

Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Malcolm Margolin
*Malcolm Margolin: "Such a goddamn beautiful life":
Conversations about Heyday Press and Everything Else*

Interviews conducted by
Kim Bancroft
in 2011-2013

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Malcolm Margolin

(photo courtesy of Kim Bancroft)

Interview 1: October 19, 2011

Audio File 1

1

Discussion of the purpose of these interviews — Early childhood in Dorchester; the apartment on Blue Hill — Jewish community there and Malcolm’s Jewish identity — A Yiddish natural history with the faigels and faigelehs — Relationship to the country, seeing his first cow — Frieda and Sam Sands — Bubbe Hurwitz — The concentration camp survivor selling pencils — The bruchas and keeping kosher — Max Margolin, father; mother Bessie, step-father Velvel — Uncle Sammy and his wife Edith; his multiple sclerosis, watching baseball — Uncle Milt, the gift of Favorite Boxing Stories — Relationship with father Max; story of discussion with Ramchandra Ghandi — Louie Sagansky, who ran the Boston & Taunton Transportation Co. — Going to the baseball game with Louie Sagansky, seeing Ted Williams — Story of the darshan, the exchange of a glance between diety and human — Lenny Louan taking over company after Louie passed away — Max becoming an independent freight — Summers on Nantasket at the Court — Uncle Jack, jumping the ditch; talking to his wife years later — Uncle Milt in later years — Mother’s sisters Ida and Anna; cousin Elsie & the family tree — Father loved to read; attended Harvard for a year — Stevie Weisman and Henry Shultz — Working at Heyday and “the luxury of being yourself” — More on relationship with father, his critical personality — “The old country” was always present — Expectations for Malcolm, his “day-dreaminess” & confusion — Relationship with mother, her fearfulness and worry — Alienation at home; secrets; gestation

Interview 2: November 15, 2011

Audio File 2

19

Education — Early reading: Pinocchio, *Make Way for Ducklings* — Lunch and chess with Jeff Lustig — Miss Muldoon — Square dancing — Mrs. Rosenberg — Losing stuff — Mrs. Hurley reading stories in 5th grade — Love of math — Boston Latin and Caesar — Friendships at school — Rambling through bookstores — ROTC — Learning to write from Joanne Holland — Looking at photos Malcolm had brought in — Discussion of education system

Interview 3: December 2, 2011

Audio File 3

34

Teen years and early adulthood — Bar Mitzvah story — Working at Paragon Park — Travels with Frank and with Walter Pitts — College years, “the long Bar Mitzvah” — Travels to Puerto Rico — Dropping in and out of college

Interview 4: January 20, 2012

Audio File 4

49

Travels West with Rina — Trip west in summer 1967, camping at Yosemite — Review of intervening years between college and trip west — Participating in Walter H. Clark’s LSD experiment in Norwich — “The temperamental proclivity to say yes” — Living in New York City, with Al Jensen across the hall — Decision to go west in VW van in 1968 — New Orleans at Mardi Gras, Big Bend in Texas — Meeting Dan Carr and family on California coast — Meeting Steinbeck’s buddy in Monterey, foraging in Big Sur — Trip to Olympic Peninsula, tree planting — Helping Dan build a boat in Vancouver — Summer at Wreck Bay — Driving cab in Portland, stopping in Tenderloin in SF, on to Baja — Ending up in Berkeley, waiting for son Reuben to be born — Reading in those days, especially the *VW Repair Book for Idiots*

Interview 5: February 15, 2012

Audio File 5

69

East Bay Regional Park Days and early years with Reuben — Reuben’s birth — The oak table — Living in a tent in the hills — Early parenting, trips in the space ship with Reuben — Reuben’s illness — Trips to Brennan’s — Reuben’s sculptural work today — Reflections on early writing — Working at the East Bay Regional Parks, folks there — How daughter Sadie got her middle name — The grandparents come to see Reuben — Connections to Texas folks; story about conversation with Carroll Abbott — Reuben at Jeffrey Stanford’s dinner party — The writing and publishing of *The Earth Manual* — Getting fired from the Park service — Using the advance from *The Earth Manual* to write *The East Bay Out* — Getting the first printing of *The East Bay Out* and selling the first copies — The richness of literary culture in the Bay Area at that time — Story of the Rabbi Archer — Naming Heyday — A robbery, and Reuben’s response — Heyday moves to its own office space

Interview 6: March 8, 2012

Audio File 6

97

Sadie’s birth and early life and the writing of *The Ohlone Way* — Pride in independence as a writer working on *The East Bay Out*, though broke — The self-reliance spirit of the time — Sadie’s early character, Reuben’s feelings about his new sister — How Sadie got named “Sadie” — Sadie forging Malcolm’s name — Sadie joining Malcolm on trips to rancherías — How *The Ohlone Way* came about as a topic — The writing of *The Ohlone Way* in a rented office — Meeting Vera Mae and David Fredrickson, and then Phil Galvan — Complex responses of Native people to a white guy writing *The Ohlone Way*

Interview 7: April 11, 2012

Audio File 7

106

Thinking aloud together about a book about Heyday — Story of little girl at park asking “You’re not dead?” — Discussion of how to present Malcolm’s story and that of Heyday — The idea of interviewing others for the project — “I love the unpredictability of the

world, the continual surprise” — The story of Stephen, Malcolm’s childhood alter ego — Honored by the National Endowment for the Humanities — How Malcolm reviews a manuscript — More discussion of a book about Heyday, a timeline, people to interview — Lillian [Fleer] comes in to talk about book with them

Interview 8: May 16, 2012

Audio File 8

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More stories about Native California and the writing of *The Ohlone Way*—*The Ohlone Way* as a reflection of the times, and yet it was radical at the time — Critique of images in the book —_Malcolm’s feelings about life among Native elders, the joy of hearing their stories, and the sadness, too — Influence of *The Ohlone Way* —_Friendship with Ray Marquez — The course Malcolm taught in Santa Barbara about Chumash life —_Jealousy of some scholars re. *The Ohlone Way* —_Malcolm’s relationship to the Native community today, insider/outsider status —_Malcolm’s interest in the world, including story of friend Chris Hanton — Traveling to share the stories in *The Ohlone Way* — Book-related events, “a fight for the human imagination” — Influence of Frank Lobo — Story of Kathleen Smith; discussion of photos from *News* covers —_Story of Vivian from Orick — Story of Ed Robbin — More about Kathleen’s recent presentation, Native elder tonality in speech — Overcoming sense of being a fraud — Story of the Kwakiutl shaman

Interview 9: June 29, 2012

Audio File 9

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Jake’s birth & early childhood, *The Way We Lived* and Heyday’s early growth — Heyday at home — How *The Way We Lived* came about — Jake’s birth and name; reminiscences and anecdotes about Jake — Moving Heyday to 2054 University — Francine Hartman as first employee — Making Heyday work, various initiatives, publishing *Stickeen* — Getting donation from Walter Munk — Typesetting other people’s books, meeting Eldridge Cleaver — Story of book about Humphrey the Whale — Story about Jake with cookie — Jake and Sadie accompanying Malcolm to events — The Three Malcolms — “Hunger is good”; self-image — Early turnover at Heyday; commitment to creativity and beauty — Reflections on role of Heyday and Malcolm’s role in Heyday — Amy Hunter and her wedding — Vera Mae Fredrickson in 1987 and starting *News from Native California* — Vera’s husband David, first writers for *News* — Story of David Peri — 25th anniversary of *News* — More stories about David, one about his grandmother Mrs. Ballard — Significance of saving stories from the older generation — At Malcolm’s emotional core: “I love to see people prosper”

Interview 10: August 22, 2012

Audio File 10

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More stories of Native elders from the 1980s and on — Eternal optimist on the Wawona Trail — Generations — Story about April Moore in Auburn’s courthouse — Story about

George Blake building canoes — Story about Mourning Dove by Chuck Donahue — Story about L. Frank and the Hawaiian recognition — Story about Lanny Pinola and serving the elders — Bird song dance and Preston Arrow-weed — Ernie Siva and the meaning of a song — Laura Somersall: “What good are you?” — Clint McKay getting seaweed for Laura — Mabel McKay’s funeral — David Risling and setting up organizations — Bertha Norris at the Big Head dance — Bill Franklin and Chaw’sse, with Old Man Burris and Dwight Dutchske — Tour by Glen Villa, Jr., of Ione sites — Story about Georgiana Trull and preserving her language — Story about Matt Vera learning his language — Working with Leanne Hinton and Bun Lucas — “What I’ve been witnessing!” — Story about camping with Bun and Jake and the bicyclists — Bun’s trip home outside Cloverdale after the war, need to remember language — Catching sea lions at the Mowry Slough — Story of Ray Marquez — Starting the Advocates group, Leanne’s role, the conferences — Thoughts about roundhouses — Malcolm’s relationship with different groups — Story about Alex Ramirez, Ohlone, at conference in Monterey — Getting people’s stories (like Sutton robbing banks) — Love of creation stories and the gods represented there; example of Marumda — Letter representing “scoring” of applicants (in relation to hiring for Roundhouse)

Interview 11: September 6, 2012

Audio File 11

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Malcolm’s Typical Day — News of David Fredrickson’s passing, plans for a fund — Joe Blum book — Board morale about finances — Kat Taylor communications, Chris Benton’s kite photography — Visit from David Rains Wallace — Lucy [Lucille] Day’s event — Poetry book related to nature; Edson poem — A’s game with Jim Quay — Susan Snyder’s cat book — Bart Abbot story about the dog — Event with Susan Straight at California Historical Society — Going through Malcolm’s email; video about Japanese internment musical — Requests for funds or visits — Note about work on David Belardes — Discussion about how Malcolm approach to communications management — Dealing with a tragedy — Certificate from Ohlone Esselen Nation — Darryl Wilson’s manuscript — Note from Lindsie Bear about her introduction in next *News* — More on how Malcolm deals with communications, his “daydreamy” response — Letter from Jane Whartman in Klamath, and Malcolm’s response — Malcolm’s letter to a woman who didn’t get the Roundhouse job

Interview 12: September 26, 2012

Audio File 12

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Discussion of the Heyday book (at Kim’s cabin) — Brainstorming on the format of the book, reviewing Kim’s potential outline — Malcolm’s views about the trouble with publishing companies — Metaphor of Heyday as traveling by ship and what it takes with it into the future — Malcolm asks about Kim’s life at the cabin; she discusses her routine — Discussion of some of what Kim’s learned in interviews, including with Jake — Malcolm on how others perceive Indians and their culture — Malcolm’s trip to Mexico with Reuben at age 16 — Kim’s life in Guanajuato, Mexico — Malcolm’s impressions upon returning

from Mexico — Reuben’s adventure by himself in Mexico — More about the structure of the book; editorial and design possibilities— Plan to put together a page on next visit — Get images from Rina — When to integrate a designer — Discussion of travel plans — Story about Suzuki Roshi and the dancing Zen students

Interview 13: October 25, 2012

Audio File 13

226

Malcolm and Kim make a scrapbook page for David Peri — Malcolm on growth of cities and the apprenticeship model of labor — Francine’s description of working with Malcolm as an apprentice — Discussion of organization and presentation of interview excerpts — More work on the scrapbook page for David — Malcolm reads the piece he wrote in honor of David upon David’s passing

Interview 14: December 19, 2012

Audio File 14

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Discussion about Heyday as an organization and stories about specific people — Making beautiful books, Malcolm’s vision — Role of shame; Rilke’s quote on beauty; enjoying beauty in simple places — Publishing Tom Killion’s and Gary Snyder’s book — How Heyday folks focus on creating a beautiful book when they initiate one — How Malcolm sees himself giving feedback — Story about Moses Mendelssohn — Response to Patricia [Wakida] noting that Malcolm “takes the blame” — Letting others focus on creating beautiful work — How Malcolm understands the joy of working at Heyday — Being authentic — Working for a pittance in a positive environment — Story about the visit from the tribal groups from Turkestan — Question of business model versus independent approach — Malcolm as both self-indulgent and hard-working — Setting an example as the boss, while depending on others for help — People have “genuine power” at Heyday — Hiring people who are fun, kind, and smart — Relative egalitarianism at Heyday, shared and overlapping responsibilities — Strong social culture, working among friends — Interesting work in a variety of areas — “I’ve been lucky” — David Isaacson comes in to get Malcolm to sign new lease — Letting people go when things don’t work out — It’s still Malcolm at the top — Story of the Kwakiutl shaman as model of “it’s better elsewhere” — What the next Heyday leader would need to get the same kind of trust — Potential difficulties for successor because “this whole place is an extension of my personality” — Detachment — “If I can’t control myself, how can I control the future of Heyday?” — “If they were all to walk out on me, I’d just walk out with them.” — Stories about Patricia Wakida and her time there — Patricia’s role in initiating the focus on Japanese American literature — Deborah [] passes through; comments on book about Julia Parker’s baskets — Metaphor of coping with problems, as in aikido, with capaciousness — Analogy to Buddhist psychological defects and dealing with anger — Patricia Wakida enters; they catch up — Story of Malcolm’s sense of politics in the late ’60s — Stories about Nanao, and the poem by him — More stories about working with Patricia — Story about the Japanese art museum in the field of the Central Valley — Working on presentation on the history of poetry in Berkeley with Robert Hass — Event

with the Oakland Museum of California — Story about Larry DiStasi and his car — Story about the house on Berkeley Way he could have bought for \$12.5K — What happened to Larry’s car after they fixed it — Malcolm’s experience of the writing group with Larry — What Malcolm learned from doing Larry’s book with him, being tough — Question of whether Malcolm has ever had regrets about not writing a full-length book again — Sadie’s work as Heyday accountant — Hardships the family faced, but no resentment on the kids’ part

Interview 15: January 17, 2013

Audio File 15

268

Discussion about the structure and content of the book — Honesty — Editorial process — “It’s going to be a good book” — “Getting canned from the East Bay Regional Park District” — An advance from Houghton Mifflin — *Earth Manual* — Marriage to Rina — Family life — Heroes — Malcolm’s sense of detachment — Frances Phillips and the supermodels — Malcolm’s gift for storytelling — Bob Callahan, a great mind, publisher of Turtle Island Books, storyteller, Irishman — Fred Cody, the bookstore, Inkslingers, the small-press publishing movement — A lunch with Studs Terkel — Fred Cody’s large spirit; his death; Pat Cody; Fred’s personal magnetism — Jeff Lustig and California Studies — Jeff’s character and background — A great Jewish joke — Malcolm’s and Jeff’s chess games — Discussion with Gayle Wattaw about the book — Work plan for interviews and book

Interview 16: February 22, 2013

Audio File 16

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Review of lingering questions: ACTA, California Indian Conference — Malcolm reads from old *News from Native California* piece about the re-initiation of facial tattoos — Conversation with Diane about the archive and Malcolm’s enjoyment of old photos — Malcolm discusses visits with Marshall McKay, Karen Rossman, Alliance for California Traditional Arts, Ron Kauk — Clarification on what happened with Wally[] — Wavy Gravy — Malcolm’s experience of the California Indian Conference — Malcolm’s speeches on complexity of Indian law, example of fishing in the Klamath, collaborative justice — Malcolm’s upcoming speech at the California Archeology Society and honoring of David and Vera Mae Fredrickson — Malcolm’s history with the Alliance for California Traditional Artists; story of learning about khong from Cambodian dancer; Amy Kitchener’s role in ACTA — Kim’s work plan — Marilee Enge comes in and they discuss visit by Ron Kauk

Interview 17: March 22, 2013

Audio File 17

321

Malcolm talks about Heyday as rogue institution — They discuss chapter three as Kim has prepared it, what and how to rewrite; schedule — Malcolm tells Kim to just “grab the

reins” — Discussion of Alcatraz — Perspective on tribes getting federal recognition; Yosemite story and Johnny Dick — Division between religious/spiritually oriented and politically oriented in tribes — Story of Tom Smith’s medicine bundle and how Malcolm ended up with it — Story of Kashaya Indians on Haupt ranch & the “Kashaya-ization” of CA natives — Role of the Ghost Dance and leadership of Annie Jarvis & then Essie Parish — More on *The Way We Lived*, 2nd edition — How Malcolm sees his life now — Best book was *Life in a California Mission* — Brief discussion about excerpts from Malcolm’s books and from *News* — Malcolm’s thoughts on the Roundhouse, as a metaphor and an organization — Etta Charle’ recent death at 103 — Roundhouse as “sepia-free zone” — Need for “passion and ferocity” — Heyday as a creative enterprise living on risk — On Lindsie filling her own shoes — Story of the Earl Warren chair — Stories about Michael Rossman — Stories about Chick [Ernest] Callenbach — Story about Reuben’s table and his mask — More information about the Koerber Building and the circumstances for leaving — Ninja Man, the elevator — Story of Malcolm as go-between for Meti in an arranged marriage — Story of the Bay Series of memoirs — Story of *Bay Nature*, question of how to disperse funds to that staff vs. Heyday’s — Nick Taylor’s book on Junipero Serra, his imminent arrival at Heyday — Malcolm’s relationship to his brother Bill — Malcolm shows Kim his red notebook of memories from Dorchester — Nick arrives — Malcolm explains from his perspective how he changed Heyday into a non-profit — Gayle Wattawa sits in on this conversation and laughs about the lack of personnel policy — Malcolm’s ruminations on someone with “no discipline” running a business — Comment on event previous evening at the California Historical Society — Being part of an “enterprise that bridges cultures... this is where I live” — History of poetry series at Heyday, role of Joyce Jenkins — Malcolm reads from Steve Kowitz’ “The Poetry Reading Was a Disaster”

Interview 18: May 22, 2013

Audio File 18

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Discussion of photos and interviews — What people say, and what seems real—Reuben’s remarks — Comment about appearing heroic but really not wanting to give orders — Sadie picking blueberries story — Story about Rick Heide — Story about Bay Nature, response to nature writing, kinds of nature writing — Starting Inlandia Institute — Starting Living Cultures magazine — Recent trip to New York with Rina; saw Cambodian Dancers; pamphlet idea — Discussing recent events & others coming up—Kule Loklo, the interview, interviewing others. KZYX interview — Reviewing progress of The Book, word counts, chapter overview — Malcolm gives history of some objects in and around his office — Recent visit with Merk Oliver; stories about him — More on trip to New York, Jake & Nick’s performance; visit to Brooklyn — What happened with Yosemite roundhouse — Strategic planning & studying other publishers — Kim’s comments on how she sees The Book so far — Story about visit with Jennifer Bates and her daughters & sister — They discuss dealing with images in The Book — Need to include some folks left out of interviewing, like Linda Yamame — Discussion of how to include mention of Parkinson’s, how his health is — What last chapter, #10, looks like (still in progress) — Story about event on Nanao; Malcolm reads one of his poems to Kim — They look at more of the objects on his tables & shelves —Malcolm reads letter from Renny from

Risighini Rancheria — Malcolm reads letter he sent to Marion Weber and reviews other stuff on his desk — Story about Dan Gerber

Interview 19: August 19, 2013

Audio File 19

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Vera-Mae and David Frederickson, *News from Native California* — The legal battle for federal recognition of unrecognized tribes — A drawing of Malcolm at Specs in North Beach — Excerpts of interviews to appear in the book — Mahatma Gandhi’s son, Ramchandra Gandhi and a visit to the Judah Magnes Museum — The Hindu practice of Advaita — Malcolm’s approach to the work of Heyday — The story a visit to Naxos; Leonard Cohen, and an amazing conversation with a Greek man — Vincent Medina talks about traditional village life of California Indian people — The urge to have a home vs. the urge to roam — Malcolm’s thoughts about Gold Rush California — Remembering poet Yevtushenko’s visit to the San Francisco Bay Area — Herman Heinzl, the Gamble brothers, and a proposal for a Heyday bird book; a story about a concentration camp — “The way that beauty gets born out of pain” — Fred Meeter, Lou Loeb, the Ark Bookstore, “The Last Wilderness” — Lou Loeb’s death; aging and loss — Reflections on the interview process and perspectives on life — A recent visit to Baja — Themes to be interwoven in the forthcoming book — Wife Rina’s family background in Poland and the Ukraine — Dachau and “a world of mysteries within mysteries” — Rina’s and Malcolm’s trip to Eastern Europe, and subsequent family visits — Tony Cody and Fred Cody — The bypass controversy in Willits — Malcolm proposes a book contract for his collaboration with Kim — Discussion about marketing the book — “This is a book about Malcolm” — And Heyday — Titling the book — Designing the cover — Heyday’s social media presence — Kim’s plan to interview Vincent Medina

Interview 20: August 21, 2013

Audio File 20

445

Mother’s best friend, Frieda Sands and superstition about the evil eye — Malcolm’s amazing memory — The Boston and Taunton Transportation Company; Benny Ford — A Damon Runyon world — The old neighborhood, Blue Hill Avenue — Playing pool with Reuben — Julian Lang, a Karuk Indian — The linguist William Bright — An encounter with astronaut Edgar Mitchell — Malcolm’s life, a bridging of worlds — More discussion about the shape of the book

Interview 21: October 18, 2013

Audio File 21

454

History as a good story, a living thing; using the past, not just preserving it — Rina's and Gayle's reviews of the work in progress (the book) — Kim talks about Guanajuato and her family and home there — Discussion about book projects — Malcolm's thoughts about salvaging endangered languages and cultures — More about interesting people and economic change in Guanajuato — Design of the book — Malcolm's use of cuss words in the interviews — Sigfrido Aguilar and Teatro Tanque — Reuben — A portrait of Malcolm — Choosing images for the book — Self-consciousness and the oral history process — The possibility of a UC Berkeley grant for a book about urban bees — An event at Z Space — *Bad Indians*, Natalie Diaz, Greg Sarris, Jo Harjo, Gordon Johnson, Deborah Miranda — The California Historical Society and Hetch Hetchy — Calendaring, and Malcolm's affection for Kim's father — The vagaries of memory — Jake's remark about Malcolm's love of beauty — Editing oral history — Alan Rosensus, *Life Amongst the Modocs*, Joaquin Miller — Malcolm's comfort level when dealing with uncertainty — Observations on the Tea Party, President Obama, the Koch brothers — More discussion about the book — Heydays board of directors — Mike McCone, Guy Lampard, Marty Krasny, and others — The changing function of the board — More about Alan Rosensus — Planning for Heyday's fortieth anniversary

Interview 22: December 10, 2013

Audio File 22

477

Concluding this long series of interviews — Graham Chisholm's role at Heyday — Feelings of kinship in Heyday's roundhouse community — Mark Dubois, kin of an environmental hero — Dan Gerber — Heyday's long association with the California Historical Society — Jim Holliday — Anthea Hartig — Heyday's new collaborations with the CHS — Thoughts about the Bancroft Library, Charles Faulhaber, Elaine Tennant — David Brower and the amazing transformation of the Sierra Club — Aikido politics — Anger, betrayal, love, beauty

[End of Interview]

Interview 1: October 19, 2011

[Begin Audio File 1]

01-00:00:00

Bancroft: This is a talk with Malcolm Margolin on October—

01-00:00:07

Margolin: Nineteenth.

01-00:00:08

Bancroft: Nineteenth. Why don't you please tell me your name and birth date, just for today.

01-00:00:17

Margolin: Let's start out modestly. So I'm Malcolm Margolin and I was born on October 27, 1940. I was born in Boston. And I was once young. Do you want more?

01-00:00:36

Bancroft: So we were just beginning to talk about the vision of what might be a book that is both about you and Heyday and some of your concerns about what the book should not be and what the book could be.

01-00:00:54

Margolin: I think we mentioned this before—there's that wonderful adage that a virgin isn't the best person to describe virginity. And Malcolm Margolin is not the best person to describe Malcolm Margolin. I'm too much in the center of it. And it's not as if I go on principles. It's not as if I have articulated standards that I follow or any kind of beliefs that I follow. I mean, if they're there, they're so damn deep that I don't know what they are. There's just a kind of opportunistic engagement in the present and whatever's in front of me and whoever's in front of me. It's trial and error. So I'm not sure what gives my life coherence. I'm not sure what gives it meaning. What probably gives it meaning is a sense of enjoyment. I mean, there's a sense of wonder, a sense of surprise. You'd better find another tack on this, Kim, because the editor in me is busily editing myself. And what we really need is some building blocks. When we tend to build books—very often when I edit a book, when something comes in, what I look for is what's good in it and edit around what's good in it and start with some solid things. Something that becomes the kernel, something that becomes the core. And what we've got to do is just kind of bumble around from the inside, stagger around and eventually something will emerge. That's the only way. Unless you want to take the steering wheel.

01-00:02:41

Bancroft: Well, I would take the steering wheel if you'd let go of the steering wheel.

01-00:02:48

Margolin: Okay, let me let go of the steering wheel. Where are you going to take me?

01-00:02:55
Bancroft:

What I'm interested in is you and your perceptions about the world and about what you've created here and how you got here. So when you said that a book shouldn't necessarily be a scrapbook of one's life, I can understand that, I see that. There are collected writings of people who are writers and you are a writer and so that's one idea, thinking about how to integrate that, but there definitely has to be a structure and a through line. And it's interesting when you just said that you were increasingly seeing people seeing your life as almost this myth and I think that's true. I think you are a cultural hero to a lot of people.

01-00:03:49
Margolin:

Yeah. People are starting to talk about me as a cultural hero, as a legend, as a treasure, and I'm not even dead.

01-00:03:55
Bancroft:

No, that's a really good thing, because then we get to celebrate you and all of those aspects about you while you're still here. I guess for myself, with whatever small encounters I have had with my mortality, that's what makes me feel like life is precious. And I look at the people who are precious to me and I want to see them being celebrated in whatever way possible. I see you as being very humble about your attainments and achievements, and so it's hard for you possibly to see a book about you and maybe you feel a little uncomfortable in the limelight, perhaps for some of the reasons we've talked about before, you know, what—

01-00:04:44
Margolin:

Okay, no, you're right.

01-00:04:46
Bancroft:

Exactly. So that's where I would like to be of help as a friend—a critical friend and a writing friend—to see how we can take everything that you've accomplished and put it into a book. You have all of these books around you that show your accomplishment, books you've given birth to through Heyday, and that's why Heyday should be an important part of whatever book is created about and with you. I think also that the story, the real life story behind the culture hero, is important to hear. How did you get here?

01-00:05:39
Margolin:

Well, let's see if we can figure it out. Is that a question you're asking me?

01-00:05:50
Bancroft:

No, I'm just thinking for a moment. I like to begin at the beginning and maybe my joy in doing oral histories is part of that, just kind of getting a sense of origins, where somebody came from. And if you want to even now share some stories about your early growing up, that's possible or we can do that in another time. We've kind of set this time as a point for thinking about mapping the way forward.

01-00:06:39
Margolin:

Well, if this is where you want to start, this is where we'll start. So I was born in 1940 in Boston. My mother claimed to have born in Russia but I think she was actually born in Lithuania. I think she was putting on airs or maybe that part of Lithuania had been Russia. They spoke a Russian Yiddish rather than a Litvak Yiddish. And my father was born in the States, barely so. It's interesting. My grandparents never spoke English. They spoke only Yiddish. My mother's parents. I always was so amazed at these people that had lived for fifty years in the United States and couldn't speak English. And I am now finding myself living for fifty years in the computer age and not knowing how to use computers, and I think that I understand what they were doing. They lived in a daydreamy world. They kind of nested in their own truth. They lived in their own minds. They were humble people. They were religious people.

In my earliest years I grew up in Dorchester. There were these apartment houses. It was 82 American Legion Highway, opposite Franklin Park. And it was near Blue Hill Avenue, which was always called Jew Hill Avenue. And it was an entirely Jewish neighborhood. There was one non-Jewish family that lived there. And I thought the whole world was Jewish. And that was a big part of my upbringing and it's still a huge part of my identity. I've left the belief structure behind. There's something in the tonality, there's something in how I feel about myself, it has something to do with that older memory of living in that neighborhood.

The apartment house that we lived in was a three-story brick building with four apartments per floor. There was kind of a slummy backyard. And then there was a coal-burning furnace down below. My father worked for a trucking company. He worked for the Boston and Taunton Transportation Company. God, there are so many stories. It was so rich.

People ask me how somebody from a neighborhood like this came to natural history. I once did a Yiddish ethno-biology, an inventory of the plants and animals we knew and what we knew about them. There were two species of birds, *fagels* (pigeons) and *fagellah* (sparrows). And my mother would look out the window at the backyard, and she'd see the little birds were going *borves*, which was the word for barefoot. And they were going barefoot in the snow and their little feet would be cold. And my mother worried about their little feet being cold, so she would fill a *shissel*, which was a saucepan, with milk and some good Jewish bread and she'd heat it up and she'd throw it out of the window into the backyard. It would hit the snow and because it was hot it would burrow down into the snow. The little birds would cock their heads and peer down the hole in the snow with the bread steaming away at the bottom of a well, totally out-of-reach.

On one hand, the whole thing was ridiculous, totally deficient in knowledge of natural history, not to mention common sense. But there was something else here, something that is all too rare, indeed often absent in the more “advanced” studies of natural history: namely, love and empathy, the understanding that the birds are not all that different from us, that they love good Jewish bread and that they shouldn’t go barefoot in the snow.

I have very early memories. My memories go back to the time I was a year-and-a-half. I had a very urban childhood. I remember, I must have been about seven years old when I saw my first cow. My father got a car in about ’45 or ’46, after the war, and he drove out into this strange and exciting place called “the country,” where there was a marvel of nature called a “cow.” I remember just being so amazed. And I felt so improved by having seen a cow. I’d seen cows in picture books but now I was seeing a real cow and there was something about it that was so marvelous—to see a real cow. And I remember coming back to the neighborhood with my chest puffed out because I had just explored the world and I had seen a real cow. And there was a fascination with cows and birds.

And then the milk was delivered by horse. It was a horse-drawn cart. And there were several horse-drawn carts when I was a kid. It was so goddamn long ago that there were people alive who remembered the Civil War. The Civil War was still an active memory when I was a kid. There were veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, there were Civil War spinsters, there were black people who had been slaves. That old world was still present and the horse would pull the milk cart. It was Hood’s milk company had horses through the war. And we were a very superior family because we had Hood’s milk, as opposed to people who had Whiting’s milk. And Hood’s milk tasted so much better than Whiting’s milk. I just couldn’t understand how people could drink that stuff. But Hood’s milk was the real thing. And the milkman would come. He had these metal racks into which he’d put the bottles and you could hear the bottles against the metal racks as the milk was delivered to your house.

And then during the war we had a victory garden. It was this bunch of urban Jews that had absolutely no idea how to plant anything, but nevertheless we were very patriotic. We had a victory garden. And my job was to gather the horse shit because we knew that horse shit was good for the soil. So I’d go down American Legion Highway and I had a shovel and a pail and I would bring the horse shit to Frieda Sands and Frieda Sands would stick it in the soil. And I’m not sure if anything ever grew. Frieda was my mother’s best friend. They knew each other from the age of three. I think they came from the old country at the same time.

Frieda had married Sam Sandofsky who had changed his name to Sam Sands. And Sam Sandofsky had true wealth. Now, Kim, you’re going to be so impressed you’re going to fall off your seat. Just brace yourself. I’ll bet you

never knew that I moved in such exalted circles. He was a fur cleaner. This was people's wealth—their fur coats. And the person who cleaned the fur coats and stored them during the summer enjoyed great prestige and community trust. You'd wear your fur coats during the wintertime and in the spring you'd give them over to Sam Sands, and he would store them. And he had a warehouse full of fur coats and it was this great trust. It was this great sense of—it was like the Kopelmans, who were jewelers. Jewelry and furs, this was old Russian wealth. And Frieda lived inhabited that world. Frieda's mother lived in the same building we did. We called her Bubbe, grandma, Bubbe Hurwitz although she wasn't our real grandmother. Frieda was one of the Hurwitz sisters, who I'm sure you've heard of. Anne and Bea were Frieda's sisters, all Hurwitzes. They were just amazing people. Bubbe Hurwitz was one of the few people that came through the back door. The back door was in the kitchen, and when you opened it you caught a glimpse into the dark bowels of the apartment building. She was one of only two people that I remember coming—and she'd come in through the kitchen and she'd sit at the table and have a *schtickel* herring, a little piece of herring and some *shvarts broyt*, some black bread or some bialy or some *challah* or some bulkie or something like that. And she'd sit there, sip tea. I don't know how she knew, but she seemed to have an antenna that could pick up the presence of pickled herring.

Every so often there'd be a knock at the back door, you'd open the door, and there was this gaunt figure from the concentration camps, this guy who had one eye blown out and a wad of cotton in the socket and he had the tattoo. He used to sell pencils. You'd always buy a pencil. My father would steal pencils from work, so we didn't even need pencils. But nevertheless, it was your duty to buy a pencil from this person.

There were *brachas*, prayers that were said over everything. You had prayers over the first food of the day, the first time you saw a child during the day, the first sunrise, when bread was served, when wine was poured, etc. There were scores of them. And there was one in particular, when you saw somebody that was crippled or in great pain or wounded by life or something like that—some one scary, like the one-eyed cadaverous pencil salesman—it was translated, “Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who delights in variety.”

My grandparents kept kosher and we didn't. You wouldn't eat pork or shellfish or mix meat or milk or anything like that. And we had four sets of dishes because you had to have four sets of dishes. But it wasn't as strict as it should have been. My parents kind of reveled in their cheating on this. They reveled in their being modern. And yet they were not very modern people in the least.

My father became much more modern as time went on. His father died when he was young, when I think he was two years old. And his original name I

think was Bauer or Blauer or something like that, and that should have been my name. But his mother remarried and her name was Bessie and she remarried a guy named Velvel. And Velvel was a tailor. My other grandfather was a tailor. Velvel and Bessie had three other children, three sons. So my father had three half-brothers and these were my heroic uncles, Milty and Jack and Sammy.

I was fascinated by them all. As a young man, Sam had a motorcycle and he had a blond girlfriend. The blond girlfriend had long blond hair and every fall he would get on that motorcycle and stop by, the girlfriend's hair waving against the wind, and they were on their way to Florida. And this was so romantic. This was so wonderful. They married. Her name was Edith. And very young he got multiple sclerosis. Edith opened a little yarn shop and Sam would sit in the back room of that yarn shop on a wheelchair and listen to the ballgame. It was a back room without any decoration. I'd sit on a chair, he'd sit on a wheelchair, and we'd listen to the baseball game together.

Jack was a hero. Jack was a boxer. And Jack gave me, when I was a kid, my favorite book of all time, *Bill Stern's Favorite Boxing Stories*. They were all the same story but with different names. There was a baby born and the baby weighed only one ounce and everybody thought the baby was going to die. The baby couldn't eat anything, the baby was bitten by a rat, the baby had a lousy childhood, the mother was poor and died of tuberculosis. But this baby had spirit. This baby had spunk. This baby had vision. This baby grew up to be Jack Dempsey or something like that. And the name changed but the story was always the same. [laughter] And it was a story that I never tired of. It was the Horatio Alger story. It was the Abraham Lincoln story. It was the story of somebody from poor origins.

I remember my father at one point, I don't remember how old I was, but I was told not to tell anybody that he was earning a hundred dollars a week because this was such a magnificent salary that people would be envious and they'd give him evil eye and nobody wanted to have evil eye. He would get his pay in an envelope in cash and then that envelope, it was called a pay envelope, it was a little tiny envelope and the money would be folded in. I would take my milk money to school in that envelope. I would take an extra quarter a week to buy savings stamps and my mother would have to pin it on to me because I was forever losing things. I was forever losing things. I would be so proud to have that milk money pinned to me, that it was my father's pay envelope, in which there had once been a hundred dollars. And I modeled myself after him. Whenever I hear my voice on the radio, whenever somebody records my voice, I'm always amazed that it's my father's voice.

I remember I was once with Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, Ramchandra Gandhi. He was talking about how difficult it was to have the name Gandhi, how difficult it was to be Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, because people expect so much of you. He says, "But you wouldn't understand." And I said, "Listen,

man, if you aren't the only one who had it rough, I was Max Margolin's son. I understand exactly. I know exactly what it means." And there was this sense of my father as a great person. And I don't think others consider him that way, but I certainly did. And in a way, still do. I think when he was young he was shy and I think he grew out of it. He was a good storyteller. He ended up being a very good businessman. He worked at the Boston and Taunton Transportation Company and it was run by this guy named Louis Sagansky. My mother had worked there, too, and that's where they met. And Louis Sagansky was one of the great men in my life. Louis would come into the office in the morning, sit down at his desk, and he would smoke cigars. Around noon, his buddies would parade in and they'd go to the ballgame. They had, I think, eight trucks that went to Boston and Taunton and New Bedford and Providence, Rhode Island, and they had an alcoholic mechanic named Happy, so none of the trucks ever worked. But nevertheless, as long as Louis went out, business was good. He'd go to ballgames and bring the traffic manager of Thom McAn shoes or somebody like that with him..

As for the kind of guy Louis was, my mother used to tell the story about how during the Depression they were earning so little money they were all starving and they were all hanging onto their jobs and Louis comes in and pulls the cuff of his pants up and he shows his socks and he says, "Guess how much these socks cost?" And they all looked and said, "How much?" He said, "Ten dollars." And they were so amazed that they worked for a man with ten dollar socks. [laughter] It redounded to Louis's glory that he was wearing ten dollar socks. His brother was Doc Sagansky, who was a gangster, and a bookie, kind of well-known in Boston. If you Google him, you'll find that he holds the record for being the oldest person ever sentenced to serve time in a federal penitentiary. He was over 90. And the place had all these bookies hanging around it. It had people hanging around. There were always people hanging around.

One day I was there and Louis got stood up and looked at me and said, "Kid, you want to go to the ballgame?" I couldn't believe my good fortune. Go to the ballgame? With Louis Sagansky?" Life doesn't get any better than this. Louis had a big Cadillac convertible, and I got into the Cadillac with the great man himself. And he's speeding. He's just speeding down the streets of Boston. It was a time when you could speed down the streets of Boston and if a cop stopped you you'd slip the cop five bucks or ten bucks and you'd just get out of it. So Louis was speeding down and he looked at me and he says, "You're scared, kid, aren't you?" I said, "N-n-n-n-no, no." He says, "Yeah," he says, "I can see that you're scared." He says, "But let me tell you something. There are so many nuts on the road, the faster you get off the road the safer you are." And we came to the ballpark and I remember we came to the ballpark and there was—and he got me a hotdog. It was not a kosher hotdog. And I had this hotdog and I was sitting with Louis Sagansky. Little Malcolm was sitting with Louis Sagansky and we sat there like friends and like comrades. And then finally there was the National Anthem and the Red

Sox were coming into the field and there running into left field was Ted Williams. It was the Ted Williams that I heard on the radio and it suddenly occurred to me that this was the real Ted Williams. This was not a picture of Ted Williams, this was not an account of Ted Williams. This was the real Ted Williams. I just couldn't take my eyes off him for that whole nine innings that he played. Just every move that he made was just so beautiful.

And I remember years later I was in South India and there was the Temple of Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. And I was going through the bowels of the temple with Sadie, my daughter, and we were going through these narrow corridors for four hours, being pushed through narrow corridors toward the inner sanctum. People were chanting Govinda and pushing each other. And just stuffy, claustrophobic inner bowels of the temple. And suddenly you come to the inner sanctum and then there's, like a horseshoe aisle, and there was the divinity Balaji at the far end of it and people just stopped and they looked and they became transformed in the looking and they give the Prasad, the offering to the God, and the priest would come and take the offering. And then the priests would kind of prod people and move them along and they would look at this God, they would look at this God totally transformed and then they would be pushed outside. Outside there was all the Prasad, all the offerings had turned into slush on the ground and it was smelly and ankle-deep in filth. And everybody walked around in a daze. And I asked my friend, Vijaya Nagarajan, I said, "What was that all about?" She said it was the darshan, it was the exchange of glance between a god and a human being and it's a transformative experience. People come for that darshan and that whole setting is set up for that viewing and that exchange of glances and exchange of power. But she says, "There's nothing like that, I don't think, in the West." I said, "Yes, I once had a darshan with Ted Williams." [laughter]

01-00:28:57
Bancroft:

What a metaphor.

01-00:28:58
Margolin:

Yeah, there was something in there. It was the sense of greatness. The sense that there are people that have super-human powers. I think that's what at the heart of celebrity. People, they see a movie star or something like that, and there's something in there, just a small contact.

And then my father, and then he was Louis Sagansky's heir apparent. He had risen to general manager of the Boston and Taunton Transportation Company. And when Louis died he was supposed to have been left the company in his will. And I think maybe Louis had told him this. There was something obscure in there, I'm not sure what happened. But instead of leaving it in his will, Louis left it to his son and son-in-law, which I can understand. And he left it to Albert Sagansky and Lenny Lewin. And Lenny Lewin had gone to Harvard Business School and Lenny Lewin immediately fired Happy. Every year Louis would go down to the local Mack truck dealer and he'd lay some

cash on the table and buy a truck. And Lenny Lewin stopped paying cash for trucks. He did it on credit and he used the money to extend the rights to other places. And my father was convinced that the whole place was going to go broke because the trick is you take people to the ballgame. That was how you a run a business. You run it on personality. You run it on who you know.

[Interruption]

01-00:31:56

Margolin:

So then my father ended up going off on his own with this friend of his, Henry Kantzer, and they became freight brokers for containerized shipping. And they got into it early and they made a fair amount of money in it. What he would end up doing is renting out container space on a wholesale basis. He'd rent the whole container and then he'd sell space to people that had less than container-load quantities. So in effect he was renting space wholesale and selling it to others retail. And he made out handsomely. We weren't rich, rich the way rich people are rich. But for that world we were prosperous. We'd go to the beach in the summertime. We'd go to Nantasket. At Nantasket there was this place called "the Court." The Sorkins owned it. And there were these horseshoe-like arrangements. It was all crowded. People love to be crowded. They love to live in these crowded conditions. And this Court had twelve little apartments around the edge and people sitting in the middle on lawn chairs and every night the men would play poker and the women would play canasta or mahjong. Mahjong was always a first-order mystery to me. I loved the sound of the tiles and I loved hearing people call out "three bam" and "four whack" or whatever the thing was. And the laughter every night. There would be barbecues and there was laughter and there were all these families, and I still remember all those families. I could tell you who lived in each of those little twelve apartments over the years. People came back to the same place and then you'd walk down to the beach and you'd fry yourself in the sun. But we could afford to go to the beach. And then there was an amusement park there, Paragon Park, and I worked there for five years when I was a kid, when I was going to college. I worked there summers, which is another whole bunch of stories. But let's finish off the early years.

So my Uncle Jack was a boxer and gave me *Bill Stern's Favorite Boxing Stories* and my fondest memory of Jack was he would babysit for me. He was muscular. He was strong. The fact that I was Jack's nephew gave me free passage anywhere you went because Jack was a fighter. Jack was charismatic, Jack was handsome. And Jack would babysit for me and I remember once—we'd go off to Franklin Park, which was opposite the house. We lived at the edge of this kind of ghetto area and the American Legion Highway was this boundary and then across the street was Franklin Park. And we'd take walks in Franklin Park. My cousin Arlette, whom I absolutely adored—she was so damn beautiful and I think my father had a crush on her. They would go off and we ended up sitting on these stone walls that had been built by the CCC

[Civilian Conservation Corps] and my father would give me an acorn. He'd take an acorn and with a pen knife he'd drill a hole in it and he'd put a matchstick in it and make a top and tell me to go away. And then I would go away, all the time craving Arlette's company.

I remember there was a mound. And it must have been a bunker where they were storing dynamite or something like that and there was a groove that went into the mound and it was a door at the end of it. And Jack would pick me up, we would just jump over this groove cut into the mound. He'd grab me under his arms and we'd jump over that groove. I knew that inside that door lived a witch that came from the center of the world. And I once saw the door open, I saw this witch kind of look out at me. But I was in Jack's arms. I was safe. And it became a metaphor in later years, that when I died, Jack would take me in his arms and we'd leap over the ditch. If I was bad, the witch would come out and grab me. And if I was good I would sail over in my Uncle Jack's arms.

And my Uncle Jack, later on he had a messy divorce from Rita, his wife, and he married somebody that we didn't know. He was alienated from the family. And her family owned a junkyard and he was working at the junkyard and then he had a stroke and he was crippled up and nobody ever saw him, and he finally died. And I always thought about how that memory was just locked in me, that it was the extent to which we all have memories that are just our own and private memories, and you become the last witness of something. And jumping over the ditch was so damn wonderful. And it was just wonderful to me and probably didn't mean anything to Jack. And then so many years later, I think it was my parents' fifty-fifth wedding anniversary, and I came back to Boston and there was this strange woman sitting there. Everybody else, I knew. But there was this strange crude woman sitting there smoking cigarettes and I came up to her and I asked her who she was and it was Jack's widow, Debbie. And she said that she really wanted to meet me, that Jack used to tell this story about jumping over a ditch, how important it was to him. But, she said, Jack didn't think I'd remember it.

Then Milt was a good guy. He never amounted to very much. He was an overcoat salesman for a while. He sold overcoats for Barron Anderson, which was a prestigious overcoat company. He went from job to job. I always thought he probably worked in stolen goods. I'm not a hundred percent sure. There was always something shifty about him. And he always knew somebody. It was a great sin in my childhood to buy retail—to actually go into a store and buy something was a mark of somebody who just was so inconsequential. There were various crimes. Like being a fussy eater was a great crime and not having good card sense was a great crime. But buying retail was also a great crime. You had to know somebody in the business. And Milt always knew somebody in the business. But that's not entirely true. There were things that we did buy retail. We'd go down to Blue Hill Avenue and there was this world of people that lived behind their stores. Murray's Toy

Store and Murray's Shoe Store and the G&G Delicatessen which was a gathering place.

Running off Blue Hill Avenue there was Woodrow Avenue that had the three synagogues—little shtetl-like synagogues, all orthodox—and one synagogue wouldn't speak to the other synagogue. And my Uncle Sam Beresnack was president of the Woodrow Avenue shul. Sam was a kosher butcher. This is not my father's brother Sam. My mother had two sisters, Ida and Anna, and Sam was a kosher butcher. It was Ida's husband. And he had one leg shorter than another, he must have weighed 300 pounds, and he ran seven butcher shops into bankruptcy and they continually had to be bailed out. But he was president of the *shul*.

I remember once my cousin, the five daughters that he had, one of them was Elsie. And Elsie came over when my mother was in her nineties and she came over to do a family tree. And I thought this was going to be the most boring thing in the world. This schleppy family of dull people that I was dragged to on Sundays to hang around. And my mother went through this family tree and it was so full of people who died and kids who died and influenza epidemic and people who separated and remarried and stuff. It was just so filled with pain and tragedy. And then I remember Elsie left and my mother looked at me and said, "This should probably die with me in my grave. But when Sam married my sister Ida, we found out he had left a family behind in Russia, and we ended up having to annul that marriage. I don't know whether the kids know it or not." No wonder they were all so crazy. The amount of pain that they floated over was so great.

But then there was the other world that was forming. My cousin Edith, one of Elsie's daughters, I remember we went over to her house and she had a Jell-O mold. She made Jell-O. And floating in the Jell-O mold were little bits of canned fruit. And we looked at this thing. It was the most amazing thing. This canned fruit was floating in this Jell-O mold and it was the most beautiful thing that I'd ever seen in my whole life. It was this grand work of art. But what was especially impressive and beautiful about it was that she had gotten the recipe from a magazine. And there were these things called magazines that just provided the entrée into this whole modern life. We used to get *Life* magazine and *Colliers* and *Look* and *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Reader's Digest*. The house was always filled with magazines. And magazines had pictures in them. There was *National Geographic*. There were all these wonderful pictures that you could have of this other life.

My father loved to read and he went to Latin school, and he went one year to Harvard. He got a scholarship and then he had to drop out because of the Depression and get a job that was beneath him. And he was very smart. When I was a kid I felt that he knew everything.

01-00:43:50
Bancroft: What was your father's full name?

01-00:43:54
Margolin: Max.

01-00:43:55
Bancroft: Just Max. And how about your mother?

01-00:43:58
Margolin: Rose. Max and Rose, or Modcha and Dreyzel.

01-00:44:05
Bancroft: What do you think your father would have liked to do had he been able to continue on with college?

01-00:44:19
Margolin: I'm not sure. He loved what he did. He loved what he did. But I always think the same thing could be true of me, too. I think that if I had opened a stationary store I would probably have an interesting stationary store and know everybody in the stationary business. I don't think happiness is something you derive from what you do as much as you bring it into what you do. It infuses what you do. There are people that do things that erode them, I guess, but I think happiness is kind of a preexisting condition. I'm not sure that's true.

01-00:45:07
Bancroft: It's true for you.

01-00:45:13
Margolin: Well, I was not a happy kid. I was morose. I was day dreamy. I was shy. I had two friends. I had Stevie Weitzman and Henry Schultz and Henry Schultz was my best friend. Stevie Weitzman's father was a junk dealer, rags and bottles. He had a cart with a horse. They used to go around the streets of Boston picking up rags and bottles. During the war there was a shortage of toys and stuff like that. So consequently Stevie Weitzman had the best toys of all. Henry Schultz's father was a lawyer and knew policemen. This was so impressive to me, that Henry Schultz's father knew policemen. And then there was Jerry and Mickey Brecker and their father was an immigrant window washer. He used to have a squeegee and he'd go over and wash windows. They were perhaps the poorest people in the neighborhood. And later on they built these high-rise buildings, the Hancock building and stuff, with these windows that went way up like twenty-five stories. And he wasn't afraid of heights. And he became something like Brecker Maintenance or something like that, and in this new world of windows he became vey successful. There was this cast of characters out there. Jeffrey Green's father was a mailman. Herman's father. Do you remember what Herman's father did, Kim? Oh, God. I don't remember either.

01-00:47:14
Bancroft:

That's interesting how you place the kids and the work that their fathers did, the role of labor and work in people's lives.

01-00:47:26
Margolin:

That is interesting. That is interesting. That was very important to me and still is. On the one hand, it still is. Jumping ahead, it's so interesting watching people come to work here and bring in a kind of professional quality and watch them lose it. Watch them take on their own voice and watch them, instead of having to pretend you're somebody else, speaking from a core of personality, where the true power lies. You're not just playing a role. We find what you do, a vehicle for self-expression. Where you have the luxury of being yourself. And for me work was always important. And for somebody who almost never had a job in his whole life except for publishing, writing—

01-00:48:32
Bancroft:

Let's go back for a moment to you talking about the quality of your childhood and the sense of being enveloped by all of these wonderful characters, but you yourself were—you describe yourself as shy. And so I see you observing all of these people perhaps quietly. What was your shyness like for you?

01-00:49:05
Margolin:

Well, I don't know. I'm not sure what shyness is. It was vulnerability. It was an egocentric sense of self-importance, not wanting to be intruded upon. A sense of feeling bad about yourself, a sense of feeling inadequate. It's just kind of a combination of things. I'm not sure what it is. But it was there and it was pronounced. And it lasted right through college. And as a matter of fact, it has lasted right through old age.

01-00:49:54
Bancroft:

Well, maybe you mask it a little well by having so many people that are in your life that you relate to and you get them to tell their stories.

01-00:50:05
Margolin:

Yeah, I love being warmed by other people's fire.

01-00:50:19
Bancroft:

What was your relationship like with your father? You mention the sense of feeling inadequate. You idolized your father.

01-00:50:25
Margolin:

He was tremendously critical. His own father died when he was young and I'm not sure he knew how to be a father. He wasn't mean or anything. He was attentive. But there was the feeling of never being able to do anything right and never being good enough and never being as good as him. But I think this is common among kids. I'm going to censor this one out. Or maybe I won't but we'll see.

I think that I have, which is probably true of my generation, the sense of having been born with all the advantages and the sense that this was the

generation that worked their way from immigration status through the Depression and made their own place in the world. And it was something that could never be gotten, that I was already born a leg up. And maybe I was reminded of it. I haven't really thought about this. I was probably reminded of it all the time. I always felt that sitting at that table was myself and my brother and my mother and my father and the Depression and the old country and they were all sitting around the table. And the Depression and the old country were just as present as anybody else. And the old country was very mysterious. It was not spoken about. The Depression was. The old country was actually the West End of Boston. It's where my mother and her family first arrived in the United States, the West End, and this was the place of nostalgia. There was a West End house. There was a kind of settlement house that they all went to. And a kind of youth organization. And then it had a summer camp and my brother ended up going to that summer camp and becoming a counselor and becoming a head counselor and running the camp and then running the west end house. So he kind of stayed in that old world. I was so eager to get away from it. I suppose we'll get into that. I needed years to disentangle myself from it and it's clear that I'm not totally disentangled.

01-00:53:17
Bancroft:

Why did you want to get away?

01-00:53:32
Margolin:

Well, I was unhappy there. And I'm not sure what that unhappiness was. There was supposed to be a trajectory and the trajectory was you had the immigration generation and then you had the generation that made it but never was fully integrated into the culture. And then my generation, what I was supposed to be doing, what I was bred for was a split-level house in a suburb like Lincoln. Two children, a good Jewish wife, and a high income. What my father wanted me to do was go to Harvard. No, he wanted me to go to MIT, study engineering, and then go to Harvard Business School and learn how to use it, and then become a multi-millionaire. And it's not that I didn't want to do that. I was just too muddled. There was something like a cloud hanging over me. I kind of enveloped myself in a self-induced state of day-dreaminess. Read a lot. Not too different from you. And was episodically lucid. Every so often something would come that I would understand. I was well-taken care of. It wasn't as if I was abused or as if any of these things were gross pieces of abuse or negligence or anything like that.

I'm not sure where that unhappiness came from. I'm not at all certain. It was certainly there. And with it came confusion. There was just tremendous confusion as to what I would be in life, who I would become, who I was, what I was interested in. This thing about being mythologized, there's the image of somebody that has clear goals and fulfills clear expectations and sets out to do something in this world. I never did. I just did what was in front of me. And it was a kind of combination. The books that I do are—there's pride in doing them but there would be a shame in doing them badly. Shame is a big part of

it. Shame in mistreating people, shame that if somebody gave us their work that was so beautiful, that they'd worked on so long, and if we did a lousy job of it, I'd just be ashamed. I think that comes from those early days.

01-00:56:56

Bancroft:

Do you see that also connected to Jewish culture and religious upbringing, a very strong sense of duty, doing what's right and thinking about the larger world and one's place in the world?

01-00:57:12

Margolin:

It was never that clear, it was never that structured. If that was the case, if that's where it came from, it was so deeply internalized. It was so moody, it was so built into the structure, into the bone. I can't say that it came from here, it came from there. It just kind of was.

01-00:57:37

Bancroft:

Well, let's finish with a few more stories about your mother, if you would, because I get a sense of what a strong figure your father was. Did she sort of counterbalance him in some ways or what was her role?

01-00:57:53

Margolin:

She was very loving. She was very fearful. Another favorite story of mine: when the Russians sent up some kind of a Sputnik with a dog in it, she refused to go out and hang clothes anymore because she was afraid the dog would fall out of the sky and hit her. And when I was a kid, this struck me as a reasonable fear. It wasn't until later years that I realized that this was nuts, this was completely crazy. And she was a good person. She loved a good party. She never went to college at all. I think she graduated high school. She was a bookkeeper. And she was smart and savvy. She loved having something called good fun. This meant playing cards with her friends. She was a wonderful card player. She was crafty. She loved being crafty. She was a decent cook. She worked around the house. She worked with my father in later years. In early years they worked together at the Boston & Taunton Transportation Company, that trucking company, and then in later years she worked for him when he became a freight consolidator. And they were close.

She was much more old-country than my father was. I remember when Rina and I were living together, we had to get a marriage license before she visited. And we couldn't tell her we were living together because it would upset her. I haven't thought seriously about any of this for so damn long. You were always on the verge of making her feel bad about something. And she was a worrier. She was a chronic worrier. So if you were like five minutes late she would already decide that you had been killed by the blacks. That was how people died. And you'd come home and there'd be hysteria. You were five minutes late and there'd be just absolute—and a sense of you'd just hurt somebody just tremendously. And I once realized I was five minutes late and I realized it wouldn't matter whether I was five minutes late or five days late. I may as well just stay out because the reaction was going to be the same.

And I remember once the very, very clear feeling something terrible had just happened to me. I forget what it was. And I was in trouble. And I realized that if I went home and I told them about it, instead of having one problem, I'd have two problems. [laughter] And I may as well just have one problem. I may as well just deal with it myself.

She took care of her own parents considerably. She took care of people but this worrying was psychotic or neurotic. It went beyond normal. You were forever, "Don't worry your mom. Don't worry your mom." And it was a little bit like people with a strict religious upbringing, where once you break it, you may as well just go all the way. So I ended up climbing mountains and riding motorcycles and taking risks and doing all kinds of things because you never had—either you were on the leash or you were off leash and there was no in-between.

01-01:02:05
Bancroft:

Do you think that when you talked about the sort of unhappiness and the cloud having over you in your childhood, that that had anything to do with it, that you had internalized your mother's sense of worry even as you have this other part of you that was willing and wanting to take risks but the worry became this internalized sense of something could go wrong or would go wrong or you weren't doing what you should be doing, inadequacy.

01-01:02:40
Margolin:

Yeah, I'm not sure, Kim. I'm not very astute in psychology or in self-analysis, I don't think. I think that I had built up a protective cloud of confusion, that I didn't want to see things. And at the same time I did, but on the other hand I didn't. There was a sense of living a muffled life. And I think within that darkness, within that muffledness, complexity develops. I think out of it came a certain richness, that complexity. It was definitely a strong inner development that was happening during that time. And there was also a sense—with that sense of alienation comes a sense of how do you make your own world, that you're not going to fit into anybody else's world, and you just damn well better make your own world or be a misfit forever. And I think that's what I've done, is I've created a world around myself.

I think they were proud of me. What they were proud of was that I had kids. The true religion of Jews is grandchild worship. So I gave them grandchildren to worship. I don't think they ever quite approved of what I was doing. I'm not sure about that. That may be wrong. That may be my own imagination. I'm not sure what they thought. I never asked them.

01-01:04:38
Bancroft:

Why not?

01-01:04:45
Margolin:

In a funny way we weren't that close. I'm always so surprised when my kids confide in me and they're honest with me. My parents were people you kept

secrets from, you kept your life secret from. It was forever the business of approval and disapproval and restriction. There were just things you didn't ask. There were things that were unspoken. It seemed to be a household in which there was a lot unspoken. And whether they were dark secrets of infidelities or betrayals, I don't know. It was a sense of growing up with secrets, that there were secrets in the world. I remember once my mother, she always said she was born in Russia, and then my brother needed—he was in the Army and he needed security clearance, so they wanted my mother's immigration papers. And it turned out that she was born not in Russia but in Lithuania. But then the real secret that she was so ashamed of was she was ten years older than she said she was. And what happened to those ten years I have absolutely no idea. What happened in the old country, I have no idea. There were just things you didn't ask. There were just things that you kind of daydreamed of. You didn't ask because you shouldn't know. You didn't want to know.

01-01:06:40

Bancroft: It was left behind.

01-01:06:45

Margolin: Things were left behind in the old country, people were left behind in the old country. But then there's the old country of your youth. You asked why I never asked them. Just didn't ask. And it wasn't that I was unloved. It was just not part of the relationship.

01-01:07:19

Bancroft: It was a different way of childrearing at that time and in that place, as well.

01-01:07:24

Margolin: Yeah.

01-01:07:29

Bancroft: Well, I think that's a good place for us to stop for this time. I really liked you coming to the point about despite whatever the situation was, that you were able to develop this strong inner sense of self through that, that it was gestating and it's kind of dark and muddled, period.

01-01:07:54

Margolin: Yeah, it's kind of the chrysalis, isn't it? It's kind of like building a cocoon around yourself.

01-01:08:05

Bancroft: Well, I'm very pleased to get all of this story from you and I'll look forward--I think actually when we talked over dinner the last time you were telling me about some of your school years and experiences and that might be a good

place to go the next time should you grant me the opportunity. [laughing]

01-01:08:26

Margolin: Oh, I adore you.

01-01:08:29

Bancroft: All right. Yes.

[End Audio File 1]

Interview 2: November 15, 2011

[Begin Audio File 2]

02-00:00:00

Bancroft: Interview with Malcolm Margolin in Berkeley on Tuesday, November 15, 2011. So I thought today if you would share any stories that you remember about your schooling, what that was like. And schooling, as far as I'm concerned as a teacher, begins before kids even get into school. So what you may remember about even being taught to read or to count at home, the kind of way your parents thought about what education meant. That could be an ongoing theme—what they tried to teach you in terms of kind of school learning, if they taught you lots of other things, and then you can move into what your schooling was like.

02-00:01:06

Margolin: Well, early on, I remember a love of books. The one book in particular that I remember was the old *Pinocchio*, the pre-Disney *Pinocchio*. And for some reason or other I had that read to me again and again. My mother used to talk about how, when somebody missed a word, I would supply the word. I would say, "You didn't tell it right." There were things that I still remember. "What's done cannot be undone" was one of those things that—I forget who said it to *Pinocchio*. I still remember that world. It was a half-world from our world. It was not complete fantasy but somehow or other it was your own world pushed an extra turn of the dial into something wonderful, into something magical, into fairy godmothers and into great tragedies. A bad boy. So I loved *Pinocchio*.

An early revelation to me was *Make Way for Ducklings* because that was the first book that had something to do with the Boston that I knew. And I had never realized that books could have a meaning, could be about things that you knew. I thought that books were places you went away to. But I remember being just so intrigued that *Make Way for Ducklings* had Boston Garden in it, had Charles Street and the Charles River and the islands and the swan boats.

I don't remember being taught to read. I remember being taught to play chess. And chess was important in my childhood. To be a good chess player, to be a good card player, was very important. I may have mentioned my cousin Leonard. My mother had two sisters, Anna and Ida, and Anna had two children, Leonard and Lilah. And Leonard ended up being a rabbi. Leonard, he was a rabbi at Santa Fe. He was known as the tap-dancing rabbi. He was a complete neurotic. He was chess champion of several states and he was a bridge champion. He loved games. I remember that we'd walk along the street and there was this character named Doc Kramer. Doc Kramer was a chiropodist, is that the right word? He took care of people's bunions and corns and everybody had bunions and corns. This was part of the adult territory, you

had bunions and corns. And everybody went to Doc Kramer. And Doc Kramer and my cousin Leonard would walk along the street and they'd play mental chess. One of them would say, "Pawn to king four," and the other one would say, "Pawn to king four," and then the other one would say, "Knight to king's bishop three," and the other one would say, "Knight to queen's bishop three." And bishop to bishop four, bishop to bishop four. That's the Giuoco Piano opening. And they would play a full game of chess in their heads without a chessboard. And I remember being taught to play chess and I remember playing chess with my babysitter. Rabinovitz was his name. And surprising the hell out of him by beating him. I still play chess.

02-00:05:22

Bancroft:

I was wondering if you do.

02-00:05:24

Margolin:

Yeah, my friend Jeff Lustig died recently. Almost every Monday, for years now, we'd go out for lunch, have a glass of wine, and play chess. It's a wonderful way of getting to know people. It's a kind of parallel universe. You know somebody's raw thoughts. You know what they do when they're cornered. You know whether they're defensive or aggressive. You know how they respond to crisis. It's an indirect way of getting to know somebody intimately.

Let's see, do I remember being taught anything else when I was a kid before kindergarten? In kindergarten I had a teacher named Miss Muldoon and I had an amazing crush on Miss Muldoon. I adored Miss Muldoon. I couldn't take my eyes off Miss Muldoon. Ms. Muldoon was the most beautiful person in the entire universe. She was graceful and thin and shapely and wore nice clothes and smelled so good. I just so adored Miss. Muldoon, and I still remember the last day of kindergarten when I was going to have to go into the first grade, into Mrs. Rosenberg's class. The dreaded Mrs. Rosenberg! I was in anguish, and into the room walks this young guy with a bouquet of flowers and Miss Muldoon looked at him in a way she never looked at me. And my heart was broken. [laughter] I realized I had lost Ms. Muldoon forever. I mourned the whole summer for Ms. Muldoon. So I'm seventy-one now. Ms. Muldoon must be, if she's alive, she must be ninety.

I was very clumsy as a kid. I was out of it. One of my memories is in the first grade, just aching to be called on to be the milk monitor or to be the eraser monitor or to be the inkwell monitor. We had inkwells and you had to pour ink into the inkwells and we had nib pens that you dipped into the inkwell, which for a clumsy kid meant that every day was a reprimand and a humiliation. Every piece of paper had blotches on it and my handwriting never was very good. But I ached for some kind of recognition. And at the same time I ached for it I was snarly. I denied its importance. Being out of it became defined as rebellious. But I was just out of it.

We had square dancing. And square dancing was a first-order mystery to me. Everybody seemed to know what to do. They came in, they grabbed their partners arms, they do-si-doh'd, they did all kinds of different things. They hooked up and there were calls and I would kind of wander around in the middle of it, just completely lost. Just completely out of it. It became a metaphor for something later on.

Mrs. Rosenberg in the first grade gave me an errand. It was an important errand. Somebody had lost a mitten and I was to go around to all of the classes and ask whose mitten it was. So this was my great opportunity to go onto the second floor of the school. This is where the bigger kids were, a land of mystery and even danger to kindergartners and first-graders, I seized the opportunity. So I brought this mitten up to the second floor of the school and I come to a door. I knock at the door and a voice says come in and God almighty, it's like the third graders. They were the big kids. And there was this teacher that I didn't quite know. And the teacher says, "What do you want?" And I said, "Mrs. Rosenberg sent me up here to see if somebody lost a mitten." She says, "Well, can you ask the class?" I said, "Did anybody lose a mitten?" There was this kind of snicker and nobody responded. So she says, "Well, I guess nobody here lost a mitten." So then I went out and I was in the corridor, it was the second floor. I mean, I'd just never been to the second floor before. And it was this whole new world up there. There were new things on the walls and stuff. And I wandered around and I came to the door and I knock at the door and a voice says, "Come in." I come in, it's the same teacher. And she says, "What do you want?" I say, "I want to know did anybody lose a mitten." She says, "You know, you've already been here." So everybody laughed at me. So then I went out and I looked at the door to make sure I remembered it. I wandered around the corridor some more and I wandered around and I finally come to a whole other different door and I knock at the door. A distant voice says, "Come in." And I open the door. It's the back door to the same class. [laughter] So she sends me back down, that I failed in my mission.

02-00:11:08
Bancroft:

Some explorer you were.

02-00:11:09
Margolin:

Yes. So Mrs. Rosenberg had to send somebody else out in my place and I was never chosen again. And there was one play in which I wasn't chosen and everybody else had a part except for me and I was told to be the audience. And I was also told I couldn't keep a tune, so I was told just to open and close my mouth and not sing. And I suspect I was a hateful kid. I suspect that I was gloomy and grumpy and mopey and ill-coordinated and slightly covered it all up by being hostile. I don't think I was a very good kid. And I certainly didn't think so at the time. I was lonely. I was pretty good at school. I was smart. But I lived in a daydream. I just would stare out the window a whole lot.

02-00:12:33

Bancroft:

Did being good at school help make up for some of the other ways that you didn't fit in?

02-00:12:45

Margolin:

Yeah, but I was good at school. It was effortless. Because it was effortless it wasn't valued. I didn't value it as much. I was terrible at ballgames. I was just horrible at ballgames.

02-00:13:06

Bancroft:

And that was valued among boys.

02-00:13:09

Margolin:

That was really valued. Yeah. There must have been moments of glory, but I don't quite remember them. I remember days that were so long, just so long. They just went on forever and ever and ever and ever. You just sit there and you look at the clock and there's fly buzz and chalk on the blackboard, something boring going on, and it's five minutes of 1:00 and then another hour passes and it's three minutes of 1:00 and another hour passes and it's two minutes of 1:00. Just long days. You could hardly wait for the day to be over.

I was very proud going to school with my father's pay envelope pinned—my mother had to pin it to me because otherwise I'd lose it. I was continually losing stuff. My mother was once so mad at me because she bought me a new navy pea jacket and I went to school and I came back with a pea jacket that was not a new navy pea jacket. Somebody else had the new navy pea jacket. But they all looked the same. And I had no concept that I had just changed jackets. And my mother was shocked because it was not only ragged and dirty but it was like three sizes too small. But it was a pea jacket.

What I did love to do was after school I loved to explore. I hadn't thought about this but I loved to walk home different ways, I loved to look into different neighborhoods. There was a place between where we lived on 82 American Legion Highway and the Robert Treat Paine School. There was a plot of land that had been undeveloped in the middle of Dorchester. It was called the jungle. It was kind of like a little woodland there. And I loved to explore that. I loved to go through that. Let's see, what else do I remember about school?

02-00:15:46

Bancroft:

Do you remember the name of the school that you went to?

02-00:15:50

Margolin:

It was the Robert Treat Paine School from kindergarten through the third grade.

02-00:15:55

Bancroft:

Robert—

- 02-00:15:56
Margolin: Treat Paine. And then we moved to West Roxbury when I was in the middle of the third grade and then I went to the Sophia Ripley School and then after that it was Boston Latin School from the seventh grade on.
- 02-00:16:12
Bancroft: And I presume these were all public schools?
- 02-00:16:16
Margolin: Yeah.
- 02-00:16:21
Bancroft: When do you remember being interested in something that you were learning?
- 02-00:16:35
Margolin: I loved stories. There was one teacher in the fifth grade, Mrs. Hurley, used to read us stories and would read, like, whole books—*Heidi* and books like that that, I just loved. I loved stories. Was I interested in anything? I was terrible at the arts. Art, music. I thought that history was not interesting but I could easily remember things and master things. So it was a playground for mastery rather than anything inherently interesting. At one point I loved math. Geometry was just the most fascinating subject in the world. I liked all those problems about if somebody drives a tank truck halfway to someplace and the tank truck is half full and three chickens cross the road and the missionaries have to get across the stream, how many miles did the chicken go before the tank truck reached its goal? So those kinds of problems I was really good at.
- 02-00:18:24
Bancroft: Because they had stories.
- 02-00:18:25
Margolin: Well, that's probably true. That's probably true.
- 02-00:18:27
Bancroft: And you just said you loved stories.
- 02-00:18:36
Margolin: By the time I got into high school—Latin was a complete mystery to me. Did I ever talk about Latin School at all?
- 02-00:18:47
Bancroft: No. You didn't talk about any of your schooling.
- 02-00:18:51
Margolin: At the end of the sixth grade there was one college preparatory school in Boston, it was Boston Latin School and there was Boys Latin and then there was a Girls Latin.
- 02-00:19:03
Bancroft: And was it fairly prestigious to be able to get into it?

02-00:19:07
Margolin:

It was difficult to get in. There was a test to get in. And then they admitted something like 1,200 students. And the first assembly you sit there in this big hall with names of illustrious graduates all around, of Benjamin Franklin and Cotton Mather and all the old Puritans and it goes right through to—I don't think Leonard Bernstein's name was up yet. Anybody had gone to Boston Latin School, anyone who succeeded, was [up on the wall]. So there were all these names of all these great people and the headmaster gets up and 1,200 students are assembled for their first days at school and the speech, everybody remembers it, and the speech had something like this in it: "Look to the boy at the right of you. Look to the boy at the left of you. Look at the boy in front of you. Look at the boy in back of you. Six years from now only one of you will graduate. Which one will it be?" And sure enough, during the course of the year, the report card would come out and then you'd come back into school the next day and there'd be three empty seats. "What happened to Murphy?" He just disappeared, and the survivors would close ranks and soldier on. It was a fight for survival, cruel and maybe senseless, at best a training ground for a dog-eat-dog world.

A story that's turned out to be emblematic of that education was we were in Class IV, which would have been the ninth grade. We were reading *Caesar's Gallic Wars*. You sit there with your book, cowering, hoping you won't be called on. There are all these strategies for sinking in behind somebody, for making yourself small, for disappearing, for looking out the window, for anything, so you don't make eye contact. Anything not to be called on. And Miller looks over the class, like a hawk scanning the meadow for mice. His eyes come to rest on Marty Savitz, and he swoops in for the kill. "Mr. Savitz, recite." And Savitz, gets up and the passage was, "Caesar ran and threw darts in all directions," is the translation of it. And to run is a reflexive, you run yourself. And so Savitz gets up and he reads, "Caesar ran in all directions and threw darts at himself." There was a long pause and Miller says, "Mr. Savitz, do you want to try that passage again, please?" So Savitz goes, "Caesar ran in all directions and threw darts at himself." And Miller goes, "Mr. Savitz, does that make any sense to you?" Savitz goes, "No, Sir." He says, "Did it ever occur to you that it should make sense?" And it was like a revelation for all of us. Nobody ever thought this stuff was supposed to make sense. Making sense was the furthest thing from our minds. Nothing made sense in that time. You just kind of learned rules and you did work and you prepared yourself for some dismal thing called the future.

I was captain of the Latin School chess team. I was a pretty good student. Although I thought it was all a fraud. I thought that it was all a game, that there was nothing sincere about it at all. You just kind of learned stuff to get good grades. There were a couple of teachers that were really inspiring. Skippy Sheehan made English come alive and Sleepy Sam Nemzoff made history come alive. Phil Marston conveyed a sense of the nobility of literary

persuits. Dobbins made math into something wonderful. Van Steinberg taught German. We took Latin, French, and German.

There was a sense of camaraderie with some of the other students, there were deep friendships there that I had. And I still think that you have your deepest friendships at that age. I think friends mean more to you at that age than they do at any other time in your life. You're breaking away from home. There's a sense of shared destiny. And I've got tons of friends right now. I am not bereft of friends, but they don't mean quite as much as I think they meant at that particular point in my life.

02-00:24:11

Bancroft:

Are you still friends with any of those friends from back then?

02-00:24:14

Margolin:

No.

02-00:24:16

Bancroft:

Well, who were some of those friends?

02-00:24:21

Margolin:

Well, there was Sherm Rosen. They were all friends from Dorchester. They were all friends from the old neighborhood. Sherm Rosen's father owned a grocery store on Walk Hill Street. Sherm Rosen and I would play hooky. We'd go to Revere Beach and be terrified that we'd be caught by this semi-mythic figure, the truant officer. Hugh McNulty was the class genius. And Hugh and I were good friends. There was a group of people that were a year ahead of me that were part of what was called the Mirsky group. Went to Harvard as the Mirsky group. And Mark Mirsky was a charismatic character. He was into acting, he was into literature. His father had been a minor politician in Dorchester. The Mirsky group was kind of the group of intellectuals and I was part of that and I was part of another group. I was peripheral to it. I had lots of good individual friends within it but I was never part of the Monarchs, with Doc Gretsky and Moon Man Levinson. I keep wondering what ever happened to Moon Man. He was so gawky. Red Cohen, not to be confused with Froggy Cohen. Everyone had nicknames. And we'd shoot pool and we'd go bowling. There was a teacher, Thompson, who had a bowling alley and we'd set pins in exchange for bowling there. Dating was awkward.

02-00:26:38

Bancroft:

I was going to ask you who your next crush was after Miss Muldoon.

02-00:26:45

Margolin:

It was probably somebody the next year. [laughter]

02-00:26:53

Bancroft:

Okay, you're serious. Yes, a dating scenario, especially if you're in a boy's school. That could be awkward in itself.

02-00:27:00
Margolin:

Oh, that was terribly awkward. There was somebody that I used to meet. I still remember the Boston Public Library where I would meet somebody named Ruth and you'd go up that grand staircase guarded by the lions, stone lions. You'd come up to the second floor, the marble, the reading room with the big wooden tables and the tiffany lamps, and shelves of leather bound books and multi-volume encyclopedias doing some stupid piece of homework and you'd go up to the counter and somebody, like a real adult in a dress or in a necktie, would come and call you sir and ask what you were doing and offer to bring you books and help you. And there was something about the opulence of the library that let you know that if you were into a life of learning, the culture respected it, so that it was providing this temple, was providing this place of beauty and opulence for you with fine art and fancy people and infinite layers of potential things there. Now, I was coming to see if I could get into Ruth's blouse. That was my whole quest. [laughter]

02-00:28:27
Bancroft:

But you were willing to sacrifice?

02-00:28:29
Margolin:

Well, I still was aware of my surroundings.

02-00:28:33
Bancroft:

Yes, yes. You were willing to sacrifice and give yourself to this temple of learning for your ultimate goal.

02-00:28:39
Margolin:

Yeah. On the way to the temple of learning there was another great temple. So Boston Latin School was in the Back Bay on Louis Pasteur Avenue and you could walk down to Mass[achusetts] Ave. And on the way to the library you'd pass several things. You'd pass the fine art museum, which was an inspiration. Then at the corner of Huntington and Mass Ave there was a little communist bookstore. Back in the fifties, communist literature was hard to get, and reading it came as a shock and something of release to me. You'd get these little books, these Haldeman-Julius books. Do you know Haldeman-Julius' books? Little Blue Book series that came out in Kansas. Hold on for a second.

02-00:29:26
Bancroft:

Sure.

02-00:29:27
Margolin:

Let me see if I can find a Haldeman-Julius book. They're little five-cent Blue Books. They were a series. There were hundreds of them. I don't know where they are anymore. There were hundreds of them and they would be something like the thought of Marx and the thoughts of Lenin and the thoughts of Engels. And there would be like short stories of Guy de Maupassant and there would be how to play bridge and there would be thoughts of the Sufis.

02-00:30:12
Bancroft:

I've probably seen them, yeah.

02-00:30:15
Margolin:

There were literally thousands of them and it was all world knowledge spread out in front of you and it cost a nickel. It was the most amazing thing, and it was a piece of extraordinary luck that I lived in an era when my teenage intellectual cravings could be filled with books that cost a nickel.

Near the bookstore was the Boston Opera House. And one of my great memories was the first time that I saw a protest around preservation. They were going to tear down the Opera House and put in a parking lot or parking garage. And there were all these women out there, high-class women with signs, "Save the Opera House. Save the Opera House." And one day I come and the women are out there with their signs and the crane is up and it's got the wrecking ball. And the wrecking ball goes out and swings and it hits the side of the Opera House and it tings and then it goes and it tings and then the crane moves again and the wall crunches and the thing starts to crumble. And everybody started crying and I thought it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in my whole life. I thought it was just utterly wonderful and I was both horrified by it, it was both magnificent and horrifying. I just thought it was a grand moment.

And there was something in there. There was a kind of destructive quality. There was a character, I think it was in the W.H. Auden play, "Desmond the Destroyer," who destroyed irreplaceable objects. And I always thought the world of Desmond. Well, that still is part of me. I don't possess anything, I don't own much. Things just pass through my fingers. I'll preserve memories, I'll preserve culture, but I don't have possessions. Let's see, what else do I remember about high school and grammar school?

02-00:32:22
Bancroft:

In presuming that you were clumsy you didn't play sports, but everybody's expected to play sports. Did you play something? Was that agonizing? Did you fake it?

02-00:32:35
Margolin:

When I played with some friends, we played backyard baseball and we played it between houses. And we never had a team of more than four people on a team, so you're continually having like an imaginary man on third. And then because it was between houses you had ground rules. For example, if Mrs. Spitz came to hang out her laundry and if you happened to hit Mrs. Spitz with the ball it was a ground rule homer. [laughter] And I was good at that. I was not good in school sports whatsoever. There was obligatory PE. The worst thing of all was obligatory military drill. They had junior ROTC and I remember in senior year in high school, you were automatically made into a second lieutenant and you had to give orders to your patrol, to your platoon, and practice giving orders. "Go left, hup. Right, hup. Forward, march." Stuff like that. So I marched them all into a wall.

02-00:33:58
Bancroft:

That is so unlike you. Even to hear that voice coming out of you.

02-00:34:01
Margolin:

I just marched everybody into a wall. They kept piling up against the wall and they kept looking back for me to give an order. "About face." And I just refused to give the order and they piled up. [laughter] And I got dragged down to the principal's office. I legitimately hated that. It was cold in Boston. So you ended up having PE indoors a whole lot and basketball was a nightmare. Basketball was aggressive and fast and you get pushed around and you had to be alert and you had to give a damn. "Here, you want the ball? Take it." [laughter]

02-00:35:00
Bancroft:

Well, for somebody who professes to be day-dreamy, being alert and aggressive was not your style.

02-00:35:04
Margolin:

Yeah, it was definitely not my style. There were a group of us that got into playing soccer. We got into playing soccer because nobody would play soccer during the fifties and so you'd end up being left alone and that was the whole goal, was just to be left alone, just to kind of kick a ball around and pretend you were doing something. And the being out of it and not caring too much went straight to the heart of it. I'd buy books, I'd read books. Every so often I would be inspired by a teacher. Every so often somebody would say something that would move me.

02-00:36:04
Bancroft:

What about writing? Did you keep diaries or enjoy writing poetry or writing for classes at all?

02-00:36:14
Margolin:

No, I had one incident that turned me into a writer and it was very memorable. And I did not particularly enjoy writing. I didn't especially enjoy it at all. I majored in English lit because it was a default thing. If you didn't know what to major in, you majored in English lit. And the senior year at Harvard you were given a tutor and there was a course called "Tutorial for Credit" and the goal of the tutor was to look over what you had done in English lit and to fill in the gaps. So if you had never taken a course in Restoration literature then you'd have to read some Congreve or something like that to fill in where you were weak.

And where I had been weak was American literature, early American literature. So they gave me as a tutor this woman Joann Holland. She was a graduate student, she was plump, very kind, very pleasant. She had recently been married. And she was, I guess, a PhD candidate. I don't know what graduate students are. But she was not terribly much older than I was. And she had a little office in the Radcliffe quadrangle. Every week I had to be there at four o'clock and we discussed things. We sat in that little room in that

Radcliffe quadrangle, warm, cozy, overstuffed with books. As we got into October and November, the days got shorter and we wouldn't put on the light and we'd have these wonderful talks and these wonderful conversations and we would talk about whatever we were talking about. In the darkened room, the talk flowed easily, honestly, emotionally—pillow talk, I guess. You could feel the air thicken with the vibrations of it all. We never went to bed but it was the real thing. The greatest affection in one another's company. There was the greatest amount of intimacy. It was just beautiful.

And then one day she says, "Listen," she says, "I was just told that I have to assign you a paper, that I have to assign you a paper so you're going to have to write a paper so I can check something off." So I said, "Okay." So I wrote a paper. I did what I always did, which was to go back and do nothing, and the night before it was due, somehow or other, at nine o'clock at night sit in front of a typewriter and whack out five pages until three o'clock in the morning and turn it in and this was called a paper.

So I turned it in and then I came back the next week and there was obviously something wrong. And I said, "Is everything okay?" And she said, "Well," she said, "that paper." She says, "It's good," she says, "and I'm supposed to grade you on it and I'll give you a good grade, but I think I was expecting something beautiful." And I remember just being enraged, that you'd just crossed a fucking line. You just crossed that goddamned line, I thought, and I was furious.. I said, "Okay, if you want something beautiful, why don't we just rip it up and I'll give you something beautiful." So I went back and for the next week I wrote a love letter and it was disguised as a paper on Huckleberry Finn's father, but that's what it was, a love letter. And it was a beautiful piece of writing. And I somehow realized what I could do as a writer. I could never have been motivated by classes, by grades, by anything else. But somehow writing directly to a person like that, I could do that. I understood that. And it was the first time I ever realized what a powerful experience writing could be, for me and for somebody else.

02-00:40:21

Bancroft:

What do you remember about writing on the theme that turned it into something beautiful?

02-00:40:29

Margolin:

I don't remember. I don't remember the paper at all. I just remember the subject.

02-00:40:35

Bancroft:

But you remember she was pleased with it. But more importantly, you knew the difference.

02-00:40:42

Margolin:

I knew the difference.

02-00:40:44
Bancroft:

And what was the difference?

02-00:40:52
Margolin:

Well, the difference was I was writing right into somebody. I was not just putting words out on a table. I was writing right to somebody. And I could put words on a table. I was pretty good at words. But they were words. It had to be that emotional connection that actually got the stuff flowing.

02-00:41:33
Bancroft:

She had higher expectations that you wanted to live up to.

02-00:41:48
Margolin:

Yeah. But I wanted to live up to them. That, I think, was the main point for me. I think a lot of what I write is a love letter. It was like opening a door and finding a new room in my head. It was like finding a new voice. It was finding some other Malcolm that I never knew existed. It was finding a Malcolm that wasn't playing the game. That's what it was. That's what it was. That I could play the game and get good grades. But this was how to say something that moves and thrills and inspires and pleases and melts the boundaries.

02-00:42:57n
Bancroft:

Nice.

02-00:43:00
Margolin:

That was probably the one educational experience I ever had.

02-00:43:06
Bancroft:

Well, certainly a transformative one.

02-00:43:09
Margolin:

Yeah.

02-00:43:15
Bancroft:

Well, and sadly, in a way, I asked you about writing, that is at the end of your educational process. You jumped ahead from high school to college to the end of your college experience.

02-00:43:30
Margolin:

So much of grammar school, high school, and college was marking time.

02-00:43:39
Bancroft:

Well, I was wondering, during that time, to go back a little bit to high school because we could probably spend the next time, depending how much time you have, spend more time on college and that era. I want, as you're going through a certain period, capture some of the era, too. And so when you started at Boston Latin you were in seventh grade, you were thirteen. So that was, what, 1953 or so?

02-00:44:08
Margolin:

Fifty-two.

02-00:44:10
Bancroft:

Fifty-two. So what do you remember during those six years of high school? What were the sort of politics at that time? At least, did that affect you at all? Was that part of your high school experience, your awareness, your consciousness, or was that more of a family community part of your life?

02-00:44:33
Margolin:

Kim, I was aware of it, but it didn't matter. I was aware of politics and I was aware of the Communist scare. I was aware of a teacher at Latin School, Fagan, who was drummed out because of communism, because he was a communist affiliate. And I remember being horrified, not that he had been kicked out but by the fact that we actually knew a communist. And to what extent had he indoctrinated us?

02-00:45:11
Bancroft:

You wondered how much he had indoctrinated you?

02-00:45:14
Margolin:

Yeah. It's paradoxical, isn't it? I think I was just pleased to know somebody whose name was in the newspaper. I think that was it. That I knew somebody famous.

02-00:45:31
Bancroft:

What did you think about the Communists? What was your awareness of who they were, what they were doing, or what the whole scare was about at some point in there?

02-00:45:48
Margolin:

God, you know, I don't quite remember. I remember being fascinated by Russia, I remember being fascinated by Stalin, I remember being engrossed in the literature of Marxism. But I don't think that I ever connected it with anything in the real world. It's hard to get the right spin on this.

02-00:46:32
Bancroft:

Well, and also your mother was from Russia.

02-00:46:37
Margolin:

Yeah, she was from Russia.

02-00:46:38
Bancroft:

If not Lithuania. So that's also another little spin on it. What Russia meant to her. Maybe Russia was a separate country than the Soviet Union. I don't know. And that's curious that you say you're engrossed by doing this reading on Marxism, even as Marxism was being vilified as part of the Communist scare.

02-01:00:45
Margolin:

My feeling is, and just from my own background, that you don't learn anything in school. That if you want to change the world, you look for other ways of teaching people things than through the school system. You look for conversionary experiences. You study how the missionaries converted Indian villages. That you don't study how things get done in schools because it's a failed enterprise. And this is not true of my kids, I don't think, but it's true of me.

02-01:01:10
Bancroft:

Well, I think it depends on the kind of schooling and there are a lot of different methods but most people don't get the opportunity to participate in different methods or the schools that are really exploratory or adventurous or alternative are often private and not everybody can pay for them. I certainly felt like I, as a teacher, wanted to go into public schools where kids didn't have a chance to choose something different and be a different kind of teacher. But at the same time I was always constrained by the system that said I had to turn in grades and students had to do homework and it's kind of amazing to me that I survived in the system, being so anti-establishment.

02-01:01:59
Margolin:

Well, you know what's amazing to me, now that I'm thinking about it, is that I hated it and it was dreadful. I came out of it having learned stuff, and I came out of it having the capacity to think and to understand and to analyze and to read, and I think there was something in that day dreaminess and there was something in that cocooning, there was something in that muffled quality that allowed me to preserve things and filter only what I wanted to hear.

02-01:02:31
Bancroft:

Right. Well, you mentioned a couple of inspiring teachers. Like, of course, the example there with Joann at the end in terms of writing, but you didn't say anything--I don't know if you remember anything specifically, say, with a teacher in high school who taught poetry or math, if there was kind of the same moment, maybe even not memorable, but where you realized that poetry had something of value, it wasn't just stuff you had to tolerate.

02-01:03:02
Margolin:

I don't remember incidents, but I do remember people. I remember Sleepy Sam. He was a history teacher, and he was called Sleepy Sam because he had narcolepsy so he would nod off in the middle of class. [laughter] And the class, of course, everybody would just disrupt into chaos. But when he was on, I was captivated by a good story again. It was just the way things are summed up in some kind of an engaging dramatic beautiful way.

02-01:03:45
Bancroft:

And something like that, without your necessarily even realizing it, may have turned you onto what could be interesting in history and the stories in history, so that many years later you have the capacity to be interested in that in ways that other people never even had that opportunity.

02-01:04:07

Margolin:

Yeah. I was around greatness. In that whole Latin stuff, in that whole literature at Harvard, in various places, even if I didn't partake in it, I was around it. And it probably seeped into me in ways that—I wasn't as resistant as I thought.

02-01:04:41

Bancroft:

Well, good. You survived and have gone on to do greatness in your own way, whether you want to accept that or not. All right, my friend.

02-01:05:04

Margolin:

In truth I was probably lucky.

02-01:05:11

Bancroft:

Very good. Well, I heard some really interesting things in there. I was drawing stars in the margins.

[End Audio File 2]

Interview 3: December 2, 2011

[Begin Audio File 3]

03-00:08:18

Bancroft: You mentioned in the first interview the importance of Jewish culture and the community around you and being embedded in that. So obviously a bar mitzvah was natural to that. I wonder what it was like for you and what it meant for you.

03-00:08:36

Margolin: They sent me to Hebrew school, of course, and I hated it. I hated the people, I hated the smell of the place. I hated the whole thing. And I resented having to go after school when you should be able to just kind of read and play and be free. To just go to this other schooling and learn this strange alphabet and learn these stupid stories, I did not like it in the least. And the consequence is I was a bad student and I flunked out. They kicked me out. So when it came time for the bar mitzvah they had to get some defrocked rabbi named Mr. Karenow. And Mr. Karenow would come and tutor me on the haphtarah, to teach the haphtarah, to teach the thing that you're supposed to read. And it was the haphtarah of Noah that was supposedly the longest haphtarah in the whole canon of haphtarahs, and we'd go over it, he'd teach it to me. And he would come into the neighborhood and I would try to hide. I'd try to hide from him. And he would come out there and he used to yell, "Malcolm. Malcolm. Malcolm." But this didn't get me to come. So finally he ended up using my Hebrew name, "Meir Laib, Meir Laib, Meir Laib." And I was so embarrassed by this that I would come out of the bushes where I was hiding and come in, and my mother would be mad at me that I hadn't been home. I claimed to have forgotten. And he would sit down there. I was the most unwilling student. I'm kind of glorifying it, as if it was active resistance. It was kind of passive resistance. It was just not being there, not being involved, not being engaged. It was just something you had to get through and you had to get through for the sake of family and you had to get through for the sake of others. I had absolutely no personal engagement in it whatsoever. And I didn't learn it very well.

And then when I got up there it was the Orthodox synagogue, the Woodrow Avenue shul where my grandparents went. Woodrow Avenue had three shuls, and this was one of these little wooden shtetl-like shuls from the old country. And I still remember the smell of it, I still remember the coloration of it, I still remember walking in to the wooden world with the first three rows of people in their gabardine, all men. It was the men in the front and the women off in the back. And all these old bearded guys up in the front speaking Yiddish. Most of them didn't speak any English. And the rabbi was Rabbi Simchas. And the funny thing is that I can still remember the whole damn thing. [recites bar mitzvah prayer in Hebrew] and I can still run through. Once I start it, I can still run through the damn thing. And I did. There was this alarm that went

through the congregation because Mr. Karenow taught me the wrong haphtarah for the day. And they gave me the right haphtarah, but since I flunked out of Hebrew school I couldn't read it. So they had to have somebody else read it. They let me run through the wrong one as an act of charity.

03-00:12:32
Bancroft:

Oh, gosh. How did you feel?

03-00:12:48
Margolin:

It was just part of the overall muddle of life. The whole thing was senseless to me. It's hard to explain it, Kim. It's just hard to explain how something could be so emotionally touching and so senseless and you can be removed from it at the same time. I certainly didn't want to be there. And then Rabbi Simchas gave this great speech about Malcolm Leonard Margolin, MLM, my little man. [laughter] And he was so proud of his English. And then there was the speech that I gave that my father wrote for me because he didn't trust me to write a speech, in which I thanked everybody and pronounced devotion to the way of Abraham. And I'm sure that speech is somewhere or other.

03-00:13:59
Bancroft:

And how did you react to the fact that you weren't able to read the correct haphtarah?

03-00:14:08
Margolin:

Well, I think that everybody was so pissed off at me in general that it was just one more thing along the way. I don't quite remember. I don't quite remember. As I think I made it clear, I was in a fog. There was a protective fog and you just kind of went through the steps and the fact that it was the wrong haphtarah was only a minor part of the senselessness of this whole damn thing. There were bigger things that were senseless and I think the big epic was getting me to write thank you notes.

03-00:15:09
Bancroft:

Do you remember the party? Because that's usually a big deal.

03-00:15:19
Margolin:

There must have been a party. I don't remember. There must have been. Everybody had one.

03-00:15:34
Bancroft:

You may have shut it out.

03-00:15:43
Margolin:

Yeah, I don't want to give the impression that it was deep and painful and in denial. I just fundamentally didn't give a damn. And I've always been that way. If it's something I don't care about, getting me to do the least thing in that direction is absolutely—the amount of effort it takes to get me to do something I don't want to do is so spectacular that people just end up doing it. And if I want to do something, there's no way of stopping it. And I just didn't

want to be there. And my imagination was somewhere else, my mind was somewhere else. It was one of these things you put up with, like you put up with your cousin Stevie. You just put up with stuff.

03-00:16:49

Bancroft: Go ahead.

03-00:16:58

Margolin: It's hard to get the right tone to this one. It's hard to get the right tone to it because I'm not sure what that right tone is. It was not as if I was craving another world. I don't think I had a vision of another world. I just knew I didn't want to be there. And on the other hand, it was not an act of complete rebellion either. It was going along with the form of it. It was giving it its minimal.

03-00:17:45

Bancroft: So after that did your family go to shul every week or was it—

03-00:17:52

Margolin: No. By this time we'd moved to West Roxbury. There was a shul that opened up in West Roxbury that I never went to. My brother did. He was much more engaged and much more involved than I was. No, I think I hardly stepped into a shul except for funerals, weddings. This was not a big part of my life, Kim.

03-00:18:27

Bancroft: No, but it's an important rite of passage, so I just wondered how you—given that you were unconventional in your approach to conventions, I wondered what that was like for you. That sounds like exactly what it would have been.

03-00:18:42

Margolin: Yeah. God, there was something. I haven't thought about this in forever. Nobody's ever asked me this question. None of my kids got bar mitzvahed. And not as an act of hostility, but it would have been false. I didn't believe in God. God, there was something I'm just dimly remembering and it has something to do with my father adjusting my tie or showing me how to tie a tie or something like that. It's just a dim memory of some moment of affection in there, some moment of connection. I can remember the tone of it. I can't remember the content of it. It must have been a party. I wonder if my brother remembers it. There must have been pictures. Yes, there was a picture. There was a picture of me sitting on a chair with a tallis and a yarmulke. And it was a black and white photo that was hand-colored and my parents had it framed and stuck in the house. It was part of a conspiracy to embarrass me. And it somehow or other represented their determination that I be somebody that I wasn't. They could take a black and white photo of me at a particular moment where I was singing the wrong haphtarah and you paint it up and you sit me in the chair looking all respectable and there it hung up in the living room for everybody to see. While I went my own way the picture stayed the same. It was such a stupid picture. They gave me rosy red cheeks. I looked so healthy. I don't know what they did with the perpetual smirk.

03-00:21:41
Bancroft:

That'd be fun to see that picture. Well, let me ask you about another rite of passage. You mentioned working at Paragon Park for five summers, so that was one question I had. I just wanted to find out what it was like because that's a big chunk of your life.

03-00:22:06
Margolin:

Paragon Park I knew as a kid as this kind of wonderland. This amusement park where maybe a couple of times a year you'd go into rides and bright lights and stuff like that. When I got there it was rundown and seedy and I worked for this guy. There was this hotdog-pizza stand that I helped manage and I worked for this guy named George Shanker. His nickname was Arkey, back at the time when everybody had nicknames. To be without a nickname was like to be a robot. Even robots had nicknames, I'm sure. And Arkey was a professor of political science at Pace University and he had been divorced a couple of times, I think, and he had alimony payments and he needed a summer job, so he opened up this hotdog stand, pizza stand. And he used to be in there and I still remember his humanist professorial guise, where he would ask provocative questions, like what is the nature of man? Are we acquisitive, are we hostile, are we cooperative? Here's what the different philosophers have to say. And at the same time he was fun to be around. He was completely irresponsible. I haven't thought about him in so many years. I can hardly picture him now. I worked twelve hours a day, seven days a week, except when it rained. They closed the park. And then I'd stay late at night, we'd play cards in the back room with other guys that worked on the different amusements, and we'd gamble and it was a kind of—for somebody that felt he was leading a sheltered life, it was a kind of sense of raw world.

There were all these tattooed characters. I loved the guy that ran the park. The maintenance man was a guy named Ross. Roscoe. No, it was Roscoe. I think his name was Ross. And he had thick glasses that would be splattered with metal from welding things all the time and he had an earthy sense of humor. And there was a guy named Kitta who ran the bar, and there was the Simmons brothers, and they were these two characters from Brockton, Massachusetts, that cleaned up afterwards. There was Lester and Simi, and they had one wife between them. And they all slept in the same bed. And they were just these mentally retarded people. They would work for summertime, and then Lester and Simi, when it got cold, they'd go off into the center of Brockton, into the downtown area and take off their clothes, and they'd get thrown in jail for six months, where they could live in jail and be fed. They'd let them out again so they could work at Paragon Park. What was the name of the family that owned that park? Larry. I forget. [Larry Stone]

And then there were people that would hang around. There were gangsters that would hang around, there were FBI agents that would hang around. It had the quality of a noire novel to it all. On the one hand, I ate it up. On the other

hand, it was kind of boring. These days were long. It was the various acts that I loved. I think I've talked about the professor, the lion tamer.

03-00:27:03
Bancroft:

No, you didn't say anything about the park.

03-00:27:07
Margolin:

So there were two different lion tamers that came. One of them was Prince Elkai Gordo, who was this big black guy who used to get dressed up in spangled uniforms and get into the middle of the—we were right opposite the stage. We were under the roller coaster and right opposite the stage where these acts were. So the people would always come in for coffee and stuff. And there was Prince Elkai Gordo but there was another guy whose name I forget. He had been a college professor, a professor of fine art at Pennsylvania State, and all of his life he wanted to be a lion tamer. So finally, in something that may be familiar to somebody sitting around this table, he gave up a life of teaching to do what he always wanted to do. And he ended up getting lions and tigers and pumas and leopards. He had about seven different cats. And he had them in like railroad cars separate from one another, and he would open the gates and then push them through. He had a big round cage in the middle. And then he would open one and push them through, and he had all these mixed cats, lions and tigers and leopards and stuff. And he would do this act, and his wife was accompanying him. And she was somebody who had married a college professor, and here she was at this low-class carnival. And she'd sit there with her cigarette holder, drinking a cup of coffee, dressed up as if she was going out to the opera, just complaining like hell about how miserable her life was and how she hated all of this.

And then there was a third person in there. He was this big rough guy. He had a gun, and he'd stand outside. He was the guard and the caretaker. And he'd stand out there with the gun, outside the cage, and then he'd take care of the lions and the tigers out there. One year I was looking over who's coming this year and the professor wasn't coming. I said, "Well, what happened?" He got eaten by his lions. He got killed. And then the next year I see this act is back, coming again, and I said, "Well, what happened?" They said, "We don't know, but it's back. We booked it because it's back on the list." And they came and the big rough guy with the gun was now dressed up as the lion tamer, and the wife now had the gun, and she was outside.

03-00:29:56
Bancroft:

What a story.

03-00:29:56
Margolin:

It was the most amazing thing. You just wonder. You just wonder. And then there were these marvelous acrobats, these acrobat families. And there was this little guy who's called—Solomon was his name. He was a little Jewish guy. He'd get dressed up in a little bathing suit and he'd crawl into a canon. No, no, no, no. He was the one that went up on this high tower, in this little

bathing suit, go up in this high tower. You could barely see him at the top. And he'd jump and there was a little pan of water at the bottom, and he'd jump and he'd hit that pan of water. He called it a schissel, a little saucepan. And he'd hit that schissel. And then there was some other guy, the Great Zucchini. I may have gotten the name wrong but it was close to this. And he'd get shot out of a cannon, he'd crawl into a cannon and get shot out of this cannon.

Then there was that wonderful time where Prince Elkai Gordo showed up on the Fourth of July weekend. Did I ever talk about this?

03-00:31:06

Bancroft: No.

03-00:31:07

Margolin: He showed up for Fourth of July weekend, and he came and he looked at the stage and the stage was rotten and the floorboards were rotten, and he wasn't going to bring his lions in there because he was afraid. This was not going to work. So he packed up his lions and he left. It was Fourth of July weekend. And you ended up having all over the posters all over Nantasket and Hull and Boston, stuff like that, said, "Come to Paragon Park. See Prince Elkai Gordo and his lions," and there was only one act that was available in all of New England on short notice on Fourth of July. It was Will Hill and his trained pigs. [laughter] So everybody's gathered to see the big lions, and out comes this guy with a hayseed, a stack of hay, and bib overalls and a couple of trained pigs. It was the only thing they could do. I think Larry Stone was the guy that owned it.

03-00:32:15

Bancroft: It reminds me of the novel *Water for Elephants*, which became a film and was such a big hit, I think because the whole life of a circus is so fascinating to people, and there you were, living in similar stories, some of the acts, the people who don't show up and what the circus manager's going to do in the last minute and the personalities and the divas and who's the high and mighty within the whole hierarchy and who's the lowly hotdog seller. And yet the fascinating perspective you have from that.

03-00:32:52

Margolin: Yeah, it was a wonderful perspective. I'm grateful to that. And I'm grateful not so much of what I learned about other people but that I found myself being able to fit into that world so easily, that I felt really comfortable in that world. And it's not as if I belonged. I've never felt that I belonged anywhere.

03-00:33:25

Bancroft: What made you feel like you fit in?

03-00:33:39

Margolin: Just because I did, and just because I'd say, "Hello, how are you?" and they'd say, "Hello, how are you?" and I'd say how I was and they'd say how they

were and we'd talk and I fit in. It was more a feeling of comfort than anything intellectual. And a lot of these people were very sad. The sadness of clowns, sadness of entertainers. It was people who had a shtick. They weren't necessarily fully developed people. They ended up having some kind of a skill that they developed. They could juggle swords or eat fire or walk on trapezes. There was some kind of weird skill that you developed. And they got into show business for the glamour of it all, and what they ended up in is this seedy urban amusement park. And yet they'd get dressed up in their glitter as if they were great stars. There was something about it that I understood and I'm not sure what it was. I'm not sure what it was.

But I worked there for five summers and then I'd open it up for weekends during the fall and the spring. I'd get out there for weekends and open it up. There were two or three coworkers that I had, one of whom kept going into jail, come out again, and we'd rehire him, then go back into jail. And I forget what for. It had something to do with his wife and kid or child support or something like that. There was a sense that this was somehow or other, as ridiculous as this world was, that this was a real world. And that the world that I was into, of the home life and school and stuff like that was not a real world. Have I talked about Walter Pitts and mountain climbing?

03-00:36:46
Bancroft:

No.

03-00:36:49
Margolin:

Well, back in college I had a friend from Latin School, Frank Axelrod, and Frank went to MIT and I went to Harvard. And Frank was actually about a year ahead of me. Frank went to MIT and when he was in MIT—I didn't talk about this, huh?

03-00:37:11
Bancroft:

No.

03-00:37:14
Margolin:

When he was in MIT, he ended up in a laboratory, working in a laboratory, in Jerry Lettvin's lab. And Jerry Lettvin was and still is the social center of MIT. It was the luckiest thing that ever happened to him. And through there we'd meet people like Norbert Wiener, who was the father of cybernetics and various other phenomenal people. But there was guy that was there named Walter Pitts. I can't believe I didn't talk about Walter Pitts.

I've never met anybody like Walter. Years ago there was an interview of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in the *Whole Earth Review*. And what they talk about in that interview was "Whatever happened to Walter Pitts, where did he go?" Just remembering him. Anybody who met him was absolutely knocked out by an intelligence. He had a photographic memory, but it was a kind of memory—I've met other people with photographic memories and it goes in and it goes out. With him it went in and it connected

with everything else that he ever knew, and it came out attached to everything else. He was the youngest person to work on the Manhattan Project. He was a teenager, and he was an applied mathematician. There's a famous formula in mathematics, the Pitt-McCulloch theorem that he created. And Frank and I were in our early twenties and Walter was about forty and Walter was always looking for mountain climbing companions. And when you get to be forty, everybody else gets hooked in with family and business and stuff like that. So we'd end up going hiking with Walter up to the White Mountains and it was my first experience of camping, of hiking, of going out into there. And Walter was a genius. Walter got bored once, and he learned ancient Nahuatl, and his translations of ancient Nahuatl were around for a while, and then he got bored another time, he learned ancient Greek. And his translations of Greek poets are still around. And MIT kept him there. They gave him a stipend just to be there. They gave him no duties. Just to be there so that people could talk to him. He was kept alive. Jerry Lettvin sheltered him and kept him alive there in this kind of unique position, without responsibility. And people would come to him.

And Walter became a good friend. I'd go up to see him in King's Tavern, where he would always sit there with a couple of glasses of beer. And he would be reading British history. And he knew everything. I remember once I took a course in medieval travelogues just because I wanted to do something that Walter didn't know anything about. And I came back to Walter and he says, "What are you taking this year?" and I said, "Medieval travelogue." And he says, "Oh, you must be reading Mandeville?" And then he ended up quoting Mandeville word for word in something that I had just read the other day, and he knew it better than I did, and he'd read it twenty years before.

So one day I was at Paragon Park, and Walter and Frank came to visit, and they wanted to go mountain climbing out in the west, and they needed somebody to come with them. Would I come? So I just quit. I just said, "Yeah, this is it." This was an opportunity. And we ended up traveling for a couple of months. We ended up climbing in the Wind River Range in Wyoming; we ended up climbing the Tetons; we ended up climbing Mount Baker, a wonderful trip up Mount Olympus and the Olympic Peninsula, the Columbia ice fields, the Athabasca Ice Fields around Banff. And it was high adventure, and it was high adventure with somebody of just great genius. He knew every plant. I remember we were up in the Wind River Range and some guy came with a flower in his hand, and it was a particular kind of mariposa lily, I forget what it was, and he said, "I've been looking for this flower for my whole life." He says, "I finally found it." And we all congratulated him, and when he left Walter said, "It's not the flower he thinks it is. It's just a variation of some other flower." He knew everything. We had an old GMC carryall. When it broke down he would fix it. He was utterly awesome.

And he was also forgetful. He was peculiarly forgetful. I remember we'd rope up on a glacier and the two of us would rope up. I'd rope up with Walter and

we picked up a fourth guy from one of these glacier climbs so that Frank could have somebody to rope up with. And when you climb glaciers, you get to the crevasse, you put your ice ax in, you belay the other person to jump the crevasse and then that person gets in and puts their ice ax in and holds the rope and the other person can jump so that if you fall in then you have somebody that's set to grab you. And Walter would jump. He'd just keep going. And he'd just keep walking. And he'd forget about me as if I didn't exist. And I'd scramble over the damn crevasse, and I'd come up, say, "Walter, for Christ's sake." And he'd look as if I was the strangest person he'd ever seen.

It was a wonderful summer. It set me on a course of wilderness, it set me on a course of mountain climbing. It gave me an identity that I hadn't had. It gave me a sense of adventure and travel. It was a great gift that Walter gave. But I gave up a fifth season at Paragon Park for that.

03-00:43:44
Bancroft:

Sounds like it was worth it.

03-00:43:45
Margolin:

Yeah, it was worth it. It was life-transforming.

03-00:43:55
Bancroft:

Whatever happened, I have to ask that question now, to Walter?

03-00:43:58
Margolin:

He killed himself.

03-00:44:01
Bancroft:

Really?

03-00:44:02
Margolin:

In a stupid suicide in front of Jerry Lettvin's kids. It was theatrical, maudlin.

03-00:44:15
Bancroft:

How did he do it?

03-00:44:20
Margolin:

You know, I never asked. I never asked. I'm just repeating the description that Frank gave. I knew there was something wrong. He'd had a rough childhood. He'd been abused as a kid and whipped and kept in closets and stuff. And his great work that he never finished was a mathematics of aesthetics. And the example that he would use is if you and I see a beautiful woman, if we agree she's beautiful, that agreement can be expressed mathematically. What's the formula? And I realized then that there was something in there that wasn't quite right.

03-00:45:07
Bancroft:

Must be quite a burden to be that brilliant and not be able to forget anything.

- 03-00:45:20
Margolin: Yeah. I have no idea what suicide's all about. I don't. I've been unhappy at times but never hopeless. No, Walter was great. Frank was great.
- 03-00:45:43
Bancroft: You're answering a question I had later, which was what got you out west. So that sounds like that was your first trip out west, I presume.
- 03-00:45:56
Margolin: Yeah, that was my first trip out west.
- 03-00:45:58
Bancroft: Before we go back to what was out west I wanted to ask a little bit more about college years. When we were talking about your education the last time we focused a lot on Boston.
- 03-00:46:11
Margolin: Yeah, there's not much there.
- 03-00:46:12
Bancroft: You kind of jumped to the end of your college years in your experience with Joann, writing and so I just want to make sure there was nothing else. It seems like, again, that's four years of your life and you seem not involved in the college, you weren't excited about—
- 03-00:46:32
Margolin: It was a long bar mitzvah.
- 03-00:46:34
Bancroft: Okay. Just wanted to make sure there were no other stories you wanted to share from those years. People that you met that became lifelong friends, if the college teaching itself was uninspiring.
- 03-00:46:35
Margolin: No, I was attracted to interesting people. There were often people that hung around. There was an all-night coffee shop, the Hayes-Bickford, and there were people that hung around there all night and I would spend my nights there. There was one guy, he went by several names, Julio Dumar and Jacques DeTalleyrand, and he was flamboyant and theatrical and brilliant and probably gay. I don't think that I understood it at the time. But a wonderful raconteur and a wonderful fraud. People would buy him coffee and listen to his stories and there were stories of great derring-do and great people that he met and larger world that he traveled in. He was always the grandson of somebody or the nephew of somebody, and it seemed to change from week to week.
- There were various people that I knew that I played chess with a lot. I had a few deep friendships. Time passed. I think I was unhappy. [portion of interview deleted in editing]

- 03-00:50:38
Bancroft: So that brings us back to you lighting out for the territories. So there you were in '62. You'd finished college that summer?
- 03-00:50:50
Margolin: No, I didn't finish until '64. I dropped out a couple of times, and once I lived in New York for six months and just got odd jobs and lived, read, and brooded and thought. Then my father was a freight broker, and the next time I dropped out I went off to work with a company that he was part of in Puerto Rico. So I lived in Puerto Rico for a couple of years. And that was interesting.
- 03-00:51:33
Bancroft: Yeah. What was that like?
- 03-00:51:38
Margolin: Well, I loved it there. I learned enough Spanish to get along. I had these wonderful friends, the Cuatero brothers, Jose and Frank Cuatero, Juan Ramon Echeverria, among them. They had horses, they had old farms. They'd go up into the country. There was an urban district that had cheap bars, and there was gambling. There was swimming and snorkeling and beaches in a place that was far away from Boston and the place was warm and the culture there was different. And it was a long time ago.
- 03-00:52:49
Bancroft: What were any things that struck you in particular about the different culture?
- 03-00:53:04
Margolin: It was sexy. Let me see if I can remember any significant stories. It's funny. It's a habit of mine that I tell stories, that I don't sum up things abstractly. And I don't think I think about them that way. We keep coming back to this, that I say I'm not introspective. So when you ask me what I think about the different cultures I'm not sure that I have any thoughts about it. It seems like I should. I got to know it pretty well. I got to know some people pretty well.
- 03-00:53:58
Bancroft: If the question provokes a memory of a specific event that exudes that difference, that speaks, as well.
- 03-00:54:20
Margolin: I think that what pleased me the most was the people, the beauty of the landscape. It was the exotic vegetation. Jose Cuatero with his horse, we'd go riding the horse. And I hate horses. Scared of them. But we'd go riding the horse out in the backcountry over these paths. We'd go out at night into the forests. We'd go into these sleazy bars. There was a sense of swimming in a sea of a different culture that I loved. I'd wander all over, I'd sleep in the sugar cane fields at night sometimes. I'd wander in through the small towns. Maybe we'll come back to it. It seems that whole college period was a period not of going forward but of recovering from a disease that I didn't know that I had. It was in the cocoon more than it was getting wings. It was letting time pass. It was slowly acquiring social skills. It was finding out that the first acts

of independence were to withdraw rather than to—that I could define myself. I could define myself by not partaking. And if you can define yourself by not partaking you can later on define yourself by partaking. It was just a habit of defining myself. That I could get away with being who I was. I don't even remember how I spent my days there. I have amazingly little to say about it. It was a gap between things.

03-00:58:10
Bancroft:

Can I ask you, so when you dropped out those couple of times, were your parents exerting a lot of force on you to go back? Were they highly displeased or have they said, "Well, this is who Malcolm is now. We just have to come to accept that he's a—"

03-00:58:29
Margolin:

They were highly displeased. My father proclaimed that it was the most bitter pill he ever had to swallow. But it was like that picture, like that bar mitzvah picture. There was some image that they had of me that I wasn't going to fit into, and they were going to maintain that image no matter what. I just wasn't part of it. There was a part of me that wished I could be. There was a part of me that wished I could please. There was a part of me that wished people would be proud of me.

03-00:59:27
Bancroft

Did your brother go to college?

03-01:59:29
Margolin:

Yeah, he went to Bowdoin.

03-00:59:37
Bancroft:

Did he go straight through?

03-00:59:40
Margolin:

I don't think so. I think he dropped out. He was in the Army for a while.

03-00:59:54
Bancroft:

I was wondering if there was a sort of competition between you, not necessarily overt, but he was staying closer to home and he was fulfilling your parents' dreams and you weren't. That doesn't sound like it's the case necessarily.

03-01:00:11
Margolin:

No, it doesn't sound like it was the case. You know, my dear friend, I wish there was a clear plot in this. I wish there was a clear balance. I wish there was dramatic contrast. It's all kind of muddled.

03-01:00:28
Bancroft:

That's got its own drama.

03-01:00:32
Margolin:

It was all kind of confused.

03-01:00:43
Bancroft:

Well, that is its own drama, especially when you're expected to have all of the answers and the path has been set for you and you're meant to follow it and that must have been painful in a way not to be able to do what you were "supposed to do."

03-01:01:07
Margolin:

If this were a therapy session I'd probably get into my father. I would probably get into how I spoke like him, I spoke with his voice, I imitated him, I worshipped him. And I felt I could never come up to him, and consequently I just didn't. He was overly critical. We discussed this. And rather than break myself trying to be the person that he wanted me to be and I wanted me to be, there was just a kind of escapism into another world, in trying to give that other world value.

03-01:02:06
Bancroft:

What struck me, in rereading the first interview transcript, is how much you have ultimately become your father in the sense that two things that you talked about that were important, many things that you talked about that were important to your father. That he was a good storyteller and you are the consummate storyteller. You've made your life around collecting and telling stories. And that he was a good businessman. And you have created an amazing business.

03-01:02:42
Margolin:

Yeah. We were with some people the other day and they discussed the sort of thing that I usually don't discuss, which is what's your totem animal. And people were talking about lions and jaguars and all kinds of great animals. And the only image that came to mind was camping on the Olympic Peninsula along the Elwha River for a month, and there was a herd of elk that kept crossing, and every morning they would cross, and the bulls would come, and they'd bellow and they would lead the way, and then they'd cross the river and they'd stand at the other side and keep guard, and then the does and the fawns could come, and then the rear guard would come. And just watching the stately procession and stuff. So this was the animal that came to mind. And then somebody said, "What is your totem animal? What quality do you have?" And it's taking care of your herd. And I think I picked that up also.

03-01:04:06
Bancroft:

Well, it's been about an hour so I don't ever want—that's usually about as long as I want to make you talk.

03-01:04:18
Margolin:

Maybe we'll get back to this era again. I feel something must have happened there. There was some kind of a change.

03-01:04:32
Bancroft:

Well, what sounds interesting, too, is that you say in '62 is when you went out west for the first time and that that was very transformative, but then you

came back, and you continued to go through this period of living--did you live in New York after '62?

03-01:04:53

Margolin: No, I lived there in '58, '59.

03-01:04:55

Bancroft: Okay, New York '58, '59.

03-01:04:57

Margolin: Fifty-nine and sixty.

03-01:04:59

Bancroft: Okay, '59 to '60. Because you must have started at Harvard in '58.

03-01:05:05

Margolin: Fifty-eight, yeah.

03-01:05:06

Bancroft: Okay, '59 to '60 and then you were back at college from '60 to '62, is that right?

03-01:05:16

Margolin: Something like that.

03-01:05:18

Bancroft: And then you went off—

03-01:05:21

Margolin: Gone from '63. I was gone from '63 or so. I think I was gone for the spring of '63 and then I came back fall of '63 and through '64 and graduated at the end of '64.

03-01:05:43

Bancroft: Okay. So you were gone in the spring. That's when you went doing the hiking? That's when you went out west?

03-01:05:49

Margolin: No, that was in the summer of '62.

03-01:05:50

Bancroft: Just the summer. Just the summer.

03-01:05:52

Margolin: That was the summer of '62, yeah.

03-01:05:52

Bancroft: Okay. And then the spring of '63, where was that?

03-01:05:59

Margolin: That was Puerto Rico.

03-01:05:59

Bancroft: Oh, that was Puerto Rico. Okay.

03-01:06:00

Margolin: I think.

03-01:06:02

Bancroft: And then you graduated in the spring of '64?

03-01:06:08

Margolin: Yeah.

03-01:06:08

Bancroft: So yeah. I would like to come back to that. I think at some point the whole sense of when you ended up gravitating west and more of what your life in nature, especially what you were introduced to in terms of the west in your trip with Frank and Walter and the kind of lasting impact of that. So those can be things we can think about and come back to.

03-01:06:48

Margolin: It was kind of building a life not around larger ideas or ideals but around episodes. I think the thing about Frank's that I loved was that it was punctuated by acts of heroism and accomplishment. That it wasn't as if we set out to have a great journey that would have a coherence to it. But when we arrived in a place there was a mountain to climb. And the thing that I love about publishing is doing books, is doing things that have—you do them really well and they're limited. I've never been good at planning, I've never been good at mission statements. I've never been good at these kind of summations. But I've been good at stories. And behind it all is some kind of value, of courage and excellence and generosity. There's a whole bunch of stuff that's in there. But it's kind of a life of tapas rather than main courses.

03-01:08:06

Bancroft: I think it's almost empty. It's empty almost so that's a good time to stop. All right, okay.

03-01:08:25

Margolin: Is it telling you that it's run out?

03-01:08:27

Bancroft: Yes, it is. That's it. So that's a good place to stop, as good a place as any. So I'm glad that you said that you felt that you could take some interest in your transcript.

[End Audio File 3]

Interview 4: January 20, 2012

[Begin Audio File 4]

04-00:00:00

Bancroft: This is an interview with Malcolm Margolin on Friday, January 20, 2012 in Berkeley. Okay. I already put the date on here. We heard a little bit before about your trip west with Walter and Frank and that that was some inspiration, surely. But I wanted to get a sense from you what drew you west and what you were leaving behind.

04-00:00:48

Margolin: There was another trip that I took out west. I don't remember it terribly well. It was in '67. Rina and I went out. We rented a car and we went out west camping. And we drove a lot and camped a lot. And I don't remember it terribly well. That was the trip to Yosemite that people always talk about. Did I talk about that?

It appears in Wikipedia. For some reason or other, it appears in my Wikipedia thing in an incomplete form. Rand McNally Guide to Campgrounds. We were going cross-country and looking for camping sites, and we came to California and there was this place in the Rand McNally guidebook that was Yosemite National Park, and it had tons of campsites. So we headed into Yosemite Valley and found a campsite and spent three days going on our air mattresses down the Merced River. Everyday we'd head down the Merced River and take this air mattress down. At night we'd just pack the air mattress back to the campsite. And we did it for three straight days. It was just so damn beautiful I could have done it forever. And then the third day we went to Yosemite Lodge to have lunch or something like that, and there was a *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper, and it had the headline "LSD Causes Birth Defects." And we just sat by the side of the river crying our eyes out because we could never have kids.

04-00:02:24

Bancroft: Okay. I'm missing a chunk of your life, then, between 1962 and 1967. So I think we need to back up. When did you graduate from college?

04-00:02:37

Margolin: Sixty-four.

04-00:02:39

Bancroft: Okay. So in '62, I think, is when you talked about going west perhaps for the first time.

04-00:02:46

Margolin: That was the first time, yes. My father had some associates in Puerto Rico so I lived in Puerto Rico for a while.

- 04-00:02:55
Bancroft: Right. And you talked about that. So in 1964, after you graduated, I thought you went to—
- 04-00:03:01
Margolin: We lived in Puerto Rico for another two years.
- 04-00:03:03
Bancroft: Okay, for another two years. So then—
- 04-00:03:04
Margolin: And that was until '66. And then in '66 through February of '68 we lived in the Lower East Side of New York City.
- 04-00:03:13
Bancroft: Okay. And you were already involved with Rina at that point then?
- 04-00:03:16
Margolin: Yeah.
- 04-00:03:17
Bancroft: Okay. And is there anything you want to share about the early relationship or getting involved or meeting? Where'd you even meet? Let's just do that and we can move on.
- 04-00:03:28
Margolin: Met at Harvard.
- 04-00:03:29
Bancroft: Met at Harvard. Okay. She was a student there, too. Okay. So you both lived in New York. So in February of '68, that's when you basically moved west. So this '67 trip was just taking the car and heading—
- 04-00:03:43
Margolin: It was just like a three-week trip. She was working for somebody who was into psychological research, and she had a vacation, and I was writing. She was earning the money.
- 04-00:03:58
Bancroft: Okay. What were you writing?
- 04-00:04:02
Margolin: Well, I was writing stories that never got published, and I wrote a few articles. There was a character named Ralph Ginzburg. He started *Eros* magazine and then *Fact* magazine, and these were really controversial edgy magazines in the sixties. And so I wrote a couple of articles for them. But I wasn't too serious about writing. I played chess a lot in Tompkins Square Park with all the Russians.

- 04-00:04:36
Bancroft: So I know one theme has been that sense of muddling through to what you wanted to do with your life and that you said, well, you just kept doing what was next, what was next. So after graduating and after Puerto Rico, you picked up writing as a focus of your life aside from playing chess. And I'm wondering a little bit about whether there was a thought process about your choosing writing.
- 04-00:05:06
Margolin: Either there wasn't a thought process or it was so undefined that I forget it. I could make one up.
- 04-00:05:16
Bancroft: No.
- 04-00:05:16
Margolin: I could make one up. Do people have thought processes? Do people have plans? Do people have clarity in their lives? They know what they're going to do when they decide to do it?
- 04-00:05:30
Bancroft: Yes, some do.
- 04-00:05:32
Margolin: That amazes me. We're such an amazing species, Kim.
- 04-00:05:37
Bancroft: But many people do not, and clearly you get to exemplify that. So to the extent that it was this spontaneous experience of following what's next, that has its very own interest to it. And clearly might have been maybe a little bit scary or just adventure. Like I'm going to do this now.
- 04-00:06:00
Margolin: Listen, there's nothing that denial hasn't been able to get me through. I grew up secure. That doesn't explain—other people grew up secure. God, I don't know. It's not too different from my talking to you. I have absolutely no idea what we're going to do. I have no idea why we're doing it. I have no idea what's going to come of it all. It just seems to be the next thing to do, and I'm doing it.
- 04-00:06:43
Bancroft: Oh, good. It works.
- 04-00:06:43
Margolin: And it's not as if I have a strategy in mind, it's not as if I know what the product is going to be, it's not as if I know how to use it. I think you're a great person. Clearly you want to talk to me. You're going to listen to me, I'm going to talk to you. Something's going to happen. And it's a dialogue with the world.

04-00:07:00
Bancroft:

It's nice.

04-00:07:03
Margolin:

For me, getting through it, it's not like driving a car where you steer and you have brake pedals and stuff. It's more like sailing a boat. You've got a sail and a rudder but you've also got cross breezes and tides and you're negotiating with the world and you're not certain which port you're going to end up in but you're just sailing out in the ocean with the best sailboat. That for me is a better metaphor. Other people seem to know exactly where they're going.

04-00:07:33
Bancroft:

Well, they may not have as much fun either. Well, let me ask you, it's now the mid-sixties. There was a lot of effervescence, of societal change at that time. You mentioned, for example, LSD. What's your memory of how some of those events were affecting your life or your choices or your values?

04-00:07:57
Margolin:

Did I talk about LSD? I checked into a nuthouse for six weeks, for two-and-a-half weeks, for an experiment on LSD.

04-00:08:14
Bancroft:

Interesting.

04-00:08:14
Margolin:

And it just happened to be at this nuthouse. It was in Norwich, Connecticut, and it was run by a guy named Walter Houston Clark. He was a professor of religious psychology. You can Google Walter. God, Walter Houston Clark. So Walter Houston Clark wrote several books on psychedelics and the religious experience and he was part of this experimental group, and there were different people taking acid and took acid for two straight weeks, every day for two straight weeks. And it was terrifying. These was not good trips. And Rina claimed I was changed completely by it. She said I came back another person.

04-00:09:04
Bancroft:

How so?

04-00:09:06
Margolin:

I'm not sure. Softer. I'm not sure. Surer. Better in touch with the undercurrents. There were six of us, and there was one guy there who escaped.

04-00:09:31
Bancroft:

I hope not when he was high.

04-00:09:32
Margolin:

Yeah, he was stoned. He was stoned, and he got out. And later on he looked me up in New York. I said, "What the hell ever happened to you?" He said, "Geez," he said—this is such a wonderful sixties story—he got on a train to go home, and the train was passing through New London, Connecticut, and a

whole bunch of sailors in uniform got on the train, and he was positive they were out to get him. They were people in uniform. They were out to get him. They were sitting next to a young woman, and he would just lay his head down on this young woman's lap and started to cry, and she patted him on the head and said it would be okay. [laughter]

04-00:10:08
Bancroft:

That's great. [laughter]

04-00:10:23
Margolin:

It was life changing. You'll have to ask Rina why it was life changing. I have no idea.

04-00:10:33
Bancroft:

Was she a psychology major at Radcliffe?

04-00:10:36
Margolin:

Yeah.

04-00:10:37
Bancroft:

But she didn't do this experiment, also. But it must have been fascinating for her to hear about how it affected you or what you were experiencing.

04-00:10:54
Margolin:

Walter Houston Clark wrote about me. I appear in a couple of books. He gave me a code name. I forget what the name was. It was, I think, Duncan Cohen, or something like that. But he wrote about me and wrote about the mystery of why it is that God gives atheists like me religious experiences. In all of his long life he, a true believer, had never had a religious experience.

04-00:11:19
Bancroft:

Wow.

04-00:11:20
Bancroft:

Do you remember having a religious experience? Do you remember the nature of it?

04-00:11:26
Margolin:

Oh, I was totally out of my mind. Yeah, it's that oneness with everything. And I still have that. I was talking. The other night we had about twenty people over discussing the Pacific Flyway. We're doing this stuff on ducks and geese, and the Pacific Flyway, a book in a museum show. And I was discussing what it felt like, watching the snow geese lift off, and what it feels like to be part of a flock and what it is to be—and I know exactly what it is because I know what it is when anger seeps through people, when we're just connected to other people with emotions and we're connected to those animals. I have absolutely no trouble with that kind of empathy, with that kind of connection. I know exactly what those geese and ducks are feeling like when they're flying, when one moves and the other moves with them and stuff. I don't know if that's religious or not but that's what I'm assuming he was talking

about. It's kind of funny because on the one hand I have absolutely no patience with ESP, I have no patience with New Age stuff and I have no patience with any of it. It just offends me. And yet on the other hand I walk in that world. And I have no need nor desire to reconcile the belief and the experience. I just have no interest in it, no desire to do so. I assume that there's something else going on. I assume there's a lot going on that I don't understand. He was funny, Walter.

04-00:13:21

Bancroft:

So do you remember what got you interested in doing that experiment? I don't know if marijuana was around and you had been using that.

04-00:13:30

Margolin:

No, I hadn't used marijuana before I used LSD. I used marijuana after LSD, and it just brought back the LSD. This was pure Sandoz lab stuff. This was great. Later on when I took acid, it was diluted and polluted and cut. It was never quite as good.

04-00:13:58

Bancroft:

And do you remember how you got interested in doing the experiment or what your connections were?

04-00:14:09

Margolin:

No. My connections were loose, but it was something to do. It just appeared on the horizon as something to do. I have never talked about this kind of stuff, and I don't mean to make it into a big mystery. But it's sort of like sailing on the sea without a deep keel. So there are things that come along and I just kind of go and complete the projects. It's the same thing that allows me to be with Indians one minute and with academics another minute, with librarians another minute, with novelists another minute, among poets another minute.

04-00:15:26

Bancroft:

That's nice.

04-00:15:29

Margolin:

And it's just getting into other people's words.

04-00:15:31

Bancroft:

Well, it sounds like even that experience, from my own—so—

04-00:15:42

Margolin:

The bad thing about not having any plan is that you drift. The good thing about it is that you drift.

04-00:16:02

Bancroft:

Yes, yes.

04-00:16:02

Margolin:

And you're not sure where the tide's taking you. There's a kind of temperamental proclivity to say yes.

- 04-00:16:19
Bancroft: Probably opens a lot more doors than would open otherwise.
- 04-00:16:22
Margolin: It opens doors. It opens doors to rooms that sometimes ought to be—I could never run for political office.
- 04-00:16:40
Bancroft: Well, you have other work that this prepared you to do. And you just said that beautifully, how the proclivity to go with the flow allows you to relate to so many more different kinds of people than other people could do if they had just one way of relating to the world.
- 04-00:17:01
Margolin: Yeah. And people give me credit for shaping something, for shaping an enterprise, for shaping something. And it always seems odd. I suppose that I do. But it's not as if there's a plan to this place. That door is stuck.
- 04-00:17:25
Bancroft: You went camping in '67.
- 04-00:17:37
Margolin: It was the summer of '67.
- 04-00:17:39
Bancroft: Wow, the summer of '67. And so do you remember any other influences? Oh, that this camping was the summer of '67.
- 04-00:17:48
Margolin: Yeah, camping was the summer of '67. We were coming out to San Francisco. It was the Summer of Love—it was just so lovely here. People were just so wonderful. There was such an openness.
- 04-00:18:08
Bancroft: That was part of the camping trip after you got to Yosemite and you kept going?
- 04-00:18:13
Margolin: I think so. Yeah. Yeah.
- 04-00:18:17
Bancroft: What are some other specific things you remember from that?
- 04-00:18:19
Margolin: Oh. Well, oddly enough, I don't remember that camping trip as well as I remember the trip across country when we came in the VW bus in '68.
- 04-00:18:31
Bancroft: Okay. Well, I want to hear about that. You were moving west then in '68?

04-00:18:40
Margolin:

I was pretending to move west. We were talking about having kids, and Rina didn't want to have kids in New York City, and I felt that New York City was the only place to live. This is where a true human lives, in New York City.

04-00:18:58
Bancroft:

That's funny.

04-00:19:02
Margolin:

But this business of having kids. I thought we would travel around the country and find that there was no place that was anything like New York City, and I'd indulge her in the search, and I wouldn't like anything and we'd move back. Did I talk about Al Jensen?

04-00:19:27
Bancroft:

No. Because we haven't talked about anything, so everything is new.

04-00:19:34
Margolin:

Where I lived was on East Tenth Street, near Avenue A. We lived in the fourth floor of—I think it was a six-story walk-up and opposite us was the studio of this guy Al Jensen. And Al Jensen was a painter. He's a well-known painter. His stuff is collected in the Museum of Modern Art. He was a dear friend. I just loved Al. He was married to Regina and Regina had been known as de Kooning's mistress. But I think she had to stand in line. And Al had all of the great artists over to the place with him. This was the art world of the 1960s. The Motherwells, the Kleins, people like that. And I remember Al painted squares. He painted little colored squares; later he began to paint numbers on each square. I found it all completely puzzling. And one day I was in there and I'd visit him, and he was painting these squares, and Henry Luce of Time Magazine came by and arranged to buy one of Al's paintings for \$75,000. This caught my attention, and I said, "What the fuck is it all about? What are you doing?" He said, "Well," he says, "I was born of Danish parents in Guatemala, and I was suckled by Mayan women, and the Mayan calendar—" And then he went on. He was talking about the Mayan calendar and colors and numbers and stars and universes and predictions, and I realized within three sentences that I hadn't understood a single word he said, and I was having a mystical experience. It was so damn beautiful. I just lived on the flow of his words that I just didn't understand. He had the most beautiful soul. He was in his seventies or eighties, and he and Regina had two little kids. And she so worshipped him that she just wanted to have his children. The greatest gift she could have was just, even if these kids would never know their father through adulthood or through teenagehood, just to be in touch with somebody like this was so great.

And Al, when it was time for me to leave New York, Al pulled me aside and said, "Don't do it, Malcolm." He says, "If you stay in New York you could be great." He says, "You're going to go somewhere else, you're going to be a big fish in a small pond." He says, "Stay here." He says, "You have to be in New

York. You have to be in New York because it pushes you. You suffer in New York because it challenges you because you're among the best writers in the world. And you go somewhere else," he says, "it's going to be too easy for you." I always thought of that.

But I always thought of how shallow greatness is in New York, how it depends upon reputation. What this place has allowed me to do is create a real community and be really useful to people. To create a home for certain people and for certain ideas. In New York I think that I would have gotten a much better reputation, I would have been perhaps world famous. But it wouldn't have mattered.

So we came out west. I bought a VW bus for \$300 in Queens and we sold everything we had, we loaded everything. I built a bed in the back and we just had what could fit under the bed, and we sewed some flower curtains. And then we headed down to Florida, down to where it was warm. And it was cold as hell.

04-00:24:13

Bancroft:

Do you remember what time of year?

04-00:24:13

Margolin:

February of 1968. I'm not sure why I remember that but I do. And then we came down there and stopped in the Everglades where we'd been several times before and went to Key West and went to Sanibel Beach and played with some shells and came up. And it was '68. So we were coming back around Tallahassee, and we get stopped by the cops. And the cops did a thorough search. They held us. There was some other guy named Margolin that was wanted for something or other. They held us for a couple of hours and they were not nice. And we got back into the car, it was a rainy day, and the driver's side door didn't open, so you had to get in through the passenger side. And so we were driving along and I said, "Geez, we better just get rid of the dope." It was in a little plastic bag, and I took it and I threw the plastic bag out the window as we were driving along.

And we drive through Alabama and through Mississippi, and we get into Louisiana and we come to New Orleans, and it's Mardi Gras time. And we pull up to a parking meter that's on the left side of the street. It was a one-way street. So we pull into this parking meter that's on the left side of the street, and I get out the passenger side and I come around. And I notice two things immediately. One thing was there was fifteen dollars lying under the parking meter. The other thing was the whole side of the bus was stems and seeds. It was like a billboard. [laughter]

04-00:26:14

Bancroft:

Right. So much for getting rid of the evidence.

04-00:26:18
Margolin:

And we had this wonderful time in New Orleans. It took us several years to get across Texas. Texas is big. In fact, the whole United States is big. And after several years we went to Big Bend National Park. Have you ever been to Big Bend?

04-00:26:39
Bancroft:

Un-unh.

04-00:29:40
Margolin:

It was so beautiful. It was so lovely. This was a wonderful day. We went to Big Bend National Park and then we came out across the desert. It was the first time I'd really seen the desert, the southern desert. Sonoran Desert, cactus and stuff.

04-00:27:03
Bancroft:

Might have even been blooming about that time.

04-00:27:08
Margolin:

Yes, it was blooming at that time. And we came into California and we hit a beach along the coast. We hit this beach along the coast and we had a campsite and then next to us—Dan Carr couldn't be on the fucking internet. He couldn't. But I would love to find out what happened to Dan Carr. So there was this family camped next to us. And they had an old jalopy, like it was an old Cadillac and the top had been cut off and it had been turned into a mobile shanty town. And there was this big guy and his wife and four kids and a huge dog, and they were coming back from Mexico. And this huge dog was named Yogi. And Yogi was tethered to a little teeny camp stool. It had a little canvas top and had a couple of little legs that crossed. It was a flimsy little thing. And this huge dog was tethered to this camp stool. And then he would get up and would feel the little tug on the leash and he would just look disconsolate and would sit down again. And I finally went up to Dan and I said, "Hey, that dog of yours is the best metaphor I've ever seen." [laughter] He says, "Let's talk." So we sat down and we had one of those amazing conversations that you have, if you're lucky, once or twice in your lifetime.

He was a shipbuilder and he built boats up in British Columbia. He lived up in Gibson or Roberts, up in the Sechelt Peninsula, and he built these beautiful wooden boats. And his wife was named Sue. She was a Sioux Indian, and she was the most lovely sad woman. She had a sadness to her that was the sadness of a cloudy day. It was such a real condition of the world. You just felt there was a wisdom to it, there was a beauty to it. And they had four kids. The oldest was Joydan. When you build a ship, the first plank you put in is called the Joydan; and then there was Heida and Kit and Schawnee. They lived up in Canada. I'm not sure whether I would like him now. He was like a survivalist. He refused to pay taxes. He refused to send his kids to school. He would log the Sitka spruce out of his backyard. He built his own house. He would log the Sitka spruce out of his backyard. Had an Alaskan mill. He'd mill it up and

he'd make boats out of it, and he'd sell the boats for cash and pay no taxes. He educated his kids at home. They grew their own food. He was an amazing character, Dan was.

I remember we had this conversation by the beach, and he asked what we were doing there, and I talked about moving out to California, maybe having kids and looking for a place to live. He says, "I've got four of the most beautiful kids in the world." And I said, "That's pretty clear." He said, "And I think I love these kids as greatly, as deeply as a man can love his children." And I said, "I'm sure you do." And he said, "You know what?" I said, "What?" He said, "I don't think it's worth it."

04-00:31:05
Bancroft:

Wow.

04-00:31:07
Margolin:

I'll get to this part later on. I used to go up to Canada and work with him building boats. And years later I was off in Texas. I created the first annual Wildflower Conference out in Dallas, Texas, and then I come back and I think that's what I was coming back from, and there was a message on the voicemail. Dan Carr was in San Francisco, he was at the San Francisco Yacht Club. He needed me. So I went down to the San Francisco Yacht Club. The school district tried to get his kids, the government wanted to get his money. Everybody was after him. They closed him down. He took the last boat, he loaded the family on it, he was going to go around the world, which was the last place a person could be free. And I helped him sail the boat down to Mexico.

And there was one night on that boat. We just set the sail at night. The kids would take the boat during the day. And Dan and I would stay up all night, and we just had these long conversations. And I remember one night I asked him, I said, "Do you remember when we first met, we talked about kids and you said you loved them as much as a person could, but it wasn't worth it." And he said, "It sounds like something I'd say." And I said, "What do you think now?" And there was this long pause. We had these conversations at night. He was such a dear friend. You'd say something and you could wait for a half-hour before there would be a reply. And I waited for the longest time, and then there was a reply. And he said, "I don't think it's worth it, but I think it's all there is."

04-00:33:04
Bancroft:

Beautiful.

04-00:33:07
Margolin:

Isn't that beautiful?

04-00:33:08
Bancroft:

Yeah.

04-00:33:09
Margolin:

Yeah, he was beautiful. Another thing that I remember on that trip was coming up the coast. We got as far as Monterey, and I'd run out of money. I had about twenty bucks left, and the car needed work. I limped into the VW dealer. And it needed a vacuum advance. A vacuum advance costs thirty bucks and all I had was twenty. So I said, "Well, I'll be back in a little while." So I took the camera, and I went into downtown Monterey, and I found a pawn shop, and I pawned the camera for about twenty bucks. So I now had forty. And on the way back I'm passing Cannery Row, and there's an old alkie comes up to me, says, "I was an old friend of John Steinbeck's." And I said, "No kidding." He says, "Yeah." He says, "John Steinbeck, Doc Ricketts," he says, "they used to be right here." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah." He says, "Let's buy a bottle of wine. I'll tell you about it." So I took some of that money, and I bought a cheap bottle of wine, and we sat there watching the sun go down, drinking wine, telling lies, and I realized it was a total fabrication. It was such a wonderful fabrication, and I was so happy to be there. [laughter]

04-00:34:58
Bancroft:

That's the perfect example of just go with the flow. What is presented to you you take in good spirit. But you still had thirty bucks left for the car.

04-00:35:06
Margolin:

And then we got up to San Francisco. We got up to Berkeley. Didn't like it. Lived in Big Sur for a couple of months, down in the Kirk Creek Campground. Just hiked every day. Learned plants, learned wild foods. We had a book by Euell Gibbons, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*.

04-00:35:42
Bancroft:

Oh, that's great.

04-00:35:44
Margolin:

And I remember the first wild food I ate was a piece of watercress, and you could identify the picture, you could identify the thing. But this whole taboo of eating stuff out of the woods—I was positive I was going to die. Then we learned to just forage.

04-00:36:17
Bancroft:

But you came back after Monterey to Big Sur.

04-00:36:21
Margolin:

Came back. Then we headed north. Let's see if I can remember the sequence of events. We headed north. We camped on the Elwha River on the Olympic Peninsula and hiked through the Olympics for the summer. Then we went into Seattle for the winter, where I drove a cab as the world's worst cab driver. I was reminiscing about it the other day. Other cab drivers would come back to the barn and rich whores had come into their cab and thrown hundred dollar bills down and rich dope dealers had come and people going to the airport had slapped money down there and rush them to the airport. Wherever I go old

ladies found me whose husbands had just died and they didn't have any money and they needed to get to the funeral parlor.

04-00:37:24

Bancroft: And you couldn't take their money.

04-00:37:25

Margolin: And I couldn't take their money. I was totally hopeless. And I did some writing up there. All the time there was a typewriter in the back of the VW. Did some writing.

04-00:37:41

Bancroft: What did you write about?

04-00:37:44

Margolin: Stories. But then I started writing about forests and forestry.

04-00:37:48

Bancroft: Why?

04-00:37:52

Margolin: Because somewhere in there I got a job planting trees on logged-over land and was part of a tree planting crew. And I don't quite remember the sequence of things, but that's what sent off the realization that this was not good. Cutting down these forests and planting the same kind of tree was not the best thing in the world. One of them I wrote for *Nation* magazine, one I wrote for *Science Digest*, one I wrote for *National Parks* magazine.

04-00:38:38

Bancroft: Wow, that's great. And were you getting paid for these articles you were writing?

04-00:38:47

Margolin: Yeah.

04-00:38:48

Bancroft: So that's a good incentive to keep writing.

04-00:38:51

Margolin: Yeah, yeah. That was a good incentive. And my editor at the *Nation* magazine was Carey McWilliams. But I didn't realize his greatness until later years.

04-00:39:14

Bancroft: Wait, can I just ask, do you have any memories of what it was like being on those tree planting crews? Or I don't know how long you were doing that for.

04-00:39:22

Margolin: Well, I was doing it for a couple of months. Yeah, it was rigorous. It was rigorous work. I had a big auger on a chainsaw motor and it's like everybody just drilled and you just moved. You drilled, you moved. It was hard physical work.

04-00:39:43

Bancroft: And living now in the camps?

04-00:39:44

Margolin: Yeah, down in the camps. Rina and I would live out in the camps. She'd plant trees behind them.

04-00:39:48

Bancroft: Oh, nice.

04-00:39:55

Margolin: I have memories of them. Nothing that crystallizes into a good story.

04-00:40:02

Bancroft: It's nice that you shared it, though. That's a nice—

04-00:40:05

Margolin: Somewhere in there we went up to Vancouver and stayed with Dan Carr and helped him build a boat. And then came the most wonderful interlude. You go from Vancouver, you take a ferry to Nanaimo. We left the car and we hitchhiked to the ferry terminal. We left the car with Dan and hitchhiked to the ferry terminal, and then we ended up going to Nanaimo and then we hitchhiked to Port Albersti, and then there was a hundred-mile dirt road that you take to two Indian villages. There was a little bay and there were about thirty families that came and built houses on the bay. It was strictly for the summer because in the spring the tides would wash driftwood up. You'd rearrange the driftwood and this little shantytown would arise, and then in the fall the tides would come back again and take the driftwood away and wash the whole thing clean.

And we ended up building a house. And we'd all spend the time fishing. And there was a drug over there called Labrador tea. And Labrador tea made you stupid. It slowed everything down. I'm not sure, like a depressant or something like that. So you would have a glass of Labrador tea at night and get totally stupid. Your speech would get slow, time would get slow. You had the same thought for a half-hour. It was completely ridiculous.

So it was a beach. And I told you how far away from everything this was. So there were no strangers on this beach. Nobody ever came there. And one day this guy shows up, his name was Stuart. And Stuart had like two weeks to graduate college with a degree, and he decided that he didn't want a degree. What he wanted to do was live in the woods and be a doctor. So Stuart came and he set up a little house there and then he put up a sign. There were about twenty or thirty families that live on this beach and everybody knows everybody, and he had a sign. And the sign said, "Doctor." And he lived in this house, and he would sit around waiting. And then after about two weeks there came another sign: "Nurses wanted." [laughter]

04-00:43:32

Bancroft: Had he studied to be a doctor?

04-00:43:33

Margolin: No. But this was the sixties. And the climax of the story is we were once out, a couple of guys were fishing for lingcod off the rocks, and somebody cut themselves with a gaff. And I said, "Well, come on. I'll bet Stuart can sew it up." So we go over to Stuart, he took one look at it, and he fainted. [laughter] We had to revive Stuart.

04-00:44:02

Bancroft: Did he take down his sign after that, after he found out—

04-00:44:07

Margolin: There was a river that came into the bay and there was a guy that lived up the river named Mr. Billing, and he was very clear that he was to be called Mr. Billing. And he lived up there in a little house. It was away from the beach. And Mr. Billing had a blanket with a fuzzy nap on it. And Mr. Billing, during the wintertime, would go down to the ocean and as the waters came churning up he would pan gold. Then the waters would come up, and he would take the silt and the dirt onto the blanket, and then he would wash it off, and little gold flecks would be left. And he'd collect these gold flecks. And he kept dreaming that someday there was a big vein out there, and someday he was going to get that big vein. Every month he would go off to Long Beach, to the post office, and get one piece of mail. It was a travel magazine. And he would look for articles on Acapulco, because his dream was that he was going to go to Acapulco. And he had a two-way radio. And one night I was visiting Mr. Billing, and he had the two-way radio. He said, "There's a storm coming." He said, "I think the beach is going to be washed clear tonight." And we went back and I remember that we came back, and the waters were already coming up high. They were already lapping around the house. And I just got the sleeping bags out, just cleaned the place, and took everything else out. And I was so goddamn happy. I was so damned happy that this paradise was going to end, that I didn't have to put up with it anymore. It was the same thing in the Caribbean. We camped out for a couple of months in Saint John, just fishing and diving, and I lasted for about two months. Could hardly wait to escape to the lower East Side of New York. Paradise is so oppressive.

04-00:46:14

Bancroft: What was oppressive about it?

04-00:46:18

Margolin: Boring. What I often thought about was that you wanted a world that reflects yourself. And if everything around you is beautiful and you don't feel at home there, you don't feel at home in the world. And that's why people become alcoholics, and that would have happened to me. You need a world that reflects the range of your person.

So then we came down from Canada and we stopped in Portland and stayed with this guy Abe Bialystofski. Every time you bring me a bialy I realize that it took its name from the Polish town of Bialystok, and Abe Bialystofski's ancestors came from there. Yeah, they were from Bialystok. And he was a teacher, and we ended up doing some counseling or some teaching for a while, and Reuben was conceived up there. And then we came back down and lived on Eddy Street in the Tenderloin.

But there was one final fling. We went for three months to Mexico. We took the VW bus and I had about 500 bucks in my pocket. And we had this wonderful trip to Mexico. We just took that VW bus down. Rina was fully pregnant. And I remember we came over the border and the first thing that we got hit by was the insurance people—you have to buy automobile insurance. It was this big official looking place, and says “seguros, insurances” and stuff like that. And this person says, “It will be so much,” and stuff like that. And I said, “Surely we can settle this among ourselves.” [laughter] He looks around. I slipped him a few bucks. So we got some cheap insurance.

04-00:48:36

Bancroft:

Good, good, good. Wow.

04-00:48:37

Margolin:

And then we ended up going down. And the border towns were terrible. The border towns were violent and it was ugly.

04-00:48:46

Bancroft:

Even then.

04-00:48:47

Margolin:

Even then. And I was uneasy. And we didn't have much money. The VW bus kept breaking down. I had the *VW Repair Book for Complete Idiot*, and I kept putting it back together again. Then I was really uneasy. And then we hit Mazatlan. And we hit Mazatlan at carnival time. And there was this big party going on in the streets, and people had these cascados, these eggshells with confetti in them, and they were throwing them at each other and drinking and laughing. I walked into this big celebration. And I remember—it is one of my clearest memories in a life of episodic lucidity—we slept in the VW bus. And the next day I sat down and had breakfast in this place where—it was a restaurant and it had the corrugated door that opened up so that the whole thing opened up to the avenue. And it was an avenue that led to the plaza. And Rina and I were sitting there just having a cup of coffee and looking out at this avenue that led to the plaza. And there were all these people walking toward the plaza. There were these women, like grand boats, each with her arms out and a kid on each arm, a kid on each kid's arm, and a kid on each kid's kid arm. Like weights. They were kind of moving through and there were people with carts pushing things and people were selling things and people with balloons coming in to sell their balloons. People with these wonderful displays, these rounds of cantaloupe and watermelon, big lollipops on sticks

that they were selling. For some reason or other, I remember one guy with neckties. He had something that looked like a big crucifix and hanging over the crucifix were these neckties. And these Indians that were walking along—spooky and wonderful. And this parade of people just floating down the street and we were just sitting there and it was the first time in my life I was so proud to be a human being. These weren't my people. This was not my culture, but this was my species. It was just so beautiful, this flow of people.

So then we spent some time in Mexico. And that pride of being human really filled me a whole lot in Mexico. I felt it also keenly at the anthropology museum at Chapultepec Park. And I just loved it. I just felt so damned at home in Mexico. We spent several months there.

We lived in a tortilla factory, in a deserted tortilla factory for a while, for a month, in a place called Santa Cruz. And it was a little town that had a deserted tortilla factory. You know when you move into a town, the people you meet tend to be the marginal people. And opposite the tortilla factory was a shell of a building in which somebody had created a boxing school, and all the young men would come during the day, and they'd try to learn boxing so they could get a bout maybe in Tepic, the nearest city, and maybe, if they were lucky, in Tijuana, and maybe make it to the big time somewhere. And there was just no other way out of the small towns. And if you were ambitious and strong, people had these dreams of being an NBA player or something like that.

And there was one electrical line that came into the town and it went to the grocery store. And the grocery store had a loudspeaker and every so often this loudspeaker would go on. "Mrs. Gonzalez is slaughtering her pig today. People that want chuletas and skin and stuff like that can see Mrs. Gonzalez. It was a fat and wonderful pig."

04-00:53:10
Bancroft:

That's great.

04-00:53:10
Margolin:

And then there'd be a pause and then some blaring stupid music would come on and "The third grade class wishes Mrs. Rodriguez happy birthday today," and these public announcements.

But there was this spooky guy who wanted me to walk out in the woods with him. There was something scary about him. There was something suspicious about him. He was so insistent that he had stuff that he wanted to show me. And finally we were about to leave and I figured I may as well do it. Probably get killed. What he wanted to show me was that there was a place in the woods that was silent. In this jungly-like woods there was one place you could go where there was absolute silence. I don't know why it was so quiet. And

when the moon shone on the palm trees, the palm leaves were silver like metal, and why was that? And that's what he wanted to show me.

04-00:54:14

Bancroft: And what did you take from that experience?

04-00:54:22

Margolin: I suppose I could make up a moral about trusting the world, about my infinite capacity to misjudge people, the value of saying yes, or the loneliness of people who live in small towns. There are a number of things. I never got past the story. It just ends there. I don't think it has a meaning.

And I remember coming back through El Paso, crossing the border, and suddenly finding myself in the United States again and feeling so horrified at the number of cops, multiple lane freeways, the violence of the place. And realizing that I'd learned something I would never forget. Realizing several months later that I'd probably forgotten most of it. It's something that has to be lived, it's not something that has to be remembered. Then we came back to Berkeley.

04-00:55:39

Bancroft: I just have to say, it's interesting that you tell the story about the silence in the jungle followed by leaving Mexico and the huge disruption of the freeway and everything. It's an interesting juxtaposition there.

04-00:55:58

Margolin: I love it when people show me things. It's one of the values of being a publisher, is you get introduced to people's worlds. And people are continually showing me their worlds. Those were wonderful years, those years of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Travels and freedom and stuff. And then Reuben was born on June 19, 1970. And that was a new era. That's the next chapter.

04-00:56:42

Bancroft: Yeah. That's next. You said you went back to Berkeley but you had been living on Eddy Street before you left or you then made it to San Francisco?

04-00:56:53

Margolin: Yeah. We had been living in San Francisco. I had college friends in Berkeley, so Berkeley was a place we could come. My first memory of Berkeley was one of those early visits. Visiting David Nawi. I knew him from Harvard. And I remember just walking up into the hills, just being in a place on Telegraph Ave and then the campus and then walking up into the hills and being in Tilden and seeing deer and hawks. And I thought it was kind of nice. I thought the view was okay, and I thought the privilege of walking out was okay.

04-00:57:49

Bancroft: Okay?

04-00:57:52
Margolin:

Well, this was not grandeur. If you want grandeur you go to the Sierra, you go to the Rockies, you climb Pike's Peak, you go to the Olympics. If you want beautiful scenes, you go to the Caribbean. There are many more beautiful places.

04-00:58:07
Bancroft:

I know, I know. But still. But actually, I just think that from your attachment to and attraction to New York, of the city life and all that that represents on the one hand, and then your enjoyment of these wild places and distant remote places that you had been in the last couple of years, in fact, it seems like Berkeley would probably have been a nice fit in between.

04-00:58:40
Margolin:

My friend Jeff Lustig said it best. And he quoted another friend of mine, Chitra Divakaruni, an East Indian writer. Chitra said once that in America you fall in love and get married. In India you get married and then you fall in love. And Berkeley was a place to settle, it was a place of convenience. I wanted a library. It had wild places you could walk out to. But I didn't fall in love with it right away.

04-00:59:15
Bancroft:

So can I go back to something? During all of this time, one of the early themes was about the mentorship and expectations of your father, and here you've just spent a couple of years traveling around and enjoying all of these places and making your life as you could. Certainly not being an engineer the way your father had expected. So I was just wondering how you felt about what your parents were laying on you as some kind of trip about what you should be doing and how you dealt with that during that time.

04-01:00:01
Margolin:

I don't think I called them. I think I just disappeared. It wasn't like anger and hostility and hate. I just didn't get around to it. Didn't call home today, and tomorrow wasn't near a phone, and then the next day I was near a phone but didn't feel like calling. So I was just out of contact.

04-01:00:33
Bancroft:

You were inaccessible.

04-01:00:34
Margolin:

Yeah, I made myself. The theme like that is there. I won't deny that it's there. But it's one of many strands in life, it's one of many things. If I had to define myself around any great battle, if my life was a vindication of something, I don't think it would be that. I'm not sure what it would be, but it wouldn't be that. It was like having asthma or something. It's like having something that is there, and you're always dealing with it but you just kind of get through life with it. Certainly a hugely different life than the life of Doc Sagansky, that world that I grew up in. And it's funny that I don't conceive of myself as

having changed that. The last child in the woods and stuff like that. I was a poster child for that. I grew up entirely without nature.

04-01:02:27

Bancroft:

You talked about you were in a sort of paradise in different places at different times and then getting bored. Was there a sense that you wanted something more with your life, but you couldn't say what it was or what was going on?

04-01:02:46

Margolin:

Boredom is boredom. You just wake up one morning and you say, "I don't want to do this anymore." It's not as if there was a great striving to do great things in the world or anything like that—there probably was.

04-01:03:07

Bancroft:

Well, you talk about writing, and that writing was sort of filtering through these different places. When you wrote the piece about forestry practices, did you have a sense of contributing to some kind of not necessarily movement but an effort to better the world through your writing?

04-01:03:35

Margolin:

I wanted to look smart. And coming from urban Jewish Boston, I was so proud of myself for mastering forestry.

04-01:03:56

Bancroft:

Okay, my last question. Do you remember who you were reading during any of that period? Any books that were influencing you? If you were in California, were you reading Steinbeck, things like that?

04-01:04:10

Margolin:

I was reading novels a lot, and I don't remember--I was reading Steinbeck, of course. One of the great experiences that I had as a kid was reading William Saroyan, of all people. And not in California but back in Boston. I remember reading *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* when I was about twelve years old. And it was just made for a twelve-year-old and just being so amazed that somebody could do that, somebody could make you feel that way. And Steinbeck also. I read a lot. I think the most influential book that I read was the *VW Repair for the Complete Idiot*. That's the reason I started Heyday. It was a self-published book. Somebody did it himself—somebody who could convince me that I could pull a motor out of a VW, that I could crack the case, that I could take out the rods and the pistons and the bearings, that I could go up and I could put the whole damn thing together again, and it would run. And that was far more valuable than any literary book that I ever had.

04-01:05:27

Bancroft:

That's great. Good story.

[End Audio File 4]

Interview 5: February 15, 2012

[Begin Audio File 5]

05-00:00:08

Bancroft: I'm here on February 15, 2012, with Malcolm Margolin in Berkeley. We last left you traveling in '68 and '69 around the west, to Mexico. You lived in a tiny driftwood cabin on a Vancouver Island. Finally you and Rina ended up back in Berkeley in 1970, I believe. And Reuben was born. So that's where we are. That's where you are. Going back and back and back. Some various questions I have about that period. What did you do once you moved back to Berkeley? Where did you live? Did you continue writing? What were you writing? What was Reuben's birth like for you and for Rina and having a newborn in your life?

05-00:01:38

Margolin: Oh, I'm not sure we're going to get through these stories, friend. Let's see. Where to begin. We found a little place near the corner of Bancroft Way and Acton Street, and our next door neighbor was Renee Shedroff, and she had a little kid who was half-black and half-white, and it turned out that the kid's father was a great jazz player. God, I'm blocking on his name [Dewey Redman; their son is the musician Joshua Redman]. I'll pick it up later on. But it was a little teeny apartment and we paid ninety dollars a month for it, and it had one room and a little teeny alcove and a kitchen, and the little alcove was like a closet. And I painted the trim orange and I painted the walls white, and we put in a crib, and we waited for Reuben to come. And then I had a series of odd jobs, temporary jobs. It involved handyman work. I worked for Easter Seal for a while, I think that's what it was, driving patients around. And at ninety dollars a month for rent, we probably lived on a couple of hundred bucks a month. And let's see, what else did I do? It was day work. It was minimum wage work. It was just whatever came along. And I forget what I was doing, but I remember there was one morning where Rina woke me up and she said, "You don't have to go to work today." And I said, "How come?" She said, "Because the baby's coming." So we drove across the bridge to UC San Francisco.

05-00:04:52

Bancroft: Why there as opposed to—there must have been hospitals here.

05-00:04:57

Margolin: It had something to do with the birth center, where I could be present. I don't exactly remember why.

05-00:05:03

Bancroft: Had you been doing Lamaze classes, together that was—

05-00:05:06

Margolin: Yeah, we had been doing Lamaze and all that stuff.

- 05-00:05:12
Bancroft: Because it was still unusual for men to be present at births. They were usually, “You sit out here and we’ll take care of your wife in the operating room.”
- 05-00:05:22
Margolin: Yes, they had some kind of an alternative birth center there.
- 05-00:05:25
Bancroft: Nice.
- 05-00:05:27
Margolin: And I remember when Reuben was born, his umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck, so he was blue because he couldn’t breathe. And then they un-wrapped the umbilical cord and just this beautiful coloration came to him, this beautiful kind of glow like a sunrise. And he had my hands. I remember I was just so stunned that somebody had my hand. I was looking at this little hand that was my hand. And there are people who remember meeting me during those first weeks. And for years I’d meet people that said that I was just absolutely transformed, and I transformed everybody around me.
- 05-00:06:13
Bancroft: How so?
- 05-00:06:14
Margolin: Just by talking about the beauty of this birth. I think I was just walking on air. Then we brought him home. And it was a thorough love affair. It was just like the other stuff, just like the real thing, just like when we usually consider—I didn’t know where I began and where he ended. There was a sense of conspiracy, a sense of intimacy. The sense of utter fascination with each other. One anecdote from that time is we had just moved into this house and we didn’t have any money so we didn’t have much furniture. So I felt that every home needed a round oak table and this is what you needed to create a family—a round oak table. Did I tell you this story?
- 05-00:07:43
Bancroft: No.
- 05-00:07:45
Margolin: I think my VW bus was broken. So I took the bicycle—
- 05-00:07:49
Bancroft: Naturally.
- 05-00:07:51
Margolin: Right. And because I was fixing it myself with that *VW Repair for the Complete Idiot*. I went down to McBeath’s Hardwood and I got five slabs of Appalachian white oak. It was built three inches thick. It was hard old growth wood. It was the strongest hardest wood that anybody could ever imagine. I took a course at Berkeley High in woodworking so I could use their equipment and I spent weeks, I spent weeks cutting that wood to size, just

planing it and joining it and trimming the sides and putting it together and drilling holes and clamping it and gluing it and then make a big circle and then took a score of the circle and then used the jigsaw to create the circle and then used a router to smooth the edges to create an edge to it all and then built a pedestal. And then sanded it down with increasingly fine sandings and then got a special grade of finish so that you'd retain the color of the oak so that it wouldn't turn dark brown, it would keep that blond color that it had. And the thing was absolutely gorgeous, and I brought it home and I sat there and I hated the goddamn thing. I just absolutely hated it. I told Rina to sell it for fifteen dollars. I didn't want to see the thing again. And I'm not certain what that anger was about, I'm not certain what that was all about, but that represented someplace that I just didn't want to go. I tried it out, and I just didn't want to go there.

05-00:09:34
Bancroft:

After all that work you put into it?

05-00:09:36
Margolin:

After all that work I put into it.

05-00:09:40
Bancroft:

And did she sell it?

05-00:09:41
Margolin:

Yeah. I wouldn't have it in the house. I just didn't want it.

05-00:09:45
Bancroft:

And you don't know what that's about? What do you think?

05-00:09:52
Margolin:

There was something phony about it. I was trying to get status through buying something, through making something. There was something about it that wasn't me. There was something about it that was—I just hated it. Just couldn't look at it.

There was a series of explosive changes. I remember there was one time where we had by this time moved through several houses and we were living in a house on Edith Street. And it was a beautiful house. This is a recurring theme, isn't it? It was a beautiful house. It was in a lovely neighborhood. We were paying 120 a month and it had a huge upstairs with a fireplace. It had a downstairs, kind of a finished basement that you could use for your hobbies, for woodworking and stuff. It had a big backyard, it had a garage, it had a fruit tree in the backyard. It was the loveliest place you could imagine. I came home, I decided people shouldn't live in houses. So I moved us out to a campground in Chabot Regional Park that hadn't been built yet and we lived in a tent. [laughter]

05-00:11:37
Bancroft:

What did Rina say about this? The three of you lived in a tent?

- 05-00:11:43
Margolin: Yeah, the three of us lived in a tent. Reuben was by this time about two years old.
- 05-00:11:47
Bancroft: What did she say?
- 05-00:11:52
Margolin: I don't quite remember. I think that it was kind of lonely out there because I'd go to work during the day, and I'd leave her and Reuben and come back at night. I didn't want to live in a house. I didn't want to live in the woods either. [laughter]
- 05-00:12:17
Bancroft: So dare I ask where did you want to live? It was a process.
- 05-00:12:22
Margolin: Well, I put my tail between my legs and moved back to a lousy place in Berkeley.
- 05-00:12:28
Bancroft: Oh. What do you think that was about? About deciding that people shouldn't live in houses and it was too nice for you?
- 05-00:12:39
Margolin: It was the same reason that I escaped the Caribbean. It was the same reason I was glad when the houses at Wreck Bay crashed. It was the same reason I threw the table out. I'm not sure what it's all about. Part of it was deeply felt, part of it was probably theatrical, performing for myself as well as for other people. I seem to do that.
- 05-00:13:19
Bancroft: Was there a very deep alienation from the material world? That's a theme we know in John Muir and leaving everything behind and being out in the wilderness. But you've got a family, you can't leave everything behind.
- 05-00:13:46
Margolin: I remember the exact moment when I decided to move. And I had been working at East Bay Regional Park District. I'll get to that in a bit. I'd been working for East Bay Regional Park District, and I was on a levee at a place called Shadow Hills, and old Alameda Creek flowed past on one side of the levee and on the other side of the levee was a manicured recreation area. And on one side there was a wild area with a river and there were some people on a handmade raft floating down the river and they looked so gorgeous. And on the other side was this manicured world of people and little chairs and picnic baskets and umbrellas and suntan lotion and a snack bar and everything else, and I just hated that world. I just hated that world of artificiality. To this day I cannot go into like a place like Macy's. I have about ten minutes of going into a Macy's before I just go crazy. There's something in the manipulation of it. There's something in the Muzak, there's something in the fact that it's all

geared to sell me stuff. There's something in the fact that it blunts hostility—it's made to blunt your zest. There's something about it that I just—it's just some kind of rebellion that comes out. I'm really not too certain. I haven't thought about this at all. It's the same reason I never got a real job. And it's not that I don't want to fit in. I'm a tremendously social animal.

05-00:16:14
Bancroft:

So how long did you live in a tent up there?

05-00:16:17
Margolin:

About four months.

05-00:16:20
Bancroft:

And I presume it was the spring and summer months?

05-00:16:24
Margolin:

Yes, it was.

05-00:16:28
Bancroft:

That's a good stretch. And then you came back to another lousy place to live? What was that?

05-00:16:35
Margolin:

Well, we must have moved through about eleven places. I once counted them. There's something like eleven places in Berkeley in the first years of Reuben's life. We'd find a good place, and the landlord would evict us because the landlord wanted to move in, or it was a terrible place and we just got it because we needed a place and we moved out as quickly as we could.

05-00:17:03
Bancroft:

And when you have less stuff, then it's less of a big deal in some ways to move constantly.

05-00:17:09
Margolin:

Oh, we had hardly anything. We had hardly anything.

05-00:17:15
Bancroft:

So let me ask, what was it like with the first year or two of childrearing? Because that changes everything, not only your falling in love with your child but the nights up and the whole focus and rhythm of your life changes.

05-00:17:35
Margolin:

I was an oddly devoted father. I took Reuben everywhere, played with him. We took him on hikes. Rina would take art classes and stuff, and I'd hang out with him. We'd climb trees, walk on logs, and go out into the woods and go to airports and watch airplanes take off. We had a closet at one place and we'd bring him down there. He'd close his eyes, and I'd take him into the closet and I'd hold him and then I'd tell him he has to keep his eyes shut because the spaceship was about to take off. And the spaceship would take off and we'd go through the air and we'd walk around the planets and we'd describe the

planets that we walked on. And then I'd bring him back and then he could open his eyes again because it was now safe. The radiation wasn't good for little kids' eyes. And we daydreamed about having a farm together and built things together.

Probably the big event was he got sick when he was about a year old and we didn't know what it was. He couldn't digest any food and was losing weight and was in just terrible physical shape. I remember there was one week where we went to eight different doctors. Just made appointments with doctors and nobody could figure it out. He got tested for cystic fibrosis and for celiac disease and all kinds of terrible things. And I remember there was one night he was up crying, and I had him in my arms and was walking back and forth. And I remember he got through to me where nobody else had gotten through. That it was just right down to some dogged loyalty, that I was going to see this fucking kid through. It was without question. It was without hold. It was without ego. There was nothing more than I was just going to get this goddamn thing through no matter what it took.

That week we went to eight doctors. There was this guy, a Dr. Louis Meyers that somebody had mentioned. He was a pediatrician on Telegraph Ave and his office was like a waiting room in India. There was tons of people in there and stuff. There was this horrible receptionist. What the hell was her name? God, I forget her name. I remembered her name for years. Maddie or Dottie. Something like that. And she would every so often raise her head from the reception area and said, "Doctor will see you now." So she came to us and she said, "Doctor will see you now." And she was such a horrible person I would have left, but there was nowhere else to go.

And we sat in this room and he came into the room, this little man with a kind of elfish look to him. And he came into the room, and he looked and he stopped and he says, "Oh." He says, "You have a real problem." I said, "Yeah." He said, "What's been happening?" So we told him what's been happening. He said, "How long has it been going on?" So we told him how long it had been going on. And then he did the most beautiful thing I've ever seen a human being do. I think the receptionist's name was Polly. He opened the door and he says, "Polly," he says, "I do not want to be disturbed no matter what happens." And he shut the door and he just looked at Reuben. He just stared at him the way an artist stares at a model. He just looked at him. And he just every so often came in and touched him and looked and really got the feel for it all and every so often asked a question, and time passed. And all this time Rina had been keeping charts of what Reuben was eating and how he was behaving, and these charts were complete madness. And he looked over the charts and he noted that some foods seemed better for him and some foods were worse. We devised some kind of very simple diet and he thrived on that diet and ended up getting better.

- 05-00:22:14
Bancroft: Just the diet.
- 05-00:22:16
Margolin: There were some kind of multiple allergies. For a long time he was allergic to wheat and milk.
- 05-00:22:25
Bancroft: Nowadays people know about that more than they probably did then.
- 05-00:22:30
Margolin: Yeah, I think we were hippies so we just figured you could feed a kid anything.
- 05-00:22:35
Bancroft: Mostly you can, but wheat and milk—
- 05-00:22:40
Margolin: Yeah, wheat and milk and a few other things that he was allergic to for the longest time. So that kind of formed me a whole lot.
- 05-00:22:57
Bancroft: Made your hold on Reuben that much tighter, I imagine.
- 05-00:23:00
Margolin: There's always been such a close bond between us. Did I tell you the story of Brennan's?
- 05-00:23:14
Bancroft: No. I haven't heard any of your stories so you never have to even ask that.
- 05-00:23:19
Margolin: So Reuben, when he was about four years old, we brought him to Brennan's to buy him—you know Brennan's? So we brought him to Brennan's to buy him his favorite food, which was a corned beef sandwich. And we said, "Reuben," we said, "you're going to have a baby brother or a baby sister. We don't know which it is, but it's going to be a baby. You're going to have a new baby, and we've been a wonderful family of three. We're now going to be a wonderful family of four." When Sadie was about six years old, we brought Reuben and Sadie over to Brennan's and we brought them their favorite food and we said, "You know, there's something we want to tell you. You're going to have a baby brother or a baby sister. We don't know which it is, but we're going to be a wonderful family of five." And Jake was born. And then when Jake was about two years old, I just all of a sudden felt like hofbrau food, and I said, "Let's go to Brennan's." And all three kids, their hair stood up on end. And they said, "No." That was years ago. Couple of weeks ago Reuben gave us another call. He said, "Let's have dinner at Brennan's."
- 05-00:24:26
Bancroft: Oh.

05-00:24:31
Margolin: So it's become a place where the kids announce their—

05-00:24:39
Bancroft: That's a great tradition to have started.

05-00:24:41
Margolin: Just was so sweet.

05-00:24:54
Bancroft: Can I ask what Reuben's doing now? And we'll come back to their present eventually.

05-00:24:57
Margolin: Do you know what Reuben is doing now? Don't you have any idea of what Reuben is doing now?

05-00:25:02
Bancroft: I remember hearing about him recently in years past.

05-00:25:08
Margolin: I'm going to show you on the computer.

05-00:25:18
Bancroft: I can see what he's doing. Ooh. Oh, wow. I knew he was a sculptor of sorts, but I never saw the—oh, my gosh. That is fantastic. Literally.

05-00:25:08
Margolin: It's a hundred feet across, made of 24,000 bicycle reflectors. Or 14,000 bicycle reflectors.

05-00:26:12
Bancroft: Oh, my God. That's outrageous. The Nebula. Wow. Well, you certainly gave him quite an imagination. How about that. And they move.

05-00:26:37
Margolin: Yeah, they're kinetic. They move like big jellyfishes and waves.

05-00:26:45
Bancroft: And I see Jake's name there as part of the videographer. What does Jake do?

05-00:26:53
Margolin: Jake is an actor.

05-00:26:59
Bancroft: Well, you created some very thoughtful, intellectual creative young beings, you and Rina. Very nice video to get the effect. Wow.

05-00:27:19
Margolin: So that's—

05-00:27:21
Bancroft: Right. I'm glad to see that.

- 05-00:27:20
Margolin: That's his work at the Anatole Hilton in Dallas, Texas. You know, in certain circles I'm just known as "Reuben's father."
- 05-00:27:40
Bancroft: Yes. Well, I can see why. You're Max Margolin's son and Reuben Margolin's father.
- 05-00:27:50
Margolin: Yeah. And somewhere in the middle there was a Malcolm.
- 05-00:27:58
Bancroft: Yeah. That's what we're getting at here. Wow.
- 05-00:28:02
Margolin: But it's a pleasure being a link in the chain of life and watching it go on. So that's what's become of Reuben.
- 05-00:28:28
Bancroft: Okay. Going back a little bit to work, Rina, she was being a mother. She had been working, doing some psychology you said before. Did she just focus on raising kids, which is enough?
- 05-00:28:46
Margolin: Yeah.
- 05-00:28:47
Bancroft: Okay. Because I remember there was a time where you said she was earning the money and you were writing, which wasn't bringing in a lot of money. So that—
- 05-00:28:55
Margolin: That was for a couple of years in New York, yeah.
- 05-00:28:57
Bancroft: Yeah. So as you were being a handyman and doing all of these various projects, did an urgency—and you actually decided you had to live inside instead of outside, that was going to cost a little more--did there become some urgency about what you were going to do to create an income?
- 05-00:29:21
Margolin: No, there wasn't much of an urgency. I was doing some writing. And then—
- 05-00:29:25
Bancroft: Well, let me ask you about the writing. What were you writing?
- 05-00:29:31
Margolin: I'm not sure. I was writing short material, articles. I wrote articles. An article for *The Nation*. I wrote an article for *Science Digest*. I wrote an article for *National Parks* magazine. I wrote articles on forestry and on—

05-00:29:54
Bancroft:

Because you talked about some of that before he was born, while you were traveling. Did you continue that after he was born?

05-00:30:00
Margolin:

I continued that afterwards. I forget when I was getting it published. I imagine that was in Berkeley. I imagine I was writing some of that stuff before. I don't quite remember anymore. I think in a way some of that writing was more a toehold in the world of fantasy, that I could support myself writing and I could support the family writing, and I needed an identity. This was something that would ultimately happen. But I remember there were times when I really did learn the craft of writing, that I studied writing, that I studied the way people—that I would take in when I would read something. If I came upon a good passage I would copy it out and I would tape it up on the wall and I'd write a letter to it, just why it was so good. And then I'd look at the way the passage was shaped, the way it would end up having a big statement and then would narrow down to a smaller statement, and then it would pop out into a larger statement again. The way something would be hit from different senses. The way it'd be set up for something and the rug would be pulled out from under you. I'd just look at the structure of things. I'd look at the vocabulary of things. I'd just study the way other writers actually wrote. And it was using it in writing that I was doing. I remember I was doing some writing, I don't remember quite what it was anymore.

05-00:31:44
Bancroft:

Do you remember any of those writers in particular that were sort of role models for you?

05-00:31:49
Margolin:

No. It was probably less of an identity than being a father. And then somewhere in Reuben's first year of life I went to work for East Bay Regional Park and I got hired by a guy named Gary Pickering, who later changed his name to Guido Pickering. And I worked at Redwood Park. My first day at Redwood Park I remember I came there and I was all eager to please and they sent me out with this old guy from Arkansas, Clyde Oden. And Clyde Oden, it got to be eight o'clock and he'd walk over and he'd punch his card in. And then he said, "Then you go to the key box and you get the key to a truck. Then you walk over to the truck and you don't just get into the truck, you look around the truck. You look to see that the tires are okay, you look to see that there's nothing under the truck. Then you'll get into the truck and then you warm up the truck. Then you back the truck up to the shed to get the tools into the truck." So I said, "Gees," I said, "the shed is like ten feet away. We could just get it." He says, "Nope." He says, "You never bring tools to a truck. You bring the truck to the tools. So then you get the tools into the truck. Then you end up going to the jobsite. But you don't go straight to the jobsite. You go check the park out to make sure everything is okay. Then you get to the park site, then you unload the tools. Then it's coffee break time. So then you end up having to load the tools back in and you go to find a place for coffee

break.” I remember it was the longest day of my life. I didn’t know they made days that long. And Clyde Oden, he’d been there since the CCC days, since the WPA days. And he loved to make stone walls was what he really loved. And he was a master at making stonewalls. And he was also good for one other thing. And I don’t believe in this stuff.

Oh, that goddamn thing about Duncan Cohen was amazing. I mean, Jesus. I don’t know what to make of that. Clearly it was another “Duncan Cohen” incidence, in which a skeptic is confronted with an experience that can’t be explained. And I remember the incidence. They had these big fields that had irrigation into them, they had pipes into them. And they’d let the fields grow during the winter and then during the spring they’d mow it down and then you’d have to find the sprinkler heads. But nobody could ever find the sprinkler heads because it had already grown over. So Clyde would do water dousing. He would come with a dousing rod and he would walk across the thing and he’d find where the pipes were and he’d find where the pipes crossed and then they would find the sprinkler heads. He showed me how to water douse. And sure enough, you walk along, you feel the thing just dip in. And I still don’t believe in it.

05-00:35:14
Bancroft:

I’m not sure I do but—

05-00:35:17
Margolin:

And then the other thing that Clyde lives off in my memory is that we were broke that year but we were broke every year. I remember once I came home, told Rina that—in fairly recent times I told her that we were having a rough spell, we were going to have to cut back and economize but things would be okay in another six months. And she said there were two things amazing about that statement. “One is you’ve been saying it for forty years and the other one is I still believe it.” So we were broke. And Clyde said, “Well,” he says, “if you’re broke there’s an easy way to get rich.” I said, “What’s that?” He says, “Your wife is going to have another baby. Put money on the baby’s name. If it’s a girl call it Penny and if it’s a boy call it Buck.” So that’s how Sadie Cash got her name.

05-00:36:06
Bancroft:

Oh. Did it work?

05-00:35:11
Margolin:

I’m still broke.

05-00:36:13
Bancroft:

Okay. That’s why you don’t believe in that kind of stuff. But you tried.

05-00:36:24
Margolin:

I don’t believe in that kind of stuff. But it seems—

05-00:36:40
Bancroft:

But you act as if—

05-00:36:45
Margolin:

I think there's a kind of what would I do if I did believe in that kind of stuff and there's a kind of playfulness that's involved in it. And then there was Guido Pickering, and Guido was an artist. Guido had graduated from the Art Institute. He hired me and he hired his friend Percy Millet who had also graduated from the Art Institute. And then there was a guy named Jake Warner. The younger generation were all kind of college educated hippies, artists. And I worked there. There was a Johnny Santisteban. And there was a guy named Greg Philips who was the supervisor of Redwood and Chabot Regional Parks, and there was Jack Miller over in Chabot and there were various people that were there.

It was an all-male crew when I joined, and it was going out and it was doing some really good work. It was digging fencepost holes, repairing trails, putting out fires. There was a guy named Dave Hupp that was working there, and Dave Hupp's mother was Lucy Hupp, who was a famous gardener in the Orinda area. Lucy and Jim. They had a place in Orinda. And Dave Hupp was into environmental stuff. And from that park he ended up creating this environmental program where kids would come in and do work. And when Dave left, I took over the program. And we ended up building trails and doing wildlife habitat restoration, and I'd lead them around. I'd lead Boy Scouts out on walks. And I was doing it as a groundsman, that's what my job position was, not as a naturalist. It wasn't wired into the place. There wasn't the position for it. It was just kind of done on the side, bootlegged as it were, free of supervision and constraints. We did erosion control work, collected wildflower seeds and native shrub seeds, cleared out invasive plants, set up a native plant nursery, developed watering holes, etc. That's what I ended up doing, was leading kids around on nature walks and doing land restoration.

05-00:39:59
Bancroft:

And I presume telling stories—

05-00:40:02
Margolin:

And telling stories. There was a wonderful naturalist at the East Bay Regional Park District at that time. His name was Josh Barkin. And Josh Barkin was out at Tilden, and basically he just sat under a tree and people would come to him. And in a way he was a fraud. He wasn't a real naturalist. I'm not sure how much he knew. But he would tell wonderful stories. He was a puppeteer. And he would tell wonderful magical stories, and everybody loved Josh. And then there was Tim Gordon and Ron Russo who were working as naturalists, and they were another generation of naturalists. They actually knew something about natural history. But you'd go out there and magical things would happen. And then they ended up building an environmental center and they ended up having people with the right degrees and they ended up having programs. But somehow that magic of meeting the old man of the woods was

gone, meeting somebody who would tell you beautiful stories and break your heart. It wasn't there anymore. I learned a lot from him.

I learned a lot from Jim Roof. Jim Roof was head of the Tilden Botanic Garden. And Jim was a great man. Jim was a well-known botanist. Jim hated people. He used to have a house in Tilden where he had on the door, he pounded nails so that the point were outside so that anybody knocking at the door would hit the nails so nobody would disturb him. He was a complete misanthropist. He loved plants. He had these Santa Lucia pines in the Tilden Botanic Garden, and he would sit out in the weeks before Christmas, because they looked like Christmas trees, and he would sit out there with a rifle to make sure that nobody got those trees. And I remember that I'd drive along in a truck with Jim, and Jim would see a barren road cut and he'd stop the truck, then he'd reach into the glove compartment and he'd pull out a seed bag, throw the seeds out there, and the next year you'd find the whole field alive with buckwheat. He was caught driving across the Richmond Bridge at 3:00 with a stripper in an East Bay Regional Park District and they fired him. This was before that generation of botanists that were so polite and so nice and knew their computers and stuff like that. He was the generation that had an earthy love of plants.

I learned a lot from Pickering, too. I learned how to weld. I learned how to repair things. Pickering was sort of a genius. This was 1970, I think, that I was hired, and by '71 there got to be a social consciousness that you had to have women and you had to have blacks. The whole discrimination thing. I remember they called Pickering up on the carpet, and they said, "What the hell are you doing? We're a public agency, and you're doing nothing but hiring your friends." And he looked at them with complete puzzlement and he said, "What do you want me to do? Hire my enemies?" [laughter]

I really liked it out there. I remember my parents came out once and I gave them a ride in a dump truck because I thought they would really like that, and they didn't like it one bit.

05-00:44:10
Bancroft:

No?

05-00:44:11
Margolin:

And I went along trails that were much too narrow for the dump truck, and my mother couldn't figure out what the hell I did over there anyway. And then she finally decided that what people do when they work in the woods is when the trees fall down they pick them up again. [laughter]

05-00:44:33
Bancroft:

It sounds like they may not have approved of your choice of work or lifestyle at that point. They were sort of out of your picture the two years you were traveling. This is the first time you've mentioned them coming back into your life.

05-00:44:48
Margolin:

Well, the true religion of Jews is grandchild worship, so now we had grandchildren. And they came out. Reuben, because he was so sick when he was young, always had earaches and he couldn't hear very well. Because he couldn't hear very well, he couldn't speak very well. And he was thin and malnourished and looked like hell. And my parents come and they're just made for grandchild worship. "Max, look how beautiful he is. Max, how smart he is." Everything that he did. "He breathes in and out, Max. Look, isn't that wonderful?" "Oh, just wonderful." And my father brought this present. It's a symbolic present, which is a big metallic elephant that was a piggybank and it had a saddle in the back and it had a slot. And then it had a tail. He had the trunk, and the trunk had a groove in it where you could put a coin, and you crank the tail and the trunk lifted up and threw the coin into the slot on the elephant's bank, and it went in there. And my father put this out and we unwrapped it. It was a toy, it had to do with money. This was a big thing. And he reaches into his pocket and he pulls out not a nickel, not a dime, but a quarter. And he puts the quarter in the slot and he tells Reuben to crank the tail. And Reuben cranks the tail, and the thing flips the coin over. Instead of going into the slot the coin goes down the elephant's trunk and rolls down under the couch. And Reuben said, "The fucking thing doesn't work." Which was the first clear thing he'd said during their visit. [laughter] And I remember my mother stopped and looked at him and said, "Max, so smart, at his age, what he knows." They were going to see the good. They were going to be blind to any kind of reality that was there and they were going to just see good.

05-00:47:01
Bancroft:

Oh. I thought they were going to lay into you for teaching him that kind of language. But no.

05-00:47:07
Margolin:

No. No, Reuben, there was always the danger that he was going to say the wrong thing. I remember years later I created the first annual Texas Wildflower Conference in Dallas and I go out there. This is for a later chapter. No, we may as well get it down now because Sadie as already born and I was already writing. Did I tell you this story?

05-00:47:40
Bancroft:

No.

05-00:47:43
Margolin:

This was so much fun. There was this guy, Geoffrey Stanford in Cedar Hills, and he had the Green Hills Nature Center or something like that outside of Dallas. They decided that I was some kind of an environmental genius, that I knew how to organize things. I had written a book by that time called *Earth Manual* about how to restore wild land that came out of my East Bay Regional Park experience. So they flew me out to Dallas, Texas, and they pick me up at the airport and they drive me out to Geoffrey Stanford's house. And Geoffrey

Stanford had been a British surgeon, and he was a tremendously wealthy man. His wife Dawn, her father was royalty of some sort and they were like consuls in Monterey when she was growing up. And they had tons of money and they had this house on a square mile of land outside of Dallas. And they would have these parties at these houses where they would invite all the ruling class, the mayor, and the head of the chamber of commerce, and Dave Fox, who was this major developer, and they would invite all these major people and they'd have these big tables set up and the maid would bring food. And the tables were arranged by status. So you had the head table and then the side tables and then the end tables and then there were these other games of status. As you were leaving he'd stop and say, "Kim, don't leave just yet. I've had a wonderful cheese flown in from England that I think you're going to really enjoy. Stay around for another half-hour. There are some things that I want to tell you about." He just played the game so beautifully.

I remember, my first night there, that it was all Lady Bird's friends. There was this guy Carroll Abbott from Kerrville, Texas. He was a wildflower seed dealer. And he's the one that got Lady Bird into beautifying America because he wanted to sell wildflower seeds. And Carroll Abbott was this lengthy Texan. And there was a guy named Benny Simpson who would take about the lonely lofty country where he would collect acorns. There were all these amazing characters, all these Texans. And I'm sitting there in this living room and Carroll looks at me and he says, "You're from Berkeley, aren't you?" And I said, "That's right, Mr. Abbott." And he says, "They do all kinds of wild and crazy things in Berkeley, don't they?" And I said, "Oh, yes, it's a pretty wild and crazy place, Mr. Abbott." He says, "They protest the war over there, don't they?" And I said, "Yes, there are strong feelings against the war." And he said, "And they smoke that drug, marijuana?" And I said, "Yes, they do smoke that marijuana." He says, "Have you ever smoked that marijuana?" And I just looked at him and I said, "You know something, Mr. Abbott? I've heard so much about Texas hospitality, and if it means taking a stranger into your midst and making him uncomfortable, you're doing a terrific job." And there was a pause and he laughed and everybody laughed, and the conversation went on, and later on he comes in, he pulls me aside, and he says, "What I really want to know is when the plant is about this high and it's starting to bud, is that when you collect the leaves?" [laughter]

05-00:51:18
Bancroft:

Oh, good story.

05-00:51:19
Margolin:

What triggered it was at one time I headed back east with Reuben and Rina and Sadie was just a little baby. And we headed back in this little teeny VW Karmann Ghia, and I figured I'd stop and visit Geoff Stanford. And all the way over I'm telling Reuben, I said, "Just don't say fuck. Don't say shit, don't say piss. These are very important people to me. They're nice people. You don't say those kinds of things in nice company. So just don't say fuck." So

we get over there and we're sitting at the table and the maid brings the food and he's looking and the first thing out of his mouth is, "Jesus, all the plates are the same." [laughter] He'd never been sitting at a table where all the plates were the same and he thought that was the most amazing thing that he'd ever seen. But he was always a good kid. There was always a sense of adventurousness to him, of pushing for limits, of climbing as high as he could climb, of doing things, what he could do.

So I worked at East Bay Regional Park District for three years.

05-00:52:46

Bancroft:

Let's go back to your *Earth Manual*. How did you work on that and tell me—

05-00:52:55

Margolin:

It's interesting. I just saw somebody who had something to do with it. This was in '73. I had all this information about working with kids on wild land. Because I had worked at Redwood Regional Park, I went to this guy [John] Dewitt, who ran Save the Redwoods League. And I said, "This is what I'm doing at Redwood Park. I'd like some money to write about how you work with kids on wild land." And he said, "See Huey Johnson." You know who Huey Johnson is?

05-00:53:39

Bancroft:

No.

05-00:53:39

Margolin:

Huey Johnson was the first employee of the Nature Conservancy west of the Mississippi, and he later founded the Trust for Public Land. He was Jerry Brown's Director of Natural Resources. Stewart Brand called him a thug for the environment. And he was part of that Whole Earth Catalog thing in some ways, and when Whole Earth Catalog created Point Foundation to give away some of their profits, Huey became part of that. And I said I wanted to write a book. I visited him at the Nature Conservancy when the Nature Conservancy consisted of Huey and a couple of scared guys. And Huey had in his office a swing hanging from the ceiling, and you'd sit in the swing and you'd kind of swing around and you'd talk to Huey. And he said, "How much do you need?" And I lied through my teeth. He says, "How long is it going to take you?" And I said, "Five months." And he says, "How much do you need?" And I said, "Well, we'd probably live on about \$400 a month, so \$2,000 ought to do it." So he said, "Okay," he says, "I'll get you a check for \$2,000." So he gave me a check for \$2,000. I rented a little studio in back of Dan and Judy Phillips place on Deacon Street. They were writers. And I'd work every day. And it was during the Watergate era. I'd work for several hours in the morning, and then I'd go off to the Buttercup Café on College Avenue, and I'd get the newspaper and I'd read about Watergate and I'd go back and work. And I lied through my teeth because we were living on much less than 400 bucks a month. I was going to make a killing. And I ended up writing the book in about four months, and I thought this was easy.

- 05-00:56:05
Bancroft: I'd love to see a copy of it one day. And so you wrote it. How did it get published?
- 05-00:56:15
Margolin: I got the money from Whole Earth Catalog. Whole Earth Catalog had been incubated by Portola Institute, and Portola in turn set up something called Word Wheel Books. And Word Wheel Books, they got this guy Wally who had been head of the East Asian Foundation or something like that.
- 05-00:56:52
Bancroft: Yeah, and the Whole Earth Catalog itself is such an amazing cultural phenom of the time, no?
- 05-00:57:00
Margolin: Oh, it was amazing.
- 05-00:57:07
Bancroft: Do you remember when the first one came out, what year about that was?
- 05-00:57:12
Margolin: Well, it must have been around 1967 or '68.
- 05-00:57:15
Bancroft: It just seemed to open up a whole new perspective on nature, alternative living, pulling together communities. Is that the book [Earth Manual]?
- 05-00:57:32
Margolin: Yeah, this is it. Houghton Mifflin published it.
- 05-00:57:35
Bancroft: Oh, wow.
- 05-00:57:38
Margolin: And it was special thanks to Huey Johnson, Dick Raymond.
- 05-00:57:50
Bancroft: So who did the drawings?
- 05-00:57:53
Margolin: Michael Harney was this guy that—I forget how I got to meet Michael.
- 05-00:58:06
Bancroft: Nineteen seventy-five.
- 05-00:58:16
Margolin: “*Earth Manual* does a very important job. It brings ecology, conservation, and a lot of other quasi-religious ideals back down to where people are. This is a very much needed how-to-get-your-hands-dirty book. Scores of ways that answers that awkward question, ‘But what can I do?’” Roger Caras. You remember Roger Caras? You can borrow it. I think this is the only copy I have.

- 05-00:58:38
Bancroft: No, I'm not borrowing it.
- 05-00:58:41
Margolin: You can borrow it.
- 05-00:59:01
Bancroft: This is what I need for my twenty-three acres.
- 05-00:59:04
Margolin: Well, it was done by an old hippie that made half of it up.
- 05-00:59:09
Bancroft: It sounds like you were talking to the right people to learn about it and you had some valuable experience by then.
- 05-00:59:17
Margolin: Yeah, yeah.
- 05-00:59:21
Bancroft: Well, how did you feel about having your first book come out?
- 05-00:59:30
Margolin: So Wally was head of Word Wheel Books, and they were forever making co-publishing arrangements with other back East publishers. This was their model. And Michael Phillips wrote *The Seven Laws of Money*, and all these new age types would have their meetings at the Erotic Art Museum and they'd go to Esalen and they were just so damn hip, it really hurt. And poor Wally, I remember his wife was distraught. I mean, here they lived in a big house in Hillside, and Wally had joined this cult. And Wally was not earning any money, and they were forever talking about how, if you follow your bliss, money will come. And then Word Wheel Books, I think they published Michael Phillips book, *The Seven Laws of Money*. And they couldn't figure out how to get a co-publishing arrangement on mine until finally Houghton Mifflin came along and they gave [me] a \$10,000 advance. Back in '73, '74, this was a spectacular amount of money. And then in '73 I sold the book to Houghton Mifflin. I had money in my pocket. The East Bay Regional Park District fired me. They wouldn't hire me back. I refused to wear a uniform.
- 05-01:01:12
Bancroft: So up until then you hadn't had to wear a uniform?
- 05-01:01:15
Margolin: No, no. I didn't want to wear a uniform.
- 05-01:01:19
Bancroft: Wow. Let me just clarify. You said you got a \$10,000 advance. They had agreed to publish it, and it was an advance for another book?
- 05-01:01:28
Margolin: No, it was an advance for this book.

- 05-01:01:31
Bancroft: Oh, because I thought you were saying that you had already gotten the money from Huey to write the book.
- 05-01:01:35
Margolin: No, for Huey I got \$2,000 to write the book.
- 05-01:01:40
Bancroft: Right. And then you wrote it in four months.
- 05-01:01:41
Margolin: Yeah. When a book is sold, very often there's an advance against royalties.
- 05-01:01:46
Bancroft: Oh, okay. So it was not an advance for writing it but—
- 05-01:01:49
Margolin: No, it was an advance against royalties, because they were publishing it.
- 05-01:01:51
Bancroft: Okay, okay. Great. Yeah, okay.
- 05-01:01:54
Margolin: So I found myself with a chunk of money in my pocket.
- 05-01:01:55
Bancroft: Nice. And without a job because you weren't going to wear a uniform.
- 05-01:01:59
Margolin: And without a job, and Reuben had gotten better. And then the other thing that happened was I turned thirty. And I turned thirty in 1970 but it took me three years, until 1973, until I actually could do it. I had to work on it. And then there was just that year, what I spent the year, I decided to write a book about the East Bay Parks, because I'd worked for East Bay Regional Park District. And it was just a year of hiking the hills and thinking and taking notes. Just being in love with the world. Was Sadie born then? No, Sadie wasn't born until 1974. So I wrote the book in '73. And then that particular book, I didn't try too hard to get it published, but I did try. I sent it off to Ten Speed, and they thought it was too regional and the regional publishers thought it was too—the poetry publishers thought it was too much like a guidebook, and the guidebook publishers thought it was too much like poetry. Nobody had ever done a regional guidebook before. There wasn't much like that out there. But I already had in my mind this model of the Whole Earth Catalog where Stewart had done it himself. And I got together with Hal Hershey, who had designed the first Whole Earth Catalog. Worked with Stewart on the design of the catalog. He taught me how to design books. Rina did the drawings. Rina did the maps and a member of her women's group did some drawings. And this wonderful calligrapher, Barbara Bash, did some calligraphy. We put out this book called the *The East Bay Out* that came out in 1974. It was just a

celebration of being alive and a celebration of the beauty of the place. That book was a walking party. That book was a gift.

And I remember that we were living on the corner of Sacramento Street and Bancroft Way, on the second floor. And the last of the money that I had I could order 7,000 copies of the book. That's how many I could get printed. So I printed 7,000 copies of the book with a list price of two ninety-five. And the truck pulls up to the house and asks where Heyday Books was and I said, "You've found it." He says, "Where's the loading dock?" So I realized this was going to cost me twenty bucks. So I gave him twenty bucks, and we loaded the books down onto the sidewalk, and for the rest of the afternoon I walked the books up the stairs and put them under Reuben's bed and put them against walls and put them everywhere. And I thought that I had published a book. I loved the design of it. I loved working with my hands. I loved putting it together. I loved the physicality of it all.

But then came this horrible understanding that the books were going to stay under Reuben's bed unless I did something. So I loaded some books into a VW bus and I went around. My first stop was Fred Cody. And I brought in a book and Fred put his arm around me and looked at it and read some passages aloud to some people, looked at me. Thought it was wonderful. He took twenty-four copies. He asked if I needed money. I said, "Of course." He went upstairs. He said to Pat, "Can you write out a check for this?" And Pat wrote me out a check. And he put up the books next to the cash register. I said, "My God," I said, "this publishing is much better than I ever thought."

And then back at that time Berkeley was just filled with small publishers. Alta had Shameless Hussy Press, and John Oliver Simon had Aldeberan. Don Cushman had Cloud Marauder, and George Mattingly had Blue Wind. And Bob Callahan and Eileen Callahan had Turtle Island. Betsy Davis had Rebis Press. Pat Dienstfrey had Kelsey Street Press. And Phil Wood was just starting Ten Speed. And Ralph Warner was just starting Nolo. And Jerry Ratch had a wonderful press called Somber Reptiles Press. And Ishmael Reed had I Reed Books. And there were just all these small presses that were around. There's all this ferment around, there's all this beauty around.

And then Berkeley was full of bookstores. You'd go down to Cody's, and then you'd go to Moe's, then you'd go to Sather Gate's, and then you'd go to Hugh Nault's, and then to the Student Union Store that had a full stock of trade books, and then you'd go to Lucas Books, and then you'd go to Books Unlimited, the three Books Unlimited that were the co-op bookstores. You'd go to Holmes in Oakland. And you'd go to Sand Dollar and Ben Franklin on Solano Avenue. A few years later there was Old Mole that opened up. Hinks Department Store had a book section. And there was this thriving world of small bookstores built around the tastes of their owners.—and the first Nature Company, Tom Wruble opened up the first Nature Company store on College

Ave., and I was the first reading that he had for *The East Bay Out*. And before Nature Company grew in to be the monster that ultimately collapsed—

05-01:07:52

Bancroft: And then the distributors.

05-01:07:56

Margolin: There was Book People and there was LS Distributors and there was CalWest Distributors and there was Milligan's Distributors. And it was this whole other world of distributors. So I just found myself in this thriving world of people that were publishing. And I was working out of the house. And then when *The East Bay Out* got published—I went through those 7,000 copies in no time flat.

05-01:08:26

Bancroft: Really? And let me just ask you—and what happened with the *Earth Manual*?

05-01:08:29

Margolin: So in '74 *The East Bay Out* came out with Heyday. In '75, by that time, *Earth Manual* came out in '75.

05-01:08:35

Bancroft: Oh, okay. So actually *East Bay Out* came out before.

05-01:08:42

Margolin: Yeah, it was—

05-01:08:45

Bancroft: Oh, because you were in charge of it of the process whereas—

05-01:08:47

Margolin: Because I could just do it, whereas with Houghton Mifflin you had to have seasons and stuff like that. And then it never did as well as anybody thought it should do, but that's the story of books. It became a cult item. People—

05-01:09:03

Bancroft: *East Bay Out*?

05-01:09:04

Margolin: No, *Earth Manual*.

05-01:09:06

Bancroft: Oh, *Earth Manual*, yeah. Because I remember when *East Bay Out*—I don't remember when it came out, but I remember buying it a few years later and even then it was the guide for those of us who were living in the Bay Area and wanted to enjoy the nature right here.

05-01:09:24

Margolin: There's Wilderness Press and Tom Winnett had Wilderness Press. I went to the thirty-fifth anniversary of Wilderness Press, and they were talking to Tom about how brilliant he was and how wonderful he was and how prescient he

was. He said, “Hey listen,” he says, “you’re giving me a lot of credit. I was a lonely, goofy guy. I liked to go hiking. I did a book. How the hell was I to know that the year that I would do the book, all America would want to go hiking?” And there was this backpack revolution. Because the other places where the *East Bay Out* sold were places like Ski Hut and Wilderness Co-op and all these backpacking stores. And it was the beginning of natural history. It was the beginning of ecology. We forget how recent this kind of consciousness was.

05-01:10:19

Bancroft:

Well, certainly you were there riding the wave of and perpetuating the wave of this interest in ecology, the environment, natural history, people getting back to nature, whether you actually moved to another rural area or found it in your local environment.

05-01:10:42

Margolin:

Yeah, no. I always say that I made almost every mistake you can make, but I never went off to raise goats in Mendocino County. At least I never made that mistake.

05-01:10:54

Bancroft:

Well, you’d already lived on a beach in Vancouver Island so you’d done paradise.

05-01:11:02

Margolin:

Goats are not paradise. I don’t think goats and I would get along very well. I’m an urban character. I think Rina would have loved to have moved to the country and had pretty flowers around. I never would. I never wanted to. It’s funny. I listen to myself talk. Giving up houses and throwing out tables, there’s a kind of lurching decisive quality about it. But it was all kind of luminosities in the fog. I helped create this group called ACTA, Alliance for California Traditional Artists, and it’s a folk art group that funds folk art people. And we had a board meeting up here last Friday. And it was a wonderful board. We had Charlie Seemann from the Western Folk Life Center. We had Dan Sheehy from Smithsonian Folkways. We had various people that were there. And the question came up, what is Heyday Books all about. And I described it. It could be the description of my life. Is the story of the rabbi who was an archer. Did I ever tell you that story?

05-01:12:50

Bancroft:

No, but I’ve heard it.

05-01:12:52

Margolin:

Yeah, I probably did, and you just want to hear it again.

05-01:12:54

Bancroft:

No, I do.

05-01:12:55
Margolin:

Yeah. Someone asked the rabbi, “Why when I ask you a question you answer with a story?” He said, “It’s because I’m a terrible archer. If I were a better archer, I would draw the bow and I would shoot the arrow to the target and you’d get your answer. But I’m a terrible archer, so I put the arrow in the bow, I pull the string, I shoot the arrow in the air. I see where it lands and I draw a target around the arrow, and that’s the story.”

I was at the Presidio the other day. We’re putting a book together with the Presidio, perhaps, and we’re looking at how that book gets done. And I suggested that it get done with photos and captions because it’s such a complicated story. It best be done in fragments because with fragments you can be inconsistent. You can say one thing with one picture and another thing with another picture, whereas with text you end up having to give it coherence and hierarchy and meaning. And yet there’s something about that fragmentation that I like. It’ll make a difficult story to write. Maybe there’s a plot in there that I’m not seeing.

05-01:15:14
Bancroft:

And why the name Heyday? How did you come up with that?

05-01:15:20
Margolin:

I needed a name for a publishing company and I had already named Reuben “Reuben Heyday Margolin” because that was just what hippies did. And I named him Reuben because it had that old Jewish sense to it, and Heyday because it had this kind of sense of celebration and wonderment. And then I named Sadie “Sadie Cash.” When it came time to name a publishing company, I couldn’t think of a name, and Rina said something like, “Well, you’re so good at naming kids. Why don’t you just name a publishing company with the same creativity that you name our kids?” So I said, “We’ll call it Cash Books.” But that didn’t sound right so we decided to call it Heyday Books. And I think it was a placeholder. I think it was not meant to last. I never thought I’d be a publisher. I thought that I would publish a book, and I thought I’d go on and do other things. And I never thought I’d be a publisher. But then I published another book and another book, and before you know it hundreds of books and forty years have passed.

05-01:16:35
Bancroft:

And the placeholder is still in place.

05-01:16:37
Margolin:

The placeholder’s still there.

05-01:16:37
Bancroft:

Well, so, since it’s been about an hour and a half, I don’t want to tucker you out, and that might be a good place to stop since we’re at the end of the beginning of Heyday. Because I want to hear more about the next book and the next book. How long did it take you to empty the house of the 7,000

copies of *East Bay Out*? That must have probably taken a few years, I imagine.

05-01:17:16
Margolin

No, it didn't take very long at all. We had to move in that time, and we moved to--Dorothy Bryant. Do you know the writer Dorothy Bryant?

05-01:17:25
Bancroft:

I know the name.

05-01:17:26
Margolin:

She had a house that they were renting out, and we rented this house next to her. One of the wonderful anecdotes about Reuben, Reuben the artist, was we were in the house on Stuart Street, 1928 Stuart Street, and we come home one night and the door is wide open and the place has been burglarized. So I just said, "Shit." And I said, "Stay here." I walked in and the drawers were pulled open and things dumped out. The place was a wreck. And Reuben and Sadie are there and Reuben says, "What happened? What happened?" And I said, "Hey, listen, some bad people came and they stole things." I said, "But it's okay." I said, "We'll just clean up and we'll get new stuff. Don't worry about it." He says, "What do you mean they stole stuff?" I said, "Well, they just came in. They broke open the door and they came in and they stole things. And I think they stole my camera and the binoculars and stuff like that." He says, "They stole things?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "Jesus." So he runs through the living room and through the kitchen. And then I had a study in the back. And in the study in the back he had made a dragon out of plywood, and it had cotton batting pasted onto it and it had cores of toilet paper rolls for ears and stuff, and it had been painted gaudy colors. And he looked at it, he says, "Phfew." He says, "They didn't take the dragon." [laughter] So I said, "We're lucky." And he says, "How come?" [laughter]

05-01:19:00
Bancroft:

That's good. Trust children to put it all in perspective. And they didn't take the books either.

05-01:19:07
Margolin:

No, they didn't take the books. Those are theft proof. Those were good years in working out of the house. It was a bit of a strain. As the place got bigger, as there got to be too many kids and too many books and too many friends and stuff like that, I finally had to get it out of the house. But they were good years. By the time the late seventies rolled around I would end up working in the morning and then making lunch for people, and then Fred Cody and Bob Callahan and various people would come by and we'd sit around and talk and go back to work.

05-01:20:08
Bancroft:

Let's end with this and we'll pick up with it the next time. Where did your first office for Heyday open?

05-01:20:17
Margolin: The first office out of the house?

05-01:20:19
Bancroft: Well, yes. Out of the house.

05-01:20:21
Margolin: I think it must have been around '80 or '81, and it was at 2054 University Ave, and it was my friend Lloyd Alexander.

05-01:20:32
Bancroft: That's not where it was before? Oh, no, that same place? Okay.

05-01:20:35
Margolin: It was the same building, but it was on the fourth floor. There was one room.

05-01:20:46
Bancroft: Okay. You've been there for a long time. Yeah, yeah.

05-01:20:39
Margolin: And Lloyd Alexander had Golden Turtle Press. They were doing calendar publishing. He had this calendar company, and he rented me a room.

05-01:20:59
Bancroft: Cool. So shall we end there?

05-01:21:02
Margolin: Sounds great.

05-01:21:05
Bancroft: All right. Thank you.

05-01:21:09
Margolin: Thank you.

05-01:21:11
Bancroft: I had a question about when you said you met Dan at a beach, Leucadia Beach? I couldn't quite get the—

05-01:21:30
Margolin: Southern California.

05-01:21:33
Bancroft: Yeah, okay. I thought you said Leucadia but I wasn't sure if I had heard right.

05-01:21:37
Margolin: There is a Leucadia.

05-01:21:40
Bancroft: Well, there is a Leucadia. I don't know if there's a Leucadia Beach. Maybe you didn't mention the name of the beach. Just some beach.

- 05-01:21:44
Margolin: It was somewhere north of San Diego. It was somewhere—
- 05-01:21:48
Bancroft: Okay. So it could have been Leucadia. That's part of where I start looking things up. I found myself looking like how to spell something. You stay it and then I'm looking it up online and then I end up—like Dave Hupp?
- 05-01:22:02
Margolin: Dave Hupp. H-U-P-P.
- 05-01:22:05
Bancroft: Okay. I just want to make sure I got that. Wow. Well, I'm going to have to bring you my copies of my books for you to sign one day.
- 05-01:22:20
Margolin: You can take this one.
- 05-01:22:21
Bancroft: No, I am not taking your only copy. I'm Harriet the Spy. I can find one online.
- 05-01:22:30
Margolin: They're publishing it again through Heyday. Ordered it from Randall.
- 05-01:22:34
Bancroft: Oh. You have copies of it? But you don't have—
- 05-01:22:38
Margolin: It's been out of print for so long.
- 05-01:22:40
Bancroft: Because that's one of the things I'm doing actually. A couple of years ago when I decided I wanted to live at the cabin I had driven down through Humboldt National Park on my way back from visiting people up in Oregon and Washington and I stopped at a trail that had this reclamation information about how the old logging trails had been reclaimed and I thought, "Oh, that's what I want to do at my place because my place was logged." All of that part of Willett's was logged in 1950 and so there are all these logging trails and it had all overgrown and so I am trying—and there's a creek there that runs from January to May if there's water. So I've been trying to do trail reclamation and even build trails and a friend of mine came with his two sons, fifteen and thirteen—
- 05-01:23:33
Margolin: Oh, great age.
- 05-01:23:33
Bancroft: —and they just loved it. And one of them, the younger one is reading this book, how to survive in the woods. So they just had such a great time and they were building. I would say, "Oh, the CCC used to build these trails with inside pieces of rebar and some redwood, some moon boards that had come from a

couple of redwood trees that came down on my land.” And so they’re building the kind of trail steps that you’d find. All of this stuff is sort of still new to me. I’m an urban girl trying to go back to the land but—

05-01:24:07

Margolin: Hey, I wrote this in ’73, and ’73 was forty years ago. People have found other things.

05-01:24:14

Bancroft: I know, I know.

05-01:24:14

Margolin: There’s more up to date information on how to do this.

05-01:24:17

Bancroft: Yes, I know. Well, yeah. But it’s interesting. I’ve been figuring it out on my own, but I need to read something real.

05-01:24:28

Margolin: As we were talking, one peculiar thing was my friend Marty Krasney called or he emailed me, and he emailed me a link to a website where you could test your accent. Ordinarily I don’t pay any attention to that stuff. But it asked you different questions like dawn, D-A-W-N and Don, D-O-N, are they pronounced the same or are they pronounced differently and there are about ten questions. And he said he answered the questions, and then he pressed a button and it told him what he thought he had hidden for years. It says, “You’re definitely from Philadelphia.” So I tried it, and it says, “You’re definitely from Boston.” And then I asked my kids to try it, see where they got their talk from, and it said that they were definitely from Boston.

05-01:25:17

Bancroft: Oh, interesting. That’s funny.

05-01:25:19

Margolin: Isn’t that funny?

05-01:25:2162--

Bancroft: Is Rina from Boston, too?

05-01:25:24

Margolin: Well, she grew up in Germany.

05-01:25:27

Bancroft: Oh, that’s right.

05-01:25:29

Margolin: She came to the United States when she was ten. And her accent, what it says, is from northeast. So it’s—

05-01:25:83

Bancroft: That’s kind of vague.

05-01:25:44
Margolin:

Yeah.

05-01:25:45
Bancroft:

That's funny. Yeah, I remember in the very first one, our first interview, listening to you talking about the milk-drawn carts and the people who were selling things on the streets off the carts and them calling out and just the very strong Yiddish accent that was coming through the English, the bottles. You talked about the bottles.

05-01:26:13
Margolin:

“Reggs und bawdels.” [Rags and bottles].

05-01:26:17
Bancroft:

Yes. I thought—

05-01:26:17
Margolin:

That was Stevie Weitzman's father. It was rags and bottles.

05-01:26:20
Bancroft:

Yeah. And you just pulled that accent right out. It's very lovely.

05-01:26:25
Margolin:

That's how real people talk.

05-01:26:27
Bancroft:

That's right.

05-01:26:28
Margolin:

I'm not sure what the rest of this world is.

05-01:26:32
Bancroft:

Well, fabulous. Thank you. I just so much love hearing your stories.

05-01:26:35
Margolin:

Well, I'm just so flattered by this attention.

[End of Interview]

Interview 6: March 8, 2012

[Begin Audio File 6]

06-00:00:00

Bancroft: Well, I think what I would like is for you to read them at some point, collect them, and then make not only corrections—I mean, I can find my typos but things that you want still deleted. As I've been going along, I've been cutting out little things like this conversation or, you know, things we say or, you know, false starts. So it's somewhat cleaned up, but I also believe, and there are those who enjoy looking at speech analysis, language, the natural language, so I leave it as is. But it's up to you to cut whatever you would like. But also, it's in your computer so you can make corrections and delete everything else and say, "This is the official copy," and send me a copy back.

06-00:00:54

Margolin: That's not a bad way to go. That's smart.

06-00:01:00

Bancroft: It's in your control. There's sometimes even where you can move something around or throw in an extra statement. I mean, I don't know.

06-00:01:12

Margolin: I might throw in extra statements or I can do stuff like that. There were some things that were funny. I think I said I was hugely gratified and you wrote I was ugly gratified.

06-00:01:26

Bancroft: Oh, okay. Well, as I said, I am still trying to do these in the midst of massive changes in my life.

06-00:01:35

Margolin: Well, okay, this is a favor you're doing me. It's just great. And in terms of voice, did I talk about taking that test as to where you come from?

06-00:01:46

Bancroft: Yes, you did but that wasn't on—that was—yeah, no.

06-00:01:50

Margolin: I don't mean it as part of—

06-00:01:52

Bancroft: But actually, yeah.

06-00:01:53

Margolin: I'm just surprised that somebody would recognize that I'm from Boston.

06-00:01:57

Bancroft: Oh, definitely. See, and that's part of the problem with the transcript, is that some of the things around accent, intonation. I put in where we laugh. We laugh a lot. And I was so moved by your story about Reuben, and that was clearly you retelling about Reuben's early childhood and the problems he

went through. Your voice was breaking, and I was trying to convey some of that. And I have this new puppy. There's nothing at all the same but your story—

06-00:02:33

Margolin: Oh, yes, it is the same.

06-00:02:33

Bancroft: Well, your story about caring for Reuben in that moment where you see him, just kind of “see this kid through this fucking ordeal” and how that parental dedication changed your relationship with him. Stories like that are really wonderful and I appreciate hearing them. Those are the things that I mentioned later resonate with me, and I think certainly will with anybody reading and listening.

06-00:03:04

Margolin: So let's plunge on.

06-00:03:05

Bancroft: Onward.

06-00:03:08

Margolin: Where are we?

06-00:03:08

Bancroft: You had just moved Heyday to its new office, its official office outside of your house. So *East Bay Out* had come out and you were able to sell it pretty well in local bookstores. You talked about the effervescence of bookstores and distributors and publishers at that time. *Earth Manual* was just coming out in 1975. So I wanted to be sure that we take some time—some of your stories have shifted, as they will tend to do over time as you're following a stream.

06-00:03:47

Margolin: A thought rather than a—

06-00:03:48

Bancroft: But I want, one, to hear more about Sadie's birth and early childhood and Jake's at some point and then whatever was going—so that's a theme. Your children and family, and then whatever was happening with Heyday, the next books. Presumably you start publishing other people's books. How did that decision happen? What was that process like? So there we are. This is March 8, 2012.

06-00:04:38

Margolin: Well, let's see. That was funny, all that stuff about moving up into the campground and stuff. That was just ridiculous. That was-- [laughter] What a fool. So funny to be reading about myself as if I were a different person and wondering who the hell this guy is. We left it off when Reuben was very little. I'm trying to remember the sequence of things. So Sadie was born in '74, which was the year that *East Bay Out* came out. And one of my fondest

memories of Sadie's birth was—she was born at home. She was born in that house we rented from Dorothy Bryant on Stuart Street. What Rina said, by the way, about Reuben's birth, was that the reason we chose the medical center at Mount Parnassus was because it was cheap. And it was an alternative birth center. That was her memory. It is probably true. Sadie was born at home, and I think it was part of something that was there at the time, was self-sufficiency. It was part of what Heyday was about, it was part of what I was about. I wasn't going to work for the East Bay Regional Park District anymore. I wasn't going to work for anybody anymore. Not only wasn't I going to live in a house, I wasn't going to work for anybody. Just part of becoming totally difficult. So there was a kind of self-sufficiency. There was this whole business of doing my own book, of writing it, of designing it, of typesetting it. And I don't know how much I talked about that. Did I talk about the joys of designing the—

06-00:07:31
Bancroft:

A little bit. Just the physicality that you were able to produce in each step of the way.

06-00:07:36
Margolin:

Yeah. And it was a pride that I was able to do things, that I think I was a kind of clumsy kid that lived in the daydream. And this whole business of having practical capacity was such a surprise to me. And it was so rewarding that I could actually typeset and design and do things like that. And I remember that there was one time when I was doing *East Bay Out* on the light table, I would put the page number on the right-hand side of the page, then I'd put the page number on the left-hand side of the page, then I'd center it, then I'd put it up above, then I'd put it down below. And I'd think about which decision best exemplified the beauty of the work, as if it really mattered, as if anybody was ever going to notice. But there was just something in making those decisions. There was something in doing something real. It was very energizing and very fulfilling and very self-gratifying. I liked the person that I was becoming under these things. And I didn't like the person that I was otherwise. Was rebellious. Was surly. Covered up inadequacies with belligerence. But the person that was actually doing stuff, he was a kind of creative force. It was kind of moving something out into the world. It was creating something through love and through respect and giving it off to the world. I really liked that.

And there was the self-sufficiency. We were so damn broke that I remember there was one time, I think we were down to one light bulb, and we used to move the light bulb from one room to another room because we were broke. This was both in the VW days. We'd get food from the back of supermarkets, saying that we had a rabbit to feed or something, and we needed vegetables and stuff. So we'd get the stuff that people would throw away.

06-00:10:10
Bancroft:

Yeah. Really good food.

06-00:10:10
Margolin:

Really great food. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And the lamb necks at nineteen cents a pound. And odd parts of animals. And I got into collecting foods in the wild and fixing my own VW was a revelation. Did I talk about that?

06-00:10:38
Bancroft:

Yes. Your wonderful *VW Repair Book for Idiots*. Yeah. When you mentioned about the practicality, that was one of those early forms of it, was being able to take care of your own car. And then later the table, too, thinking about your wonderful oak table that you made so carefully and lovingly and then sold.

06-00:10:59
Margolin:

Yeah. But that's what it was. It was to master the crafts of woodworking, of car repair. Part of it was the era. It was the *Whole Earth Catalogue*. It was people going off into the woods. Self-sufficiency was something in the air. Just as natural history was in the air, just as Indians were in the air. It's not as if I invented these things. They were around. And I just responded to them. But part of that self-sufficiency was having your own kid at home. But we had it with a midwife and a doctor was there, a guy by the name of Mike Witte who had a practice in Berkeley and later on went off to Martin, to Point Reyes, where he was kind of a well-known family physician. I think there were two Mike Wittes out there. I think in a small town there were two guys named Michael Witte, which caused no end of confusion. They were both doctors. [laughter]

When Sadie was born, Rina had a friend of hers over. I remember I was in the bedroom. It was an ordinary and dramatic birth, and it was a girl. I was just so astounded it was a girl. We had no idea whether it would be a girl or a boy.

06-00:12:56
Bancroft:

Why were you stunned?

06-00:13:05
Margolin:

I think I'd been expecting a boy. I think rationally I knew that there was a toss-up, but I'd never had girls in the family. Just had a brother. The whole thought that I would be the father to a girl was something I didn't know how to do, and it was just this miracle of having this girl. And then Reuben, meanwhile, was off in the other room with this woman that was taking care of him. And then when, at the proper time, we called Reuben in to see his new baby, and Reuben came in and I don't know where the hell he'd got it, but he was wearing a cowboy hat and a gun. And he comes in and he looks and he says, "Oh," suspicious and surly. And I said, "Reuben, Reuben, it's a girl." And Reuben looks at me and his first words were, "I hate girls." [laughter] That defined the Reuben/Sadie relationship for the next several years. [laughter]

06-00:14:20
Bancroft:

And he was four?

06-00:14:21

Margolin:

Yeah, he was four. And Sadie was a joy. Right from the earliest days Sadie was glued to the outside world. Sadie was always glued to the outside world. Sadie always was so responsive to other people and to what was going on and sociable and this great curiosity about things and this capacity to charm. She had the most wonderful capacity to charm. And she had a capacity to just imitate. She would go along with people. She would go along with the flow of things. Reuben had my capacity to always be outside things, to define himself around something, around himself, around some other—he was hearing some other song or didn't know how to join in the rhythms or whatever it was. Sadie liked people. I'm not sure that I ever liked people that much.

06-00:15:36

Bancroft:

Do you think she was more like Rina in that respect?

06-00:15:39

Margolin:

No, Rina's tremendously shy. Rina's tremendously—

06-00:15:44

Bancroft:

So she was an anomaly. Well, you're sociable.

06-00:15:47

Margolin:

Yeah, I'm sociable. One of the anecdotes that always sums Sadie up for me is we went with some friends up to the lake up in the—[break in audio]

06-00:17:02

Bancroft:

Okay, let's continue with where you left off about Sadie. Actually I was going to ask you if there's anything about her name, why you chose Sadie as a name.

06-00:17:17

Margolin:

For the same reason I chose Reuben as a name and the same reason I chose Jacob as a name. It was some tribute to an older generation of Jews. The people that I grew up with had names like Sadie and Sophie and Bessie and Molly. It was kind of an older generation name. It had gone out of fashion, and because it had gone out of fashion—it wasn't that I wanted to bring the culture back, but there was a feeling that I wanted to bring back. The feeling, the Yiddish word for it is *haimish*. *Haimish*. And *haimish* is beautiful and lovely, but in a homey way. Not homely but homey way, in a domestic way. And there was something that I really liked about it all, that feeling that I liked about it all. And there was also a playfulness to it. People were no longer called Sadie. I also loved the meter of it. Sadie Cash Margolin. There was something in the metric quality that I liked, the way the vowels and consonants played together and the way the whole thing sounded. Just seemed to slip into some groove that was very satisfying. It was a very satisfying name. I don't think that I ever knew any Sadie. Yes, God, there was one Sadie. The funny thing, the Sadies that I knew I never really liked all that much. It was Sadie Mostow. It was Verna Mostow's mom and Verna Mostow was one of the kids that I grew up with. I was starting to talk about Sadie—

06-00:19:44
Bancroft:

About an anecdote that you had.

06-00:19:47
Margolin:

One of the anecdotes that always summed Sadie up was we were off at Tule Lake watching birds, and there were myself and Rina and there were a few other people there, and we had one pair of binoculars between us and we're passing the binoculars along. And you'd look over and there were these rafts of geese and ducks. It was just spectacular. And somebody would look through it and go, "Wow," and somebody else would go look through it and go, "Wow," and then you handed it to Sadie and she'd look through it and go, "Wow." And I was wondering what she was seeing because the lenses were so far apart. She was just a little kid, that you couldn't quite get the thing up to her face right. So when it came to me, I said, "Wow," and I put the lens caps on and I gave it to her and she looked at it and she went, "Oh, wow." [laughter] And it wasn't that she was looking at the birds. What she was responding to were the people around her and she had joined in on it. And that was what Sadie would do. She would kind of join in. She would play on your playground. I always wanted to play on my playground. Sadie would play on other people's playgrounds. Sadie was not sick. Sadie was funny. There was a kind of sweetness and a gentleness to her but there was also a deep rebellion to her. Did I tell you the story of my writing her a note from school?

06-00:21:35
Bancroft:

No.

06-00:21:36
Margolin:

Oh, this was such a wonderful story, that she was sick one day and she asked me to write a note excusing her absence. So I wrote a note, "Please excuse Sadie from being absent yesterday. She was sick. Signed Malcolm Margolin." And she went off to school and the next morning I'm at work and I get a call from the principal. "Your daughter has forged your signature." And I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, we have this note that says she was sick yesterday, and it's a forged signature." I said, "No, I wrote that note." I said, "My handwriting is lousy, but I wrote that note." And there was a long pause and the principal said, "That's funny. The signature doesn't match the signature on the other notes we've got." [laughter] And it was always with such pride that I'd go down there and have to bail my kids out. I loved this rebelliousness in them.

Sadie would come around with me to these various Indian events more than anybody. Reuben didn't come around very much with me because I didn't get into it until Reuben was older. Sadie was very young when I got into this Indian stuff and Sadie would come around with this Indian stuff. And I remember once explaining to somebody: we'd go off to Hupa and we'd hear the Hupa language spoken, we'd see the World Renewal dances; and we'd go up to the Yurok reservation and hear Georgiana Trull speak the wonderful Yurok language; and we'd go up to the Karuk and we'd hear Julian Lang and

Margaret Chase, I think her name was, and Violet Super speak the wonderful Karuk language; and we'd go off to Achomawi country; and we'd go off to Miwok country; and we'd hear all these wonderful languages and attend all these ceremonies. And Sadie was about five or six or seven and she recently characterized it—we were reminiscing about it and she recently characterized it as 95 percent boredom and 5 percent complete heartbreak. And then I always thought that she was going to be the last witness to this, that she's the only person, there is nobody else that would go around to all these events. Most of the Indians stayed in their own world, their own territory. And I would travel freely. Then when she's an old woman she's going to be the last person who will have witnessed this beautiful world. I always thought it was just so peculiar that it would be in the hands of some little kid from Berkeley. Not that she remembers it all that well but just to have seen it.

She was an utter delight. She was an utter joy to be with. She was playful, but she was so much into her friends. Somebody offered to give me one of those islands off the Richmond coast, the Brothers. There's a lighthouse on one of them. And if I wanted to live in that lighthouse, then they'd give it to me. And so I came back and I was—Reuben was thrilled that we'd be living in a lighthouse. Sadie, I don't know where little girls learn this thing, but she balled up her fists and she stuck her fists on her hips, she said, "No." [laughter] That I was going to take her away from her friends, I was going to take her away from her world. She was going to have to spend her time with the stupid family out on a goddamn island. She lived for her friends. She lived for her friendships. She lived for her linkages with other people.

06-00:25:53
Bancroft:

Well, I asked you about Reuben, so I should do the same with Sadie, to just make the big leap to say what she's doing now with her life. And there'll be other stories along the way but just—

06-00:26:11
Margolin:

The most amazing thing is that she had trouble in school. And Rina and I fought viciously about this. She was diagnosed as dyslexic, and I thought it was a crock of shit. The mere fact that she reversed letters and didn't read well and stuff like that, that was me to the core. I always had that problem. And I thought it was just garden variety of different people learning differently, you just don't pay much attention to it and it goes away. But Rina made a big deal of it, and it caused no ends of tension between us. She ended up going to Hampshire and then she dropped out and then she went to Laney College and she met a wonderful teacher there. [Note. This "wonderful teacher" was Kim Bancroft, the person conducting these interviews.] And then she went off to Mills, and she graduated, and then she went to UCLA and got a master's and a PhD in public health and she's now working doing post-doc work in public health. Got two kids, happily married to a guy who's a theater producer and teaches theater at the Marin Theater Company, I think it's called. I'm blocking on the precise name for it. I think it's the Marin Theater Company. She's

wonderfully adept at juggling family and work and play and still a delight to be with.

I finished the *East Bay Out* in '74. I published it in '74 and then I was looking for a quick book to write. This whole business of doing something myself was just so wonderful that I wanted to do a quick book, and I decided that I'd write a book about Indian life in the Bay area.

06-00:28:32
Bancroft:

Why?

06-00:28:33
Margolin:

Because when I was working for East Bay Regional Park District I gave nature walks and I didn't know anything about nature, and I knew less about Indians. But it didn't stop me from talking about them. And I thought I knew something. And then I thought there was also no book out on Indians, and it would be an easy topic because they were simple people that lived under oak trees and an acorn would drop down and they'd cook it up, and there wasn't much to their lives. And there was something that I admired in this putative simplicity, in this direct living, in this lack of complexity. And there was no literature out. In the years after Alcatraz there was an interest in Indians. I was very much affected by books like *Black Elk Speaks* and until I met him the Carlos Castaneda books, the earliest ones. He was a fascist. He was a fraud.

And I thought I knew something and I thought it was an easy book. I gave myself three months to research it and three months to write it. And I had been so successful in writing the *Earth Manual* in four months that I thought this was plenty of time. And I got into it and discovered that there was a bit more to it than I thought. And at that time nobody had ever done anything like this, this comprehensive look at a people in California. And the information was scattered all over the damn place. It was scattered all over. You'd read diaries, you'd read archeological reports, you'd read anthropological surveys. I'd read old newspapers, I'd read county histories. I'd go into archives, just catch a mention here and catch a mention there. And it was the days long before computers and Xerox machines were still fairly new. So I would read something and I would copy it out. And I rented a study on Dwight Way. It was underneath an apartment house next to the laundry room. It was a dark little place. Gee, I haven't thought about that for years. Go through the laundry room into this dark little study, and there I'd read stuff.

And I had a whole bunch of big envelopes that were labeled, and if I read something like about how the basket weavers would collect sedge root and size them and weave them into baskets, I would take and I might copy that down several times. I might copy it down one time and put it into an envelope marked "Basket weaving," and then I might do another envelope marked "Gathering" and another envelope marked "Plants" and stuff. And I would end up just copying these things and having little scraps of paper. It was

almost like a kitty litter box. I just had scraps of paper and I put them in these envelopes. And then the envelopes began to build up. And this is when we were really poor.

And the damn project just kept getting longer and longer the more I got into it. If somebody told me that this whole thing would take three years I never would have started it. There was information to collect from odd places but there was the whole business of really understanding something, of understanding something afresh. And I was so ignorant about Indian life that when I began it, I didn't realize there were still Indians in California. I thought that it was going to be all library research. And then all of a sudden they were goddamn people. How terribly inconvenient. So we ended up going out and meeting people. And I remember that I would collect information and then—

When it came time to write a chapter or a section I would end up taking like a section on deer hunting. I would end up fasting for half-a-day or a day and then I would take the envelope and I would dump it out on the table.

06-00:34:08

Bancroft: That's okay.

[End Audio File 6.1]

Interview 7: April 11, 2012

[Begin Audio File 7]

Bancroft: So going back to the archipelago. I could see that working.

07-00:02:08

Margolin: I can see that. It's the strength of how I present things, anyway, is not overarching systematic views of things but stories that are entertaining and moving and structured. I had the most amazing thing happen to me on Sunday. The most amazing conversation I've ever had with any human being in my entire life. It was Easter Sunday, and I went out with Rina and Reuben and his wife Amber, and their kid Niko, and Sadie and her husband Josh, and their kids, Arden and Eliania. We went out and had a picnic at Sunol. And there was an empty picnic table next to it, so I lay down at that picnic table and I took a nap and I fell asleep. And I woke up and there was this little girl standing there, and she looks at me and she says, "Oh, you're not dead." And I said, "No, I'm not dead, but this is the first time I've gotten up in over a hundred years." And she said, "That's because it's Easter." [laughter]

07-00:03:22

Bancroft: That's so great. [laughter]

07-00:03:26

Margolin: Isn't that an amazing—

07-00:03:28

Bancroft: Oh, that's very good. That's very—

07-00:03:30

Margolin: It was such an amazing conversation. [laughter]

07-00:03:34

Bancroft: I'm sure she went home with a story to tell.

07-00:03:37

Margolin: Well, that's the kind of stuff I like. I'm not sure how that connects to my life or how it connects to the world, but it's this self-contained structure. It made you laugh. It brought life to stuff.

07-00:03:58

Bancroft: And so it's interesting. I think the question will be how, again, the fragments connect, the transition and framing. So that's a story that's self-contained. You just told me a story about this Sunday. It wasn't necessarily because of your proving some other point with the story. And I think in some ways that can just be a way. It's like a garden of these flowers coming up, too.

07-00:04:27

Margolin: Yeah, right.

07-00:04:28

Bancroft:

And you don't have to say, "Well, here's the rose bed and the roses are part of this family and now you can enjoy the roses that are in the rose bed." You're just like, "Look at the roses and enjoy them." So I think that can work just as well. And we can try it. I think that's part of what we're talking about there, is what can we try that's going to work and that's going to represent you the best, the way you feel is valuable.

07-00:04:52

Margolin:

Yeah. This trying to put it into the form of a conventional biography, where there's early influences and these influences accumulated and formed the personality that led to something like that. It seems—

07-00:05:12

Bancroft:

Conventional and you're not conventional.

07-00:05:13

Margolin:

—forced. I don't believe it. I don't believe it.

07-00:05:23

Bancroft:

Well, I do but—

07-00:05:27

Margolin:

The fact that I went hiking with Walter Pitts means nothing. What means something is who Walter Pitts was. The magnitude of that mind that you come upon. That sense that the world outside is so damned interesting rather than the world inside. That the world was a playground for the mind. The traveling with him, the alcohol. I seem to be resisting putting things into some sort of structure and order, and this has been a habit of mine.

07-00:06:35

Bancroft:

Well, that's you leaving the house and going to live in a tent because it was too conventional. So in a sense that fits and I can see why you would want a structure of the story of your life that is also non-conventional and doesn't fit into a box. That totally makes sense.

07-00:06:56

Margolin:

I'm so comfortable having twenty-five books a year that we publish, each of them separate entities, each of them with their own dynamic and their own story.

07-00:07:05

Bancroft:

I do think that--and this goes back to even what we were saying about Chick [Ernest Callenbach]--there's those of us, we want a reason, we want to see cause and effect and, of course, that's part of how my brain works, is to understand things and then at the same time there can be the Buddhist in me that just says this is how it is or there isn't a reason. So I do think there are things. For example, you talked about that trip with Walter going out and Frank going out west as being transformative, that it changed your life, it opened a world. And to the extent that you do self-analysis and say, "Okay,

that was a link in this chain of events that eventually led you back out west,” to perhaps continue to explore, maybe, maybe not. Maybe that doesn’t matter. In a sense, that’s what I hear you saying. I think that’s what a conventional biography tries to do, is see a chain of events and give some understanding of how the man you are today got to this place. And I tried to put that in almost as a theme, that you resist those kinds of definitions and that sense of a clear purpose. One of our comments in the transcript was that you said, “Do people have plans? How amazing. Some people make plans for themselves, carry them out.” And I think those kinds of comments about yourself should certainly be in there because that’s part of how you see your life and how you’ve been able to kind of episodically create what you’ve created, by just taking the next chance and the next chance.

07-00:09:05
Margolin:

If you were in there as a person, also, that would allow us to have these discussions in the book. That you can disagree with me in the book. If you disagree with me in the voice of Kim Bancroft. If it’s a voice of an overall narrator that’s taking charge of the framing of it, then it becomes—

07-00:09:40
Bancroft:

Disembodied.

07-00:09:42
Margolin:

Disembodied and authoritative.

07-00:09:53
Bancroft:

I agree with that.

07-00:09:54
Margolin:

And it could be the dialogue between two people, one of whom is looking for rationality and meaning and cause and effect, and the other one who is steadily and perhaps unreasonably denying that any such things exist. And that maybe this is an openness to possibility. It’s a virtue and a defect.

07-00:10:35
Bancroft:

Well, I think that could work. Just the very fact that I ask the questions. We could just have it be our conversations and edit it, go through the transcripts more. We can both continue to pare away at what we don’t like in the questions and answers and tighten it up. But the fact that I’m asking questions that you respond to sometimes with a deeper analysis of what was going on or you say, “I don’t know,” or there was no reason in itself shows what the relationship is. And it might stand alone in that sense.

07-00:11:27
Margolin:

I like where this is heading. I like where this is heading because it leaves space in the manuscript. It leaves space between the anecdotes; it leaves space between definition and vagueness. It’s splotches of paint on a canvas rather than a stilted roadmap.

07-00:12:02
Bancroft: I have to say, even in writing that piece, I was noticing how—one reason I escaped the university and academic writing is because it is so extremely stilted. If I had to write one more piece about standardized testing with the introduction and the literature on the field and the methodology and all that, I just thought I would die. And it was really fun when I started writing my blog because my blog is just a very personal approach. Writing the piece about you, I could feel like, “Okay—“

07-00:12:42
Margolin: Come on in, Mike. Do you know Kim Bancroft?

07-00:12:45
Bancroft: No. So hi.

07-00:12:47
McCone: Mike.

07-00:12:47
Margolin: This is Mike McCone.

07-00:00:00
Bancroft: Oh, hi, nice to meet you.

07-00:12:49
McCone: Hello, Kim.

07-00:12:49
Bancroft: Nice to meet you.

07-00:12:51
McCone: Why are you saying that with such—

07-00:12:53
Bancroft: I don’t know. I just—

07-00:12:54
Margolin: Because she’s heard about you.

07-00:12:55
Bancroft: Well, yeah. You’re—

07-00:12:56
McCone: No, no.

07-00:12:57
Bancroft: Well, I’m happy to meet anybody who’s a friend of Malcolm’s.

07-00:13:01
McCone: Well, you’re kept busy then, aren’t you? [laughter]

07-00:13:07
Margolin: [laughter] She’s interviewing me about my life.

07-00:13:13

McCone: Take you a long time.

07-00:13:14

Bancroft: It is. We're only up to 1978 so far.

07-00:13:17

McCone: Oh. Well, you're four years into Heyday then. This is terrific. Many of us around here have moved against a rather immovable rock to do exactly what you're doing.

[portion deleted]

07-00:15:28

Margolin: She snuck in.

07-00:15:29

Bancroft: I was persistent, too.

07-00:15:32

McCone: Oh, well, that's a very good attribute. And so you will be able to get this published?

07-00:15:39

Bancroft: That is what we were discussing.

07-00:15:42

McCone: Oh.

07-00:15:42

Margolin: We were discussing publishing it for the fortieth birthday of Heyday.

07-00:15:47

McCone: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. That's a very good idea. That's a very good—and we would publish it, do you think? Why not?

07-00:15:54

Margolin: I assume. Unless there's a better publisher.

07-00:15:59

McCone: Can't think of one. All right. Well, I will leave you to do your thing. Nice to have met you.

07-00:16:04

Bancroft: Nice to meet you.

[portion deleted]

Bancroft: What other thoughts are you having about the book and about getting more [interviews], getting more about the history of Heyday? I remember originally you said you wanted to be able to incorporate the voices of people who've

worked here. I don't know what else you've thought about or are thinking about?

07-00:18:26

Margolin:

I thought about incorporating voices of people that work here. I thought about talking to Rina, talking to the kids. I'm uneasy with the focus on me. I think the thing of beauty is Heyday. And it reflects me. The reason I'm given awards is not because I'm so wonderful, it's because of what I've created. I put a lot of myself into the creation of the place. Put a lot of myself into the creation of beautiful kids. I put a lot of myself into the creation of things around me. And I think I'd like a bit more emphasis on that. It may be that I tell good stories to deflect rather than to explain. But we keep coming back to this and I don't know where this—because you end up interviewing me about myself, I end up talking about myself a whole lot. I talk about myself as if I were a character in a story.

I remember when I used to write fiction, I would end up having these complicated plots. There'd be good people and evil people and there'd be confrontations between them, and there'd be a resonance between past and present. There'd be all these things.

And I suddenly realized that this was me written out in some other form and maybe this place is me written out in some other form. I don't know. There's just this great uneasiness around the character that you present in the first paragraph walking down the street with his arms behind his back with the long locks of hair, looking like John Muir, seemingly deep in thought, yet aware of everything around him. I'm not aware of everything around me. I'm nearsighted. I'm daydreaming. I bump into things. You walk through the door of something called Heyday and you see this, that, and the other thing. You see places [I've] created, a legacy of beauty and integrity—we've given voice to a whole lot. We see people working who are joyful in their work. We see a place that is probably unique in your experience and my experience. We look to see how this thing happens, how this thing works. And the person that formed it and the way in which it was—I would be more tempted to approach it from that indirect way.

07-00:23:37

Bancroft:

In the context of Heyday rather than—

07-00:23:38

Margolin:

In the context of Heyday.

07-00:23:40

Bancroft:

—you as a solitary famed individual.

07-00:23:46

Margolin:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Things don't have to be explained, they have to be felt, they have to be lived, they have to be understood. It's much more essential that something be felt and lived than it be explained and put into context. And

things don't have to be coherent. They don't have to add up. They just have to be alive. They just have to be fun. They have to be stimulating. They have to move us in some deep way. It's like people who like to read novels and stuff. It's the other worlds into which you enter and to which you flow. It's because they bring you out of yourself as they bring you into yourself. I'm stumbling around. Let's see, what do I do when I interview people? Isn't it funny? I have the greatest curiosity about other people. I love to know how their lives are, I love to know how they work. Okay. This is not going anywhere. I love not to create traps for people, where you get trapped into identities and definition. I love to be surprised by people. I love the unpredictability of the world. I love the fact that I don't know anything you couldn't talk me out of in five minutes. I love the fact that I'm wrong all the time. That I meet people that I think are the most wonderful people in the world and they turn out to be jerks, and I meet people that I think are total jerks and they turn out to be saints. Just the continual surprise of the world. There's a celebration of surprise. I've written beautiful stuff about Indians. I've written beautiful pieces on individuals, on values, on ways of seeing things. Well, I don't understand what this reluctance is to deal with myself. I just don't. But it is. It's strong.

07-00:28:02
Bancroft:

You think it relates at all to the shyness we talked about at the very beginning? That the focus on you just becomes—it's uncomfortable to have eyes looking at you?

07-00:28:24
Margolin:

There was a story that I told you once, and that's the story of looking for my father's praise and not getting it and creating a character. Pretending that there was this other person in my class named Steven. And I would come home and tell my father all the wonderful things that Steven had done, which were actually things that I had done. But I would tell him that Steven had done them, and he would praise Steven and wanted to know why I couldn't be more like Steven. And yet if I told him that I did those same things, he'd be critical. And there's something in there of seeing yourself reflected in others that I find very easy and very satisfying. And this is not a cause and effect, that this happened and therefore it caused that to happen. It's a psychological position. It's a lack of self-perception, it's a lack of—I don't dress well, I don't groom myself well. I was once talking to a beautiful woman, and she was talking about how every minute of the day she's aware of how she looks to other people. She's aware of how she presents herself to other people. I have no awareness of this whatsoever. I'm just not aware of it. I don't think about it. I don't think about how I look, I don't think about what I wear. I don't think about the effect that I have. Even now as I'm talking about not talking about myself, I'm talking about myself. And I'm clearly not doing very well at it. I'm clearly much more articulate. I could talk about Indian transmission of knowledge with eloquence and certainty, and I'm not an Indian and I have no idea what I'm—but I can talk about that world with eloquence and certainty.

The inner world is a puzzlement. Each of these books is a world unto itself. Each of these stories is a world unto itself.

07-00:31:36

Bancroft:

And you gave your good graces to each one and probably had a lot to do with editing, shaping, bringing along an author in a certain way. So your mark is left on each of those books, and I think a book about Heyday obviously has as a central character the person who formed Heyday and whose vision led to what Heyday is and to this wealth of material, and in turn has led to having the impact, as I said, on California, as you were recently recognized for. And so the curiosity for the people who admire such amazing production and creativity is a kind of natural questioning about where did this come from, how did somebody create this? What was the vision? What are the values? What's the through line here? There's obviously an obvious through line in terms of Native American culture and your interest in support of various ethnic cultures and history and botany. It's diverse. And I can see a resistance for somebody who is nonconventional to not want to be made into a celebrity, a hero, a cultural icon. And at the same time it is natural for us to question, How do people get to be where they are? And that's kind of been what's driving me all along.

07-00:33:23

Margolin:

That's your question, and your question can be in that book.

07-00:33:26

Bancroft:

Yes, and your answer is in the book, too, which is—

07-00:33:30

Margolin:

And my answer can be in that book also.

07-00:33:31

Bancroft:

Definitely.

07-00:33:33

Margolin:

We can spar over the book.

07-00:33:35

Bancroft:

Right. Speaking of the recent awards ceremony, what was that like for you?

07-00:33:52

Margolin:

Well, it was very gratifying. It's good to be thought well of. And I had to give a talk for about fifteen minutes or so when I received it. And the focus I put on was what stories I would tell at that talk. The people that came there were heads of various foundations and heads of cultural institutions and culturally powerful people. So it was the thought of how I could pull them into some kind of a scheme for doing some more books, how I could get some more money. There was an awareness that this kind of national recognition would make some of the projects that I have more fundable and all of that. I began the talk by talking about—it's probably apocryphal, but there was supposed to be a poetry contest in Spain before Franco. I think it was in Barcelona. And

third prize for the poetry contest was a silver rose. A perfectly made silver rose, the leaves beaten thin, delicate stem, little thorns. The petals curl. It was a beautiful little silver rose. Second prize was a golden rose of equally exquisite form and exquisite shape. First prize was a real rose. When I talked about this, being surrounded by friends and being surrounded by people that I've known for years, that this was the real rose. The stature of the award, it was the friendship with various people in that room.

And I went around and I talked about the various people in that room who worked with me, on the projects we'd worked on together, this adventure. That Heyday was a horse, that it allowed me to get out into the world, it allowed me to explore places. I talked about my friend Ed Robbin. And Ed was so goddamn old that he lived in Chicago at a time when he knew Theodore Dreiser and Nelson Algren. This was a long gone generation. And he lived in Paris when Fitzgerald and Hemingway and people like that were living there. He came out. He was a friend of Woody Guthrie's and wrote a book called *Woody and Me*. Then he was an editor of *People's World*. He was a Commie. He was an editor of *People's World*. And like some of these old lefties, he invested in real estate and made a fortune. And so he was a wonderful old friend, and he'd come by. And one day he was talking to me. We were talking about somebody we knew in common, and he said, "Do you like him?" And I said, "Not particularly." And he said, "You know," he said, "neither do I, but he claims that I'm his best friend, and he may be one of my best friends. We're close friends, but I never did like him very much. Do you have people like that in your life?" I said, "Yeah, they're called relatives." But then we got talking about the taxonomy of friendships. We have different friends that reflect us, friends that complete us, friends that we play with, friends that massage our egos, friends that we give things to, friends that give things to us. We have this one word, friends, but there's a variety of friends that we have, and you're wealthy not just in terms of the number of friends that you have but the range of friends that you have. And that I've been so lucky that Heyday and I have had not just many friends but a range of friends that go across a whole spectrum.

And then I talked about how I began Heyday to be independent. I began Heyday to be free of somebody called "the man," to have my own books, to write my own books, to design them, to set them, to sell them directly, so that I wouldn't have to work for somebody else. And there was a quest for independence, and I've been searching for independence now for thirty-seven years and the consequence is that I'm dependent upon the people that work for me, the people that funded me, the people that read the books, the people that distribute the books. I've become the most dependent person in the entire world and the other name for that dependence is community. And I'm more proud of the community that I've built up than I am of anything that I've done.

So I guess when you asked how I feel about it, it was putting it into friendships, putting it into community. It was an avoidance of a myth that isn't quite true, of a life of struggle. My Uncle Jack was a boxer and my Uncle Jack gave—I don't know if I talked about Jack's giving me—it was my favorite book when I was a kid, Bill Stern's favorite boxing stories. Did I talk about that?

07-00:39:57
Bancroft:

Yes.

07-00:40:00
Margolin:

This was the Horatio Alger story. They were all Horatio Alger stories of people who began from humble backgrounds and built up great strengths and became champions. There's a tendency to put a biography in that form, and there's a resistance to it. There's an editing principle that I created when we get a book in. The first thing that I tell people, when there's a manuscript that comes in, there's a kind of way of doing things. And before you criticize it, before you end up correcting it, make sure you understand what's right about it. Make sure you understand where the power is. Make sure you work around bringing the power out in something rather than shaping something to your image of it. Look to what's inherently powerful in that other world. I was looking around at those people in there, these little furnaces of passion and integrity and realizing what was beautiful in them and relating to it.

What else I thought about that award was, I'd been joking a hell of a lot about it. I've been telling people how lucky they are to be hanging around with a national treasure. They ought to appreciate it more. [laughter]

07-00:41:33
Bancroft:

Most of us do.

07-00:41:37
Margolin:

But it was a wonderful thing.

07-00:41:49
Bancroft:

Which of your family members went? Were able to go? You've got busy family members.

07-00:41:56
Margolin:

As a matter of fact, I never told any of the kids about it. They found out about it through Facebook. And I told Rina about it, and she didn't quite recognize what this thing was all about. I went down with Marilee Enge, Heyday's Development Director. I viewed it as professional.

07-00:42:18
Bancroft:

Well, your family already knows what a national treasure you are. They recognize that from decades back. So I suppose it wasn't news for them.

07-00:42:28
Margolin:

Yeah. I'd be so embarrassed to invite people to something so that they could see how people say nice things about me.

07-00:42:38
Bancroft:

Yes, that sounds like it would be excruciating for you.

07-00:42:41
Margolin:

It's just excruciating. It's just horrible. When I was introduced at this event, people were saying nice things about me. I had my lines rehearsed and the lines were, "I'm so glad to hear about this character named Malcolm Margolin. I hope to meet him someday." But I didn't use it because I was actually genuinely touched by what they were saying. On Wednesday I went to a retirement of a friend of mine who retired from Sierra College. It was a formal event. It was heads of different departments getting up and giving small-town speeches about how grateful they are to him and how much they value his leadership and how they're going to miss him and stuff like that. It felt what there wasn't in that ceremony was some genuine warmth.

We're used to dealing with one another in structures of formality, with titles and stuff like that. It all comes down to love and vulnerability and a capacity to move each other and a capacity to be moved. Things work on a different circuitry, and I was really pleased to see that circuitry in there. It was not the Potemkin village of praise. It was not the formal structures of things. I love the laughter in the other room. Do you hear the laughter in the other room? This is work. Isn't that wonderful?

07-00:44:54
Bancroft:

Yes.

07-00:44:54
Margolin:

It's just wonderful.

07-00:44:55
Bancroft:

Well, let me ask you, going back to that, then, just to—maybe this whole conversation will be like a station identification, see if we get back to your history. But going back to the book.

07-00:45:10
Margolin:

That is a great metaphor.

07-00:45:11
Bancroft:

Oh, yes, okay. Thinking about the book. So when it comes to the other part—we have this part, which is, our conversations about you and your history. And then I don't know if you would like me—when you said you wanted to have conversations with your kids, with Rina, with folks from Heyday, including probably some past and present, maybe some authors from Heyday who are repeat performers who could be interviewed about Heyday. I don't know how you see all of that happening. And planning backwards for a book that comes out in 2014, you asked is that doable. Obviously you know a lot more about

getting books out, so that's part two of my questions, how you see a timeline and whatever you've thought about it or haven't thought about it yet. But as we're beginning to move in that direction.

07-00:46:22

Margolin: Well, for a book to come out in June of 2014, you'd have to have a manuscript in by the spring or summer of 2013.

07-00:48:33

Bancroft: Fourteen, right.

07-00:46:35

Margolin: But you'd have to have a manuscript in by the summer of 2013.

07-00:46:49

Bancroft: Which is a little over a year from now.

07-00:46:52

Margolin: Which is a little over a year from now. Let's say that the book weren't structured around my life; let's say that it was structured around something else. Let's say that it was structured around—like that wonderful book *920 O'Farrell Street*. Do you know that book?

07-00:47:15

Bancroft: Yes.

07-00:47:17

Margolin: Yes, you do. It's structured around rooms in a house and these rooms in a house create a biography of the people that are living there. It's a tone, it's a mood. Let's say that it was structured around something else. Let's say that it was structured around—I'm not sure what.

07-00:47:44

Bancroft: Well, around Heyday because it's a book that you want. And you said this from the beginning. You see it about Heyday and the focus shouldn't be on you, it should be on Heyday. You just said that and I can very well see that. That doesn't mean that one of the chapters isn't about the corner office in Heyday. But that the other offices and the library and the archive aren't part of that book, to continue that metaphor.

07-00:48:19

Margolin: You know what? If I continue talking about interviewing me, I'd interview other people. You're certainly welcome to interview them on your own, and I don't want to be there. Isn't it funny how I see a series of stories, each of them on an index card, and I see a blank wall and I see us spending some time putting these index cards up on the wall and arranging them in clusters and seeing how they cluster. I see us doing it almost like an anthology. Doing it as a collection of self-contained illuminations.

- 07-00:49:18
Bancroft: That makes sense. That's why I mentioned that the book that you were talking about, the *Presidio*, was it the *Presidio*?
- 07-00:49:30
Margolin: Yeah, yeah.
- 07-00:49:32
Bancroft: And how you had the photos and the captions and that they were working better to explain a certain situation or an aspect of the park. That there can be as an anthology even that section of photographs and captions or the fragments of stories with captions to those stories. I'd be happy to interview other folks here, and as of next week I will be a whole lot more free.
- 07-00:50:18
Margolin: Is your house sold?
- 07-00:50:19
Bancroft: Moving man is coming on Monday.
- [portion deleted]
- Margolin: —deep exploration of what the place, Heyday, has meant to them.
- 07-00:51:45
Bancroft: Do you have any recommendations about how I should do that? And, again, you can think about it, and we can email maybe a list of begin here and move down the list and other people that you would like me to talk to. I would love to do all of that.
- 07-00:52:09
Margolin: Well, I could make a list off the top of my head. Over here I would start with Jeannine [Gendar]. We worked together for over twenty years.
- 07-00:52:27
Bancroft: I look forward to that.
- 07-00:52:30
Margolin: Huh?
- 07-00:52:31
Bancroft: I look forward to that.
- Margolin: And be sure to interview Gayle Wattawa. Gayle's acquisitions editor. She's taken over from Jeannine as editorial director, and she came here as a student, as my assistant. I would interview Lillian. Let's see. I'd interview anybody else. I'd interview George Young. The authors, I'd interview Jack Laws. Tom Killian would be a good person to interview. Fred Setterberg. I think you know Fred.

07-00:53:59
Bancroft: Yeah. I would love to do that since he's interviewed me.

07-00:54:03
Margolin: [laughter] And get even with him. You might interview somebody like Tom Layton of Gerbode Foundation. You might interview Frank LaPena, the Indian dancer.

07-00:54:58
Bancroft: And who?

07-00:54:59
Margolin: Frank LaPena

07-00:55:00
Bancroft: Yes.

07-00:55:17
Margolin: You might interview Jim Quay. You know Jim? He used to be head of California Council for the Humanities.

07-00:55:26
Bancroft: Oh, yes.

07-00:55:26
Margolin: We have lunch with him once every month—and you might interview Jeff Lustig. You might interview Mike McCone. Our current board chair is Guy Lampard. Well, hey, listen, I could go on like this.

07-00:56:04
Bancroft: Okay, well, that's a good start.

07-00:56:05
Margolin: You might interview Patricia Wakida. You might interview Stan Yogi.

07-00:56:24
Bancroft: Yes. Met Stan. What about Susan Snyder?

07-00:56:31
Margolin: Oh, we might interview Susan Snyder.

07-00:56:42
Bancroft: That will be a good starting point and I will try to make interviews happen with them in the next few months. And then with the transcripts, once again we can kind of see what you want to do with them. It might just be that format of letting the stories tell themselves, in a sense, will work well. But we shall see.

07-00:57:12
Margolin: We're working with David Kippen on a book for state parks and he's divided that book not in terms of parks—

What he ended up doing that I thought was so ingenious was instead of having the parts divided by history and natural history or south and north or alphabetical or whatever it is, he has them divided by theme. Parks that define faith, parks that define immigration, parks that define injustice. And there was something about that division of things, the thematic division of things that I really liked. I guess what I'm trying to do is destructure this so that it's not structured around my life.

07-00:58:35

Bancroft:

I think that the focus is clearly on Heyday. We'd begun with the focus on your life and I am focusing heavily on that as we're going through your life, but the book will certainly be about Heyday, and you will be interposed throughout because people have things to say about you in talking about Heyday. But it'll be back on Steven.

07-00:59:07

Margolin:

Yeah.

07-00:59:09

Bancroft:

Don't worry.

07-00:59:14

Margolin:

That said, I also love the stories you've been collecting, and I would love to see these stories survive.

07-00:59:21

Bancroft:

Yes.

07-00:59:40

Margolin:

Do you have a few more minutes?

07-00:59:43

Bancroft:

I do. I was just going to ask you.

07-00:59:47

Margolin:

Let me get Lillian up here. Let's talk to Lillian.

07-00:59:54

Bancroft:

Okay. [break in audio]

07-01:00:25

Margolin:

—be chaotic and tries to create a world in which that chaos has permission to exist.

07-01:00:37

Bancroft:

Okay. Well, then, between us we will make something chaotically beautiful.

07-01:00:47

Margolin:

Let me get Lillian [Fleer] up here. She's the best person in the whole world.

- 07-01:00:52
Bancroft: We were talking about something that happened in your history, ten years ago. No, just kidding.
- 07-01:01:01
Margolin: So listen, she's been interviewing me about me and Heyday, and I'm trying to deflect her from me onto Heyday.
- 07-01:01:008
Fleer: Right, yeah. You're pawning her off on the rest of us.
- 07-01:01:14
Bancroft: It'll be okay.
- 07-01:01:16
Margolin: I was just kind of wondering how we discuss Heyday. What do we discuss about it? What themes rise up? How do you structure a book about it? How do you get it the hell off me? How do you get me out of this one? So when I'm in trouble, I call on you for help, as you are well aware.
- 07-01:01:40
Fleer: Okay. So we're talking about Heyday, we're talking about a book about Heyday?
- 07-01:01:47
Bancroft: Right. And I think this is maybe just preliminary because what we just did was come up with a list, and your name was on the list of people that I should be interviewing eventually. So I'm doing these interviews with Malcolm, and then I'll start trying to interview folks from Heyday who work here, authors from Heyday, as well as continuing with our interviews. And I'll probably start doing some of those in May. But just to begin thinking about the process, if this book is going to come out a little over a year from now. What will the structure of the book look like? How will we structure the stories that come out of all of these folks about Heyday? What will Heyday look like in the book?
- 07-01:02:41
Margolin: That's right. And it's like, what do we want to say about Heyday? Where are its strengths? Where's the beauty of it? Why do we do such beautiful work? How does it all happen?
- 07-01:03:02
Bancroft: I also think of Heyday as a survivor. Remember the list of all of the presses that you reeled off from the sixties, how many of those are no longer with us, and Heyday's still here.
- 07-01:03:14
Fleer: We didn't get the memo.

07-01:03:19
Margolin:

That's one of my favorite anecdotes, about the *Forverts*, the last of the Yiddish newspapers in New York. And there were once twenty-three Yiddish newspapers in New York and the *Forverts* was the last one and somebody came to the editor and said, "Why have you survived when all the others haven't?" He said, "It's because we were bad bookkeepers." And they said, "What do you mean you were bad bookkeepers?" He said, "The others were good bookkeepers. They knew they were bankrupt. We never knew it." [laughter] "We just kept going."

07-01:03:52
Fleer:

I think you draw in the people. I think it's all about the people that you interact with and how you can focus in on somebody who's actually very interesting, and then a project comes out of that interesting person, as opposed to looking for a project that is attached to a person.

07-01:04:21
Margolin:

Yeah, I think in terms of people.

07-01:04:25
Fleer:

Yeah. I think that's a big difference. Maybe.

07-01:04:30
Margolin:

Maybe the thing is constructed around people rather than ideas. Maybe you ought to interview Lillian about her life.

07-01:04:41
Fleer:

[laughter] This is about you.

07-01:04:42
Bancroft:

Well, now, no.

07-01:04:44
Margolin:

No, I'm trying to make it about you.

07-01:04:46
Bancroft:

I will get into everybody's business, you can be sure. Because that's the question I keep coming back to, is how does a life create, lead to a certain artifact, a certain creation. You even told the story about Al Jensen painting these little boxes with numbers in them and you said, "What the hell is this all about? What are you doing here?" And he said, "Well, I was born from a Danish father and suckled at the breast of a Mayan nursemaid," and telling this amazing story about how that connected to cosmology and his boxes and numbers and things like that. So there are little tidbits of people's lives that I think become interesting parts of the story of what they create. And you're here creating things. I get emails from you all the time of all of the wonderful events going on here and what's being organized. So it'll be good to get your background in relation to that.

- 07-01:05:46
Margolin: God, I'm foundering around because I haven't the vaguest idea what to do and I'm hoping that if I founder around long enough somebody'll bail me out. And I'm hoping it's you.
- 07-01:06:04
Fleer: We're just talking about a book—
- 07-01:06:08
Margolin: Yeah, we're talking about a book about Heyday.
- 07-01:06:12
Fleer: And what would go in that.
- 07-01:06:12
Margolin: And how it would be structured.
- 07-01:06:15
Fleer: Not actually what's going to be said, but the bones of it. Not the flesh of it.
- 07-01:06:27
Margolin: Yeah.
- 07-01:06:34
Bancroft: Well, I think it's both. And I think one thing is that if we sort of proceed as if we know the book is coming—if I'm doing these interviews and you're all continuing, as I'm doing the interviews, to think about, "Well, what has Heyday meant to you, how does it operate, what makes it so vibrant and productive and interesting?" and not only just the books that you produce but obviously these events. Because I put that in the essay. I did a kind of draft of an essay that was about some of the things that I see and how important it is that this—an army of authors go out every month talking about their books and then the space that's used here. Back to the metaphor of the house. There's not only the office of the publisher but what goes on. Malcolm was mentioning the laughter coming out of this room. The events, the meetings that go on here. I think that's very important. And the role. So just trying to see in a very holistic way what Heyday produces, what it means to the community, the various communities. Our conversation today has turned into a what's next interview more than anything else and to get that rolling. And so when I can come back, I can start, you know, maybe in May, get to interview you and I'll talk to Jeannine and a few other people, as well as Malcolm, and kind of see what begins coming out of all of that. Does that sound like a good way to proceed?
- 07-01:08:12
Margolin: Yeah, yeah. The place works on laughter. The place works on people having power. I don't interfere with your life at all.
- 07-01:08:31
Fleer: No.

07-01:08:33
Margolin: You just do what you do.

07-01:08:34
Fleer: There's no micromanagement.

07-01:08:35
Margolin: There's no micromanagement, there's no macromanagement either. [laughter]

07-01:08:39
Fleer: Yeah, there's no management.

07-01:08:42
Bancroft: That's the secret.

07-01:08:45
Margolin: It's somehow how you take this dispersed, fragmented, chaotic sense that I have of myself.

07-01:08:48
Fleer: I've been designing the books for the last two years. Did you know?

07-01:08:54
Margolin: Have you been writing checks? It's how a fragmented vision actually works in the world.

[interruption; asides deleted]

[End Audio File 7]

Interview 8: May 16, 2012

[Begin Audio File 8]

08-00:00:00

Bancroft: All righty then. So here we are. It's Wednesday, May 16th, and we get to talk to Malcolm Margolin again. I was wondering if you had any reactions to the last transcript I sent about the book or any further thoughts on that.

08-00:00:22

Margolin: I got it yesterday and I haven't really looked at it.

08-00:00:23

Bancroft: Okay. [Last time] we kind of left off when *The Ohlone Way* came out and so one thing is to kind of take off from there. I don't know if Jake's birth comes up soon and if we'll get to cover that. You talked a lot about the layout for *East Bay Out* and how wonderful it was to do the design and to sell it yourself. And so we talked about what the writing of *The Ohlone Way* was for you and the outcome in terms of dealing with the Native American community, but I was also wondering if you wanted to tell anything more about the actual production of the book. Its beautiful drawings. And, again, what that was like for you to create your own book. So maybe you want to start with that. And then we haven't talked much about *News from Native California*, but I don't know when that comes into the picture.

08-00:01:26

Margolin: That was '87.

08-00:01:28

Bancroft: Okay, so that was much later. So you were clearly, when it came to *The Ohlone Way*, obviously going to publish it again with Heyday. But I was just interested in that process of what it was like to think about, "Okay, now I'm doing another book with Heyday." And when did Heyday start becoming more than just getting *The East Bay* out and becoming a larger enterprise in your mind and experience? That's a lot. You can mull over that for a moment.

08-00:02:07

Margolin: It's so hard to drop back into that era, to think about those times.

08-00:02:17

Bancroft: It's okay. I'm just checking.

08-00:02:18

Margolin: It was long ago. I talked about the writing of *The Ohlone Way*. I talked about putting things up on the wall and thinking it through. It's funny. I felt really good about that book. I felt that the text had settled into itself, that there was really good writing in there, that there were good images in there, that I'd captured something. And there was complete confidence that I had in that book. And it was the confidence you can only have when you're ignorant, when you don't know anything. And there were things in there that are now taken more for granted that back then were acts of courage. Talking about the

acceptance of gays, talking about the nudity. There are various things in there that I felt were kind of edgy. There was something in the politics of it that to this day, that right now—these interviews that I’m going to be doing is on California Indian leadership. What was it a California Indian chief. And the way in which some of these ruling class families have power without aggression. That have a way of being that isn’t competitive and yet on the other hand is effective. And how you do this. How you combine this. There was something about it that was so anti-capitalist, anti-American values. It was very much of its era. It was very much of the seventies. It was very much the concern of the seventies. The typesetting and the design I did.

08-00:04:53

Bancroft:

As much pleasure as you talked about when you were working on *The East Bay Out*?

08-00:05:02

Margolin:

I don’t remember it as keenly. There was my good friend—what’s his name?

08-00:05:36

Bancroft:

Michael?

08-00:05:38

Margolin:

Christopher Weills. And Kit Weills, he lived underneath Bob Scheer. He was his brother-in-law or something, and he was doing some publishing. He had a Compugraphic typesetting machine. And I ended up using that. I ended up setting my own type on it. Did the proofreading. There was satisfaction in doing it. There was a sense of completion in doing it. There was a sense of control in doing it. It wasn’t the same thrill as the first one. It wasn’t the same challenge. I now look at it, I see “acknowledgements” is misspelled. I think I would redo the illustrations, I would redo the text.

08-00:07:11

Bancroft:

Why the illustrations? I’m surprised, because I think of those as being so outstanding.

08-00:07:29

Margolin:

I was just with Kent Lightfoot at the anthropology department at Cal. We went out and had drinks. We’re getting together a crew of student interns to go over what these old village sites were like, to collect information and to do it with an artist. And to do it with a much greater sense of detail, a much greater sense of finesse, a much greater sense of nuance and subtlety. It’s simply that I could do much more now. On the other hand, I could never write this book again. I know too much. I know too much to make any generalizations. I know too much. I’m going to be going up to Tulomne Rancheria, and I’ll be sitting around for the day under a tree with some chairs talking to people. There’s just that beauty of memory, of sadness. I think that when I first got into it, it was a sense that it was the Kroeber paradigm, that there was this moment of purity before the whites came. That this is what Indian civilization was. And then there’s been a decay through the present.

And there hasn't been. There's been an evolution to the present. There's been changes to the present. I think that I would now see the past through the eyes of the people that are here today. I think the illustrations would be illustrations of people that I know more than people that were reimagined. I think that I would do them with a softer touch. The thought on doing new illustrations were that there were things that you know for certainty and there are things that you don't know, that you conjecture at. And that we would end up doing the things with certainty, with a sharpness, and the things that were conjectured at with a more hazy impressionistic way. There's just ways of doing it that I would love to do.

08-00:10:48

Bancroft:

Nice.

08-00:10:49

Margolin:

Hey, listen, I've learned something in thirty-five years. It's evolved. I'm still amazed at the influence that the book has had. The number of people that I meet, the number of people whose lives were affected by it. The number of people that have gone on to do research and thinking and what it's meant for the Indian community.

08-00:11:15

Bancroft:

Can you name some of those examples of ways people have talked about how it's influenced them and the Indian community?

08-00:11:38

Margolin:

Yeah. I'm a little bit reluctant to do this. The stance that I take is that I'm not all that important and that I simply pointed out something that was there. I think that something perhaps equally true is that people felt a validation, they felt that it used to be if you said you were an Ohlone Indian, it didn't mean anything to anybody. When the book came out, it now meant something to the dominant culture. I haven't kept letters or stuff like that in any kind of an organized fashion. But people have talked about how alienated and separated they were from their backgrounds, how little they knew, and how this provided them with something, a body of information and sensibility and respect. The past was lost.

A wonderful old friend, Ray Marquez, was a garbage man in Watsonville. Like other people there he was Ohlone Indian but they were also mixed with Mexican. So he called himself a Mexican, even though he didn't speak any Spanish because to be an Indian was to be a dog. To be an Indian was to be so degraded. And then along came Alcatraz and along came various other things and along came this revival of hippie interest in Indians and ecology and all of a sudden it became bearable in your own eyes to be an Indian. And he went to his mother and he said, "Listen," he says, "what do we know about background? How do we get back to this old knowledge?" And she said, "Well," she said, "the last person that knew anything was your uncle, and he's dead. There's only one way that I know to go about it. And you climb that

mountain,” I think it was Mount Madonna, but I’m not sure. “You fast for four days and you climb to the top of the mountain. You’ll look around for the old village site, and you’ll notice it when you’ll see it. You’ll know where it is. And what you do is you dig up some earth, you hold it in your hands, and you close your eyes and the old world will come back to you. This is what I’ve heard.” So Ray’s a garbage man. He fasted for four days. He climbed to the top of the mountain. He looked around and he found what he realized was the old village site. He sat down. He dug up some earth, he held on to the earth and he closed his eyes. And in his eyes he had a vision. In this vision he was now at the bottom of the mountain looking up, except now at the top of the mountain was the outlines of an old village. He was going to walk towards that village.

As he was walking up toward that village, suddenly other Indians came around and they attacked him. And they beat him and they whipped him and they scarred him. He was trying to get through and he couldn’t get through. He tried to get to the top of the mountain, he couldn’t get to the top of the mountain. And finally he just dropped the earth and he came back into rational world. And he went to his mother and he said, “What happened?” And she says, “You know who those people were?” And he says, “No.” She says, “Those are our ancestors. To get to that old world you have to go through 200 years of pain, and nobody’s been able to do it.” And what she told him is the past is lost. Pay attention to the present. And he opened up a little self-help center in Watsonville, something for alcohol abuse, for job counseling, for pregnancy counseling, and he paid attention to the living. But there was the feeling that that old world was lost. And to some extent I provided the outlines for some connection with that old world.

It’s partly that I don’t want to take too much credit because I’m not sure how much I deserve, in part because in my relationship with the Indian community, I’m an outsider. I just get into trouble. I would just get into trouble if I said that I was all this important. So I just kind of keep a low profile. We mentored various people. Jeannine would probably be able to talk about it more easily than I would. It was interesting that *News From Native California* was created in 1987 and when I go around to Indian conferences there were activists in their early thirties who remember it as a child, growing up with it, and for them this was sort of their introduction to this larger Indian world, to people that are doing things. Have you read those early issues? Do you know those early issues?

08-00:17:55
Bancroft:

Un-unh.

08-00:17:56
Margolin:

They were just so gorgeous. There was something about *The Ohlone Way* that was written largely in a library—it was written largely through archives. It was an act of imaginative reconstruction. We ended up selling a hundred

thousand odd copies over the years. It ended up being an essential part of courses. It's been wonderfully stolen from.

08-00:18:56

Bancroft: Including by me.

08-00:18:59

Margolin: Yeah, you, too. Everybody steals it. It's been dismembered and appears in different places.

08-00:19:06

Bancroft: Anthologies, yes.

08-00:19:08

Margolin: Yeah, it appears all over, in course packets and various other places. I once gave a course in Santa Barbara at the College of Creative Studies. It was, I think, a six-week course. They hired me to come down for six weeks. And it was reconstructing Chumash lives. Did I ever talk about that?

08-00:19:34

Bancroft: Un-unh.

08-00:19:34

Margolin: And I'm going to do the same thing. We're starting Heyday University. So, "Hey U." And we're going to do the same thing here.

08-00:19:43

Bancroft: Oh, nice.

08-00:19:44

Margolin: It was reconstructing Chumash life. And we'd go to an old village site and we'd look at it and think about what it was like. We'd go off to Santa Ynez Reservation and spend the day with Tony Romero, who was one of the last of the old time Indians. He thought, he spoke, his intonation, his manner. He was a beautiful guy. He ended up killing his wife and going up to Pelican Bay and died up there. But he was just a beautiful guy. And we talked to Tony just to get a sense of what it was. We'd read stories. We'd read the old stories, and we'd read them with a carefulness, that every sentence was thought about. We'd look at who was addressing who, at who spoke first. At what things were said and what things weren't said. And it was squeezing every drop of meaning you could out of a story. We'd go off to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and look at the artifacts. We spent a day just handling mortars and pestles and baskets and stuff like that. We listened to songs that had been recorded on wax cylinders. We ended up going to the painted caves and looking at rock art. We just ended up thinking as deeply and as sensually as you could about what that old world was like. What it would be like. We'd do imaginative trips. That you're in the village and you're entering the house. What does the house smell like? What color is out there? What happens when it gets dark? Where are people sleeping? We'd just get into just pushing yourself into this world. And that's what I was good at. That's what I was

good at. There was the scholarly accumulation of information but there was that kind of sensual dwelling on something, that imaginative sensual day-dreamy dwelling on something. It was the day dreaminess that came to my rescue. It was the wondering what if.

When the book came out I remember various academics. I expected criticism from the academic world. I expected I'd be savaged. They all loved it and they all said that this was what they had hoped to do when they got into anthropology but they forgot. They couldn't do it because of their constrictions for accuracy. They couldn't speculate.

08-00:22:19

Bancroft: Footnotes.

08-00:22:20

Margolin: Footnotes and their fear of criticism. And somehow, as somebody outside the circuit I was able to do something that nobody else could do. And it was outside the Indian circuitry, too.

08-00:22:34

Bancroft: You were between two worlds.

08-00:22:36

Margolin: I was outside of all words.

08-00:22:47

Bancroft: You mentioned Greg Sarris. I think that's the title of one of his books, *Between Two Worlds*.

08-00:22:57

Margolin: Did he do that one or was it Darryl Wilson?

08-00:23:02

Bancroft: Well, speaking of Darryl Wilson, I just got an email from Babe two days ago, and I wanted to check on him today. He was having trouble with his heart and was getting checked out by the doctor and he thought it was another stroke. So I'll let you know when I find out anything.

08-00:23:19

Margolin: Oh, do so.

08-00:23:22

Bancroft: Well, I'm sure the concept of being between two worlds—I think I remembered a book by Greg Sarris by that title. In any case, yeah, so it's interesting how that is kind of—I know you don't like all my themes but a theme in your life of being outside.

08-00:23:39

Margolin: That's good.

- 08-00:23:41
Bancroft: Being outside of the Jewish tradition when you couldn't quite get it together, didn't enjoy doing the bar mitzvah and you had to get kind of thrown out of the shul and had to do it on your own, up to this idea that having that perspective allows you a lot of freedom and opportunities to see things from the way people inside wouldn't necessarily see it.
- 08-00:24:09
Margolin: Yeah, yeah. That's true.
- 08-00:24:12
Bancroft: When you said that you still saw yourself as an outsider, you are an outsider to the Indian community, but to some extent have you ever been seen also as a kind of honorary insider, where people say, "Oh, Malcolm, he's one of us. We belong here."
- 08-00:24:28
Margolin: Yeah, yeah. I have. Yeah.
- 08-00:24:30
Bancroft: And so that's also important.
- 08-00:24:32
Margolin: Yeah, that happens frequently. I was with some Indians last week. We had a get-together here and they were talking about treating me as everybody's elder and interviewing me. Then I've got this memory of the Indian community and these last thirty years and I knew people that—yeah.
- 08-00:25:00
Bancroft: You're important. You hold the memory that many others don't have, especially the younger generations, because of where you've gone, who you've talked to, all of these stories.
- 08-00:25:09
Margolin: Yeah, I remember some younger Indian met me and she was absolutely stunned that I was still alive. She thought I was of Kroeber's generation. She thought I was one of the old-time anthropologists. I think I mentioned it before. It's--Clifford Geertz's definition of anthropology is deep hanging out, and that's what I've done, is deep hanging out. It's not been systematic. There hasn't been a whole lot of self-interest in this one. I don't make any money off of it. I'm not sure what it is, Kim. I'm not sure what the attraction is. But it's there, and it's there for me in other worlds, too. I was just contacted by some Japanese Americans about their mother's biography, and it was that same feeling, that I've been part of a community, that I'm valuable to people. It's the role of publisher, it's the role of furthering others. It's the role of stage setting for others to come and perform. And it seems that I'm not as pure as all that.
- 08-00:27:00
Bancroft: What do you mean?

08-00:27:05
Margolin:

Well, it seems to be creating the image of somebody who's self-sacrificing. I'm aware of the image that I'm creating. And I'm embarrassed by the fact that it might be true. Hey.

08-00:27:29
_:

Hey.

08-00:27:34
Bancroft:

It reminds me of one of the stories about you that I love from your early days, is sitting around the table with the family and how much the old country was always part of your family, was sitting at the table with you.

08-00:27:49
Margolin:

That was standard at the table.

08-00:27:49
Bancroft:

And your awareness of that even as a boy, as a youth, seems to continue through. This is the old country of the Native Americans or the Japanese Americans; whoever you're encountering has their old country they're bringing with them. And for the Native Americans it was here. So I can see how that part of you that connects to that would have been particularly moved and compelled in the case of Native Californians.

08-00:28:26
Margolin:

I'm genuinely curious about people. I'll just get into conversations with people. I gave a eulogy for my friend Chris Hanton this Monday at a memorial service. I met him in a bar and it was just getting to know somebody. I guess I love people's stories. I don't exactly figure out how people work in a mechanical way, but I'm continually asking people what they do and where they grew up and where they're from and what their goals are. And an abiding theme that you keep rejecting is that I'm much more interested in the world than I am in myself. I find it much easier to talk about the world than I do about myself. Chris was amazing.

08-00:30:02
Bancroft:

How did you know him?

08-00:30:03
Margolin:

Well, I'd go off to this bar at the end of work, after work, and he'd be sitting there looking. He had a preppy look about him. He would have a necktie at a slant, a blazer, chinos. He would have a plate of oysters, a glass of thin white sparkling wine. He'd be reading a *New Yorker*. He was an aesthete. He loved the beautiful things of the world, and there was something surrounding him that was inviolate. You didn't want to intrude upon him. He was in his own world. So this became a challenge. [laughter] And then I got to know him. He was a high-powered lawyer. He was a wonderfully entertaining person. But he was a lover of beauty. The oysters, the wine, the *New Yorker*. He was into music and poetry. And the image that I had was that we'd end up discussing family and life and work, and we could hardly wait to just make our way

through all of that stuff and get down into that river of beauty that flows through the middle of life, that just nourishes everything, and just stand over there and look to see what was coming through, and just talk about the arts, talk about what moved us, talk about people of courage. And sometimes you'd find that river and sometimes you wouldn't. But just standing along the banks of it was always great.

08-00:31:50
Bancroft:

And can I ask what he passed away from? What did he die of?

08-00:31:54
Margolin:

Oh, like everybody else. Cancer of one sort or another. He was sixty-two.

08-00:32:02
Bancroft:

And was there a service for Chick, I imagine?

08-00:32:05
Margolin:

There's going to be a memorial service in August. His grandchildren are in New York and they're not going to be free until August, so it's going to be held around then. And we'll probably end up helping her run it. At least I offered. One of the things that I'm good at is speaking and storytelling. So for me *The Ohlone Way* was an excuse to just get in—I was up at bookstore readings and events and gatherings and camps and stuff like that. I never said no to anything. If three people were gathering in Turlock at 7:30 in the morning for a Kiwanis Club breakfast and they needed a speaker, I was there. [laughter] You just never say no. And so I was out speaking all the time. That's probably been as important as the writing and as important as the other stuff, is this public presence. The number of people that sit down and read a book and get something from it is rather minimal. The number of people that are influenced by hearing something, by radio interviews, by stuff that they see in the newspaper, by the number of TV things that I've done. I remember when *The Ohlone Way* came out there were several TV events that I did and one of them was very illuminating. It was a Coyote Hills in Fremont, where a naturalist had reconstructed an Indian village.

08-00:34:15
Bancroft:

Yeah, I think you told me that, and then that you also made sure that a family—

08-00:34:20
Margolin:

I did tell you about that.

08-00:34:21
Bancroft:

Yes.

08-00:34:21
Margolin:

But that was--the family but it was also the kind of thing that would get broadcast. It was—

08-00:34:32
Bancroft: Ah, okay. So that was a TV event, as well.

08-00:34:33
Margolin: It was a TV event. That was a TV show.

08-00:34:38
Bancroft: Oh, okay. You didn't tell me that part of it.

08-00:34:39
Margolin: And it fed into the fact that Heyday, through twenty-five books a year, we do a couple of hundred events, we have six museum shows traveling, that it's just—

08-00:34:56
Bancroft: Two hundred events a year?

08-00:34:57
Margolin: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we've got one tonight. Got a big one tonight.

08-00:34:59
Bancroft: I know. I'm going to it.

08-00:35:00
Margolin: Oh, that's great. That's great. That's wonderful. Greg Sarris will be there.

08-00:35:05
Bancroft: Wait, is this the *New California Writing* event?

08-00:35:08
Margolin: Yeah, yeah.

08-00:35:08
Bancroft: Oh, good.

08-00:35:09
Margolin: Yeah. Maxine Hong Kingston will be there. We've got Tony Serra. You know Tony Serra, the lawyer?

08-00:35:15
Bancroft: I have heard of him on many, many occasions. I even have a ticket somewhere for it. Yes. So wow. Well, I was thinking about it, I just want to say about the event, too, with you being a public person, that that seems to me part of what Heyday is now. I get the announcements from Lillian and all of the events that include authors going out. So that seems part of your ethic, that maybe not everybody's going to read the book, but they'll hear about the book. Fred Setterberg, for example, has been to probably twenty or thirty different places.

08-00:35:49
Margolin: That's right. It's how you share the core of what's valuable in a book. What you're fighting for is a place in people's imagination. You're fighting for space in the imagination and you just have to approach that space through any

avenue you can possibly get it into, but you've got to plant the stuff. There's a fight on for the human imagination and the amount of noise that the dominant and technological noise is making is just so spectacular. It's so deafening. The place for a subtle and quiet idea, for a deep quiet truth, it's very difficult to find a place for it. And when it goes into the mind it's like something rotten in the refrigerator. The other stuff spreads the odor around of greed, of anger, of getting ahead, of competition, of the subtleties of racism, the cruelty of it all. It taints things that come in. It's just hard to get something out there and get it in its good form.

It seems that I should have more to say about *The Ohlone Way*. Let me take a quick look at some of the acknowledgements. God, I forget who some of these people are. Red McClintock was my VW mechanic. He kept my VW running.

08-00:37:50
Bancroft:

After you got too busy to do the repairs yourself?

08-00:37:55
Margolin:

No, I was doing the repairs, that he would advise me on it.

08-00:38:00
Bancroft:

Oh, I see. How long did that VW last until?

08-00:38:24
Margolin:

Well, we got it in '68. It was around in '74, '75, '76. Probably until the late seventies.

08-00:38:41
Bancroft:

I didn't mean to distract you from your search.

08-00:39:37
Margolin:

Did I ever talk about Frank Lobo? Frank Lobo was a Juaneno Indian from San Juan Capistrano. When we lived on Stuart Street the first time, next to Dorothy Bryant, Bob and Dorothy had an old house that they were going to destroy and tear it down, and they wanted somebody to rent it for a few years until they saved up their money. And we rented it from them. And even though the rent was low we didn't have enough so we ended up sharing the house with Frank and his wife, Sue Lobo. And Frank was so knowledgeable. He was a dropout from the academic world. He couldn't finish his degrees. He couldn't get his act together to write the thesis and stuff like that. But he had the deepest kind of knowledge, and there was something in his mannerism, there was something in his way of thinking, there was something in his intonation. There was something in his humor, in his understanding that I really absorbed, and it's the kind of thing that is—I remember that I was reviewing a book that somebody wrote, and my review was that the facts were all right, the book lies in a deep way. And the lie has to do with the tone and the root of things. That facts aren't enough. And getting the facts right is necessary but it's not sufficient. What's harder to capture is the pacing, is the tonalities, is the nuance, is the gesture, is the posture that you have toward life.

The stuff that we don't quite have the vocabulary for describing it. That's the stuff that's really hard to capture. It's really hard to put forth. And Frank was responsible for a lot of that. I picked up a lot from Frank.

There was a story of somebody that went to see the master and wanted to learn from the master and all of his life he wanted to learn from the master. He finally approaches the master, and he sees the master and after five minutes he comes back to his village and he says he's learned everything he has to learn. They said, "What happened?" He says, "I watched as he tied his shoe."
[laughter]

08-00:42:48

Bancroft: That's all it takes, if you observe it.

08-00:42:52

Margolin: And I would watch Frank repair his car, and it was all you had to know, was the meticulousness.

I introduced somebody the other day. I've known her for thirty years, Kathleen Smith. And even though I've known her for thirty years, when I think of her I think of her in the picture that was taken of her when I first met her. So that's Kathleen and that's Laura Somersall. And that's her mom, Lucy Smith and that's David Peri. And what I said was you could learn more sitting between these women silently for a half hour than you could learn from four years at Cal.

08-00:44:15

Bancroft: Nice. Wow. Beautiful. What are all these?

08-00:44:29

Margolin: Do you know that book? [*First Families*]

08-00:44:30

Bancroft: I've seen it. It's lovely. Even the cover.

08-00:44:39

Margolin: That's Frank LaPena's daughter. That's his uncle.

08-00:44:43

Bancroft: Well, you mentioned Frank LaPena as somebody I should talk to, so I'm looking forward to doing that.

08-00:44:49

Margolin: Oh, that'd be great.

08-00:44:54

Bancroft: Babe [Darryl Wilson] invited me to go to Indian Canyon, I think it was last summer, and I didn't get to go. I don't know if he'll go this summer. But if there's some event like that that I can go along with you or him, I would love to because I actually want to interview Babe, too.

08-00:45:23
Margolin:

Oh, that'd be great. Well, I'll be up at Tuolomne Rancheria this weekend.

08-00:45:30
Bancroft:

I already have plans this weekend, but we can think about anything that's maybe coming up in June or July.

08-00:46:04
Margolin:

It's funny. I'm puzzled by my involvement in this. It makes no sense to me. It makes absolutely no sense. It seems that I owe you a story that would have sharp definition of cause and effect instead of a kind of bemused muddle.

08-00:46:45
Bancroft:

Well, let me just clarify. You don't owe me anything, and what could be bemused muddling to you will still make sense to me in some way. It'll make sense to Rina in a different way, to your friends, all your friends. Everybody will make something of the stories we get. That's part of it, for better or for worse. And so I'm quite convinced that the best way to get your stories is just to get your stories and not try to—I'll see themes. I'll see patterns because humans are pattern finders and pattern makers. But they won't necessarily be true for you. That's like you sharing a dream and I'll say, "Oh, here's something I see in your dream," but it's your dream and it's going to mean something different to you. It'll mean something different to Sadie. It'll mean something different to somebody who appears in the dream. So I accept that.

08-00:47:59
Margolin:

I genuinely look forward to this weekend. I genuinely look forward to seeing people up there, to talking with them. There's this wonderful lady that I see every year up there, Vivian, and Vivian grew up in the old town of Morek on the Klamath River and she left when she was about thirteen years old and she moved to Nevada and she still practices Yurok traditional arts in Nevada, getting her materials from the Klamath River. But because she hasn't been back very much, her stories are the stories of an old world that's been untainted by the sense of change. And I just sit there and we talk and at the end she gives me a gift of some sort. She'll give me a basket or something that she's made.

Maybe it has to do with this. I think I may have mentioned my wonderful old friend Ed Robbins and Ed Robbins' sense of witness. Did I?

08-00:49:11
Bancroft:

No.

08-00:49:13
Margolin:

I don't know what I was talking about with Ed, but he was so goddamn old that he knew people like Theodore Dreiser in Chicago and Nelson Algren, those old Chicago writers. He knew Hemingway and Fitzgerald from Paris. He wrote the story of Woody Guthrie. He was a friend of Woody Guthrie's. He was an editor of *People's World*. He was a Commie. And like other old

Com mies he invested in real estate and made a fortune. And he lived in Berkeley, and he would come up to the office and he'd hang out and we'd talk and he was just so utterly lovely to be with. He was so capacious and so easy and so fun and so full of life. And when he died, I was at his memorial service, and he had a brother there, Mort. And his brother Mort was about fifteen years younger than Ed. So he never really knew Ed. By the time he had memory, Ed had moved out of the house. But they got together in later life and they would have lunch every Thursday, and we were talking at the memorial service and he says he always wondered that he had nothing in common with Ed. He was wondering what in the world Ed wanted to have lunch with him for. And then he said he finally began to feel that maybe it was something like that, "That in life we have various people that we need. We need kin, we need partners, we need parents, we need friendships, we need, oh, so many things. We also need a witness and I was his witness." And I feel that maybe one of my jobs in this Indian world is that of witness. But this is all to give some importance to the fact that I just really enjoy the hell out of it all.

08-00:51:15
Bancroft:

That's okay, too.

08-00:51:15
Margolin:

I just enjoy the hell out of it all. We had Kathleen Smith come up to the office last week. She was talking about foods. I love the sound of her voice. I love the intonations. I love the Indian rhythms of her voice. You just moved into this other world. And there were so many people that know more facts than she does, but what she knows is that that mood, that nuance, that tone, that intonation. That's maybe where truth lies, is not in the facts, not in the big themes but in the tonalities, in the rhythms, somewhere else.

08-00:52:21
Bancroft:

There's almost a sing-song quality in some of the native peoples I know, the voice, especially the elders. And you hear that in Babe, too. It's very subtle. It's hard for me as a white person to capture that, to try to imitate it and capture it, but it's recognizable.

08-00:52:42
Margolin:

It's recognizable. It's recognizable. There's a kind of indirection to a lot of it. They do not follow the rules that English teachers lay down of being succinct and going directly to the point and being well-organized. It kind of drifts around and wanders around, truths rise up mysteriously out of the middle of incoherence. You set the mood for facts that can rise up of their own accord. It's a different kind of thing.

08-00:53:18
Bancroft:

Yeah. Well, that was the wonderful challenge when I edited Babe's book.

08-00:53:22
Margolin:

Isn't that a major challenge?

08-00:53:23
Bancroft:

Because it was all about that indirection and a reader can get lost, especially a reader that thinks rationally, like most white westerners, and so trying to retain the voice while getting the transition and the connections and the context.

08-00:53:40
Margolin:

That is the biggest challenge of all. It's like trying to edit Frank LaPena. He drifts around and wanders around. You line it all up and there's nothing there. It's a nest. It's a nest out of which things rise up.

08-00:54:03
Bancroft:

Well, that might be enough for us. That's really a couple of conversations about *The Ohlone Way*, and I think the connections that continue on from that book and community will continue on through our talks. Since we're—

08-00:54:21
Margolin:

There's one more thing I'm going to say. That I always felt in that book, and I felt in *Earth Manual*, I felt in *East Bay Out* that I was a fraud. That I should know more than I know. That I can talk a better game than I know. And that there was something in there, that my knowledge was shallow. And whether this is true or not, I'm not sure.

08-00:54:50
Bancroft:

Now that you've had all of this experience, these years, decades in the native community, do you feel less of a fraud? You said if you could do this book over again—you've learned so much in the last thirty years. Or does that feeling still linger for you?

08-00:55:14
Margolin:

It's much less. I'm much more comfortable acknowledging what I don't know. I don't feel like I'm a fraud. I feel like I'm seeing and I articulate more than I really know. Let me just muddle around with that for one more second before we quit. It's as if I don't know what I'm thinking until I've said it. There was the wonderful story of the Kwakiutl shaman. [Franz] Boas had this story. I'm not sure that I can remember it completely but the story went something like this. There was a young man in the Kwakiutl world up in Vancouver Island, and he was kind of an atheist, that he didn't believe in the old world, he didn't believe in the old traditions; he wanted to be a modern person. And he particularly despised the shaman, who he thought was a complete fraud. And one day he saw the shaman take and heal somebody. And in the healing of somebody you suck a disease out of them and you take this disease from your mouth and you display it to the world, like a coyote hair or something like that.

And this person, he was watching the shaman closely, and the shaman—he was healing somebody and then he saw the shaman insert something into his mouth and then later on pull it out and claim that it was something that he sucked from the patient. So he realized that the shaman was a total fraud. And he decided that he would expose the shaman to everybody. But he realized

that he also had no credibility unless he really learned shamanism so he apprenticed himself to the shaman and he learned the tricks and he learned the songs and he learned the gestures and he learned how you insert something and how you pull it out and how you display it and stuff like that. And to his amazement people got better, and he became known as a great healer and he was a great shaman and he was a leader among the Kwakiutl people as a great shaman. And Franz Boas finally said to him, "But you're a fraud." He said, "You've become the fraud that you've exposed." He said, "Listen, I think maybe in the old days people could do it right. They could suck the thing out. But nowadays we don't know how to do it, so we're just doing the best we can." [laughter] And he said, "But maybe there's somebody else, and I think on the other part of the island people still know how to do it right." So there's the sense of—what I'm keenly aware of is how much more there is to know.

08-00:58:46
Bancroft:

Yes. And you certainly keep producing books that show us how much more there is to know.

[End Audio File 8]

Interview 9: June 29, 2012

[Begin Audio File 9]

09-00:00:03

Bancroft: I have a couple of questions that I just, as I've been going over things, I do not know Rina's maiden name.

09-00:00:16

Margolin: Tice.

09-00:00:17

Bancroft: Spelled?

09-00:00:18

Margolin: T-I-C-E.

09-00:00:19

Bancroft: T-I-C-E.

09-00:00:22

Margolin: She was born Von Teitz [pronounced Von Tits], but at Ellis Island they strongly suggested a name change, and her father didn't know very much English. He thought Tice rhymed with nice. So he thought that he'd be accepted if he named himself Tice.

09-00:00:37

Bancroft: That's very good. I like that. Okay. And, also, what is Sadie's birth date? Do you remember the day?

09-00:00:47

Margolin: September 29, 1974.

09-00:00:51

Bancroft: Okay, because we have the year. So here we are again, Malcolm and Kim in Berkeley, June 29th. I even looked at the date. And getting to start interview number nine, I believe. And so where we left off was with *The Ohlone Way*, and so I wanted to hear in particular about Jacob coming into your life, and then the next book, I believe, was *The Way We Lived* and that was a little bit of a shift. So anything that was kind of going on in there in those few years.

09-00:01:31

Margolin: So we're living on Berkeley Way. I forget the numbers. Thirteen something or other. And it was the second house we'd had on Berkeley Way. We lived in the bottom floor of this big gloomy house where the Harmons lived upstairs and the Harmons had, I think, eight kids. One of them died, so they ended up with seven. I think they were all pairs of twins. We lived on the bottom floor. It was kind of dark and ramblly and it was kind of in disrepair. There was a front room that I created an office for Heyday Books and worked out of that office. And then there was a living room and a couple of bedrooms and a

backyard. Sadie was there and Reuben, and Jake hadn't been born yet. I don't know if I talked about that house. Did I?

09-00:02:33

Bancroft: No. Well, you mentioned the Dorothy Bryant house. Is that the Dorothy Bryant house? There was a house that Dorothy Bryant owned and you were living in it? I don't know if that was it.

09-00:02:46

Margolin: That was—

09-00:02:46

Bancroft: Earlier. I think that was earlier.

09-00:02:48

Margolin: That was earlier. That was early.

09-00:02:49

Bancroft: Yeah. So you haven't talked about this house.

09-00:02:50

Margolin: That was early in. And Heyday Books was a room. It was probably one of my favorite venues for Heyday because I very often cooked lunch for people. And people would come over for lunch. Fred Cody used to come by and Bob Callahan used to come by and various friends would come by, and I'd make curried carrots and I loved to cook for people. And the kids were crawling around and people would come over and buy books. I'd make my morning trip out to the post office and pick up the mail and hope there was something good and have a cup of coffee at Peet's and come back home and work. And *The Way We Lived* came before. I guess I didn't publish it until '81. And Jake came along in '80. But I was working on it at that house and somehow or other it was what was left on the cutting room floor from *The Ohlone Way*. I'd done all of this research, and I had all these particular pieces of stories and fragments of poems and stuff that I liked that I had collected. And I think that I then wanted to do something that was entirely in an Indian voice. Maybe it was a corrective to *The Ohlone Way*, which was my interpreting things. I wanted things in people's own voice. And I'm not sure whether that came from urgings of others or from a sense of self-criticism or a sense of inevitability. I wanted the story told. And I ended up researching and reading.

I started the book thinking I had a lot but I ended up spending a couple of years collecting, researching, and thinking and putting stuff together and getting photos. I forget where I got all those photos. I had a lot of photos. And I once went to Chicago and picked up some photos at the Field Museum. And I was collecting California Indian photos at that time and had spectacular collection of museum archival and stuff. I'd get copies of things. I don't remember exactly how I got them. I remember that I once brought them down to the California Council for the Humanities and knocked them all out by

laying tons of photos down and say, “Hey, this is our heritage.” But I ended up putting the book together. Then Jake was born.

09-00:05:48

Bancroft:

What’s his full name and the date of his birth?

09-00:05:53

Margolin:

Jacob Orion Margolin, and it was September 30th. And it may very well be that I’ve confused Sadie and Jake, because [their birthdays are] one day apart. And I think that Sadie is the 29th and Jake is the 30th and Sadie was pissed off at Jake because he’d been born on her day. But Sadie always felt that Jake was her kid. What Rina was doing there was a puzzlement to Sadie. She was somehow in there to take care of a few things while Sadie took care of her child. And Sadie was very possessive of Jake. Was very caring and very possessive and Jake was just the cutest little baby. He was just an adorable little baby.

09-00:06:43

Bancroft:

And where was he born? Because you’ve mentioned that Sadie was born at home.

09-00:06:47

Margolin:

Jake was born in a hospital, but it was midwives in a hospital.

09-00:06:57

Bancroft:

That was a compromise.

09-00:06:58

Margolin:

Alternative birth center. Yeah. And I think it had to do with the particular midwife that we wanted to be out of the hos—there was some circumstance in there that Rina will remember but I no longer remember. But Jake was born, and the house seemed to be full. One of the fondest memories I have of Jake is when he was very little. I was sitting in that house on Berkeley Way. I was sitting in a chair, and it’s the living room and we’ve got a treadle sewing machine and there was a fern on the treadle sewing machine and there was a cat sitting on the treadle sewing machine, looking out the window, and the cat’s tail was hanging down. And I was sitting there reading, he doesn’t realize I’m there, and he comes in, he looks around, and he goes and he pulls the cat’s tail. And I realize he’s one of us. [laughter] That it was just this love of engagement, this love of putting out—if nothing’s happening he makes something happen. You don’t just sit around. You don’t like stasis; you make things happen.

And it was bringing people into the house. I remember there was one guy that came in, John Stokes. He came in; he was playing the didgeridoo. And we had people in there with this didgeridoo, and I remember Jake sitting there. He stopped breathing for an hour, just listening to the sound of the didgeridoo. And then somebody brought us the gift of a lobster, a live lobster, and we put the lobster in the bottom of the refrigerator in the vegetable compartment. And

somehow or other Reuben came and told Sadie to get him an apple, and Sadie opened up the thing and there was this lobster in there and she screamed like hell. So then they both waited for Jake. And Jake came in, and they sent him to the refrigerator and his hair literally stood on end. And he didn't understand the word lobster. He thought it was the monster in the refrigerator. He was a roly-poly chubby, very happy, very content, very adorable little kid.

It just got too domestic. There were just too many kids and too much of a wife and too much of a home, and I just wanted to get the hell out. And I think it was partly I couldn't get away from it. I just work—

09-00:09:57

Bancroft: You were working at home.

09-00:09:57

Margolin: I was just working at home, so I was never fully at work, I was never fully at rest. And I thought that it would be a good thing to divide it up, to just get it out of the house. But I think part of it all was just some restlessness, some sense that it had gone as far as it could go. That this business of doing my own books—every book up until this point I had written, I had typeset, I had edited, I had put out as one of the Heyday books. And people were writing wonderful articles about this new wave of publishing, this do-it-yourself, self-sufficiency. I was into self-sufficiency. But it had gone as far as it could go, and it wasn't going to get any better. And I just wanted to do something else. I just wanted to do something else.

So I ended up moving the office out. And I moved the office out into 2054 University Ave on the fourth floor. There was my wonderful difficult friend Lloyd Alexander, and Lloyd Alexander had been dean of religious studies at Nyingma Institute, a Buddhist. And he started a calendar company, Golden Turtle Press, to publish calendars. And he was the most interesting man. His years of meditation had left him without guilt. And at first this was the most attractive thing that I'd ever met. When I got to deal with him later on I realized that guilt is a good thing, that guilt keeps us in life. There was a self-centeredness, there was a cruelty that I began to be aware of. There was a charm to him. He was doing beautiful things. There was not a deep love of things. There was not a deep love of what he was doing. There was a sense of ruthless play in there.

09-00:12:06

Bancroft: A sort of distancing—

09-00:12:10

Margolin: That distancing.

09-00:12:10

Bancroft: The Buddhist ethic.

09-00:12:13
Margolin:

That's exactly what it was.

09-00:12:16
Bancroft:

—not engage.

09-00:12:17
Margolin:

That's exactly what it was. That's a much better phrase. And working for him was Jordan Thorn. And we ended up having this teeny office. And by this time I'd had people working for me. Back at the house there was somebody named Donna DuMont. She was a student. And then Francine Hartman came to work. And Francine was skinny and hungry. Hungry for experience. She came from Scotts Bluff in Nebraska. She came out. They named her Francine because it was a kind of worship of France. She had gone to France for a year to study abroad. She loved literature. She was hungry for life. I was so pissed off at Cal, giving her these courses in criticism, this kind of opaque self-involved incomprehensible stuff with Derrida and the new criticism and stuff that was so without juice, without meaning, without guts, without anything that nourishes the soul. And she was just so stressed about it and she was trying to understand it, as if this was the key to understanding life. And I thought it was such a goddamn fraud. I thought it was so horrible. And Francine ended up going over with me to the new office. I think she started in the house. We used to talk about her memories of Heyday, and I think on her first day of work, Rina and I went out for lunch, and the cat was giving birth to kittens. And she ended up having this handful of kittens, and one of the kittens didn't seem to be doing so well, so she had to give it mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. And she was afraid that we'd be mad at her because the kitten had died. She noted that she had done her best, and midwiving kittens wasn't in her job description. And she was very funny. She was very, very funny.

09-00:14:35
Bancroft:

Let me just ask you. So you're describing leaving the house as partly your desire to get out and have some separation, and that makes sense. Was Rina pushing you out at all? Because obviously you've got Heyday happening there and now people are working there with you. Was that at all part of the—

09-00:14:54
Margolin:

Yeah, it was part of it. It was part of it. It was that she didn't have a house, that it was public ground. People were coming in and out.

09-00:15:01
Bancroft:

And with a third child the Heyday room might be even useful. Did it stay as a home office?

09-00:15:09
Margolin:

It stayed as a home office I think.

09-00:15:10
Bancroft:

Still.

09-00:15:11
Margolin:

But I think we moved shortly thereafter.

09-00:15:18
Bancroft:

That's a big moment because it recognizes that even when you're saying you had somebody working there with you, that no longer became just Malcolm's little operation and his publication, his publishing—

09-00:15:31
Margolin:

Yeah, this was a big moment.

09-00:15:32
Bancroft:

It's now becoming an organization that requires more space, more people, more time.

09-00:15:40
Margolin:

Yeah, an identity of its own. This is true. This is true. It was a big moment. And then came, how do you support this damn thing? And now I had another rent and a salary and stuff like that. So I started up something called the Book Camel, which was to distribute books to non-traditional bookstores. And we distributed other people's books. We had a warehouse, and Francine would go around and sell books to building supply houses, to wilderness supply shops and various other places. It was a total pain in the ass, and various people came and worked for me and sold books. Accounting has never been my strong point, so I had absolutely no idea whether this thing was making money or taking money or whatever it was. But all I knew was I hated it. And yet we were tied into it. We ended up getting this stream of books that were coming in and we were distributing oth—and the thought was that since I was selling my books, the *East Bay Out* and *The Ohlone Way* and now *The Way We Lived*, I'd also done *Stickeen* and reset that one and did my own edition of that. It was a John Muir book. But since we were distributing these books to bookstores and places, it would just be so easy to bring other people's books along and wouldn't be any extra work. And it turned out to be the tail that wagged the dog. It turned out to be a whole lot of work and a whole lot of accounting and a whole lot of drudgery. Just drudgery. Just bills and losses and shortages and damages and collecting money. It became a goddamn business.

And then I tried another business. I had somebody come to work for me named Kendall. Kendall was working for me for a while. And Kendall's father was Walter Munk and Walter Munk was a professor at Scripps in San Diego. They lived next to Dr. Seuss, and they lived next to Sam Hinton, the folk singer, Leanne Hinton's father. There were, I think, thirteen houses on La Jolla Park Drive overlooking the ocean. And Walter had a backyard in which there was an amphitheater. And I remember talking to Walter's mother. Walter was born in Vienna. And the mother was explaining to me how difficult it was to have a house, he house that she had in Vienna, and how

difficult it was to maintain a house like that with only four servants. I said, “I know what you mean.” [laughter]

Walter was a different breed of character and with the amphitheater and with his tremendous wealth and as a gift he gave a piece of typesetting equipment that we could use. And he thought this would be a great gift to Heyday. And that piece of typesetting equipment was a Compugraphic, and it was this old style of typesetting equipment. At one time there was type that you set, a metal type that you set, and today there are computers. But bridging the two of them were these strange things that had rolls of film and the letters were cut out like stencils. They were cut out of these strips of film and they’d be put on drums inside a machine and they’d whirl around and lights would flash through them and they’d be registered on pieces of film, and you’d develop the film in dark rooms and you’d lay it all out. You’d have galleys. And we had this production going on where we had these galleys. Pure gold.

09-00:20:16
Bancroft:

Was that at University Avenue?

09-00:20:16
Margolin:

We took over some offices on the third floor and there was a typesetter named Rick Heide who had a typesetting business called Archtype. And he moved in with us. He brought his typesetting machines. We had this typesetting machine that Water Munk had given us. And we ended up setting type for our own books and for other people’s books. And I thought that once again it was the inability of publishing to support itself. So it was having the Book Camel, it was doing typesetting for other people. We typeset lots of books for people that were publishing their own books. And since I had been publishing my own books, I felt about it a kind of ideological fervor, that you didn’t have to depend upon other people to publish your book. If you had something you wanted to say, you could do it yourself. And we had this cast of amazing people, characters come through. We were typesetting their books. And Francine was doing a lot of the typesetting. And once again it was a business. And it’s a mean business. You end up charging people money for stuff. You end up counting your time. People bring in corrections, you charge them for doing the corrections. You bill in minute intervals. It wasn’t this kind of loose open quality that I like. All kinds of strange people came in. This old guy from China who wanted to publish a book he had written on a business he had started, planting tung trees in South America and extracting tung oil from the nuts. Eldridge Cleaver came in. We did a couple of books with him. We did books on dancers. We did books on the stock market. And it was this never ending mass of problems. There were typos, there were machine breakdowns, there were schedules. I didn’t like the business. I didn’t like the stuff.

09-00:22:52
Bancroft:

When the book would come out, would it just say, “Printed at Heyday Books”?

09-00:22:59
Margolin:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we didn't—

09-00:23:01
Bancroft:

You were the printers, not the publishers.

09-00:23:04
Margolin:

Yeah, right. Right, we were not the publishers of it. This was work for hire. And meanwhile we kept squeezing out books. We did several bicycle guides to the Bay Area that were fairly successful. We did a couple more Indian books that were some reprints. I could pull together some of these early books and we could take a look and see what they were. But they were a variety of fumbling attempts at finding a tone, at finding a subject. It was what came along. Let's see, Reuben was sixteen, so it would have been in 1986. Humphrey the Whale came into the Bay and it must have been like September or October when it came into the Bay. I was watching people stand around these newspaper kiosks in wonderment. Every day was what happened to Humphrey and there was this kind of big drama and it struck me like Indian times. It struck me there's this big animal drama was unfolding and it riveted everybody's attention. And finally they ended up bringing it out with Bernie Krause's whale sounds. They ended up leading it back out the Bay. And there was this big cheer and I thought, "This is an instant book." So I went to Chick Callenbach and I went to my friend Carl Buell, who had been illustrating some books for us. And I said, "Hey, listen, let's do an instant book on Humphrey the Wayward Whale." And Chick and his wife, Christine, wrote the book in a couple of days. I edited it. Carl did some drawings. My friend Don Ellis at Creative Arts Press, he had printing presses down there. And we went over to the printing presses, we got some paper. We worked the presses, we had the binderies set up. We had friends at the bindery. We just started printing this goddamn book and it was like 4.95. It was a little skinny book. And we got it out in three weeks from the time the whale left. We got it out in three weeks.

And I had this old alcoholic sales rep at this time, Sherwood Hayden. He had emphysema. He was an old drunk. And he was taking stuff around to the bookstores. And he'd wheeze up in his old car, he'd open the trunk. We'd take off the end of the presses, we'd throw the books in, he'd go around, he'd distribute them. Every morning I came in, and the phone was ringing with people wanting to know where they could get this Humphrey book. We ended up selling 40,000 of them in a few weeks.

09-00:26:15
Bancroft:

Oh, my God.

09-00:26:1
Margolin:

The presses were breaking down. We kept printing them and stuff like that. And at the end I found myself with a chunk of money. I got rid of that typesetting equipment, I got rid of the Book Camel. I went off to Mexico with

Reuben. I was so goddamn glad to just be out from under all that shit. It was just wonderful.

09-00:26:38

Bancroft: That's amazing.

09-00:26:37

Margolin: It was just wonderful. It was so lucky. We could have struggled along forever.

09-00:26:46

Bancroft: But I protest that it wasn't just luck. There was something lucky that Humphrey happened to come and grace your life, but you also saw an opportunity.

09-00:26:58

Margolin: I saw an opportunity. Yeah. No, I saw the opportunity. I did see the opportunity. Yeah.

09-00:27:09

Bancroft: What you mentioned in there that was a nice little touch was that it went back to something you said, kind of like Indian life. Like here was a—

09-00:27:23

Margolin: It was an animal story.

09-00:27:26

Bancroft: Yeah, like this archetypal need to connect and the human desire to see this huge creature.

09-00:27:33

Margolin: Yes, that's exactly what it was.

09-00:27:34

Bancroft: For me, so often, I go back to *The Ohlone Way* when I am wandering anywhere. And I think what did this place used to look like. What have we lost? Why are there only a few birds out there? When there used to be, as you've described, the sky covered with them and so the sense of this huge magnificent creature that you were already attuned to from your own work, that now you could see this human need to connect.

09-00:28:06

Margolin: Yeah, yeah. No, that's there. And maybe if there's something important about the story, faded or symbolic, that it was seeing a story that was beautiful, seizing on that story, pulling it out and getting rid of something that was ugly. Getting rid of the typesetting business, getting rid of the distribution business. That it was waiting around. And I'm about to do it again. I'm working on some stuff that is just going to absolutely transform the place. It's going to transform the place. It's just so damn beautiful, it's just so amazing. There was also in that story the orchestration of others. It brought the best out of Chick and Christine, it brought the best out of Carl Buell, it brought the best

out of the printer. The sales rep almost came alive. [laughter] It was a matter of teamwork. It was a matter of getting a crew together. And it was going beyond. Once again it was not just the writing of the book, it was the whole orchestration of the book and this orchestration of people. And the fun of it. The fun of it. It was so much fun.

I think by the time Jake came along I was more involved in books than I had been with Reuben and Sadie. Jake and Sadie would come with me to Indian events all the time. I was going around to all these Indian events. They always went with me. Reuben didn't go, or very rarely. Jake and Sadie did. There was a wonderful story that I've forgotten about that Pat Cody, Fred Cody's widow, always used to repeat. It's her favorite story. And I was with Jake. I was in Monterey. I'd driven down to Monterey for something and he was a little kid. And I bought him a cookie. And he was eating the cookie. And I said, "Hey, let me have a bite of that cookie." He says, "No." I said, "What do you mean no?" He says, "No," he says, "it's my cookie." And I said, "Fuck you, man. I just bought you that cookie. I want a bite of your cookie." And Jake says, "Look around you. Look at how beautiful the world is." [laughter] "Think about something else besides the cookie."

09-00:31:19
Bancroft:

Oh, he knew how to dish it back.

09-00:31:22
Margolin:

[laughter] Boy, that was hoisted by your own petard, isn't it.

09-00:31:29
Bancroft:

Yes. Brilliant.

09-00:31:31
Margolin:

I thought that was pretty good. I remember we once went off to Los Padres Wilderness, and I asked Sadie if she wanted to come to Los Padres with me. And she said, "Yeah." So I was kind of surprised because she wasn't that much into camping. So we got some camping stuff together, we went to Los Padres and we were camping out there. It turns out she thought that we were going to the lost parties. [laughter]

09-00:32:02
Bancroft:

Was she highly disappointed when there were no parties when she arrived?

09-00:32:08
Margolin:

I don't know whether she was disappointed or not but she was—

09-00:32:12
Bancroft:

You told her just to look at the beautiful things around her.

09-00:32:14
Margolin:

She was wonderfully companionable. She was wonderfully companionable. And I still go out to Indian places. I guess it hasn't happened in the last few years, but for years people would ask, "Whatever happened to that little girl of

yours? That pretty little girl, whatever happened to her?" And she'd go, we'd sell books, and then we'd go off to these long dances up in the Yurok Reservation. I remember once bringing the kids up there. It was important for me to have the kids. It was important to travel around with them.

09-00:33:01

Bancroft: Why?

09-00:33:16

Margolin: My friend David Guy runs the Northern California Water Association, and we're doing some work up in the Sacramento Valley. He brought his kid along and he was asked if I would ever let this kid come with me to interview when I'm talking to people. So the kid is into videoing and could the kid video it. And on the one hand, it just struck me as such a pain in the ass, having this kid along. On the other hand, it struck me, I knew exactly where David was coming from. Your first duty in life is to give your kids experience, to introduce them to your world, to broaden them out, to see things through their eyes, to shake off the loneliness of just doing something yourself, to share it with somebody. And I liked myself in the role of daddy. I played that role well and I liked that role. I liked myself in that role. That was a good role. Plus the kids were fun to be with. They were just a whole lot of fun. I was reminiscing to somebody. You've seen the picture of the three Malcolms. [shows photo]

09-00:35:09

Bancroft: Oh. Oh, my gosh. These were the days.

09-00:35:17

Margolin: Isn't that fun?

09-00:35:20

Bancroft: And who are these two Malcolms?

09-00:35:23

Margolin: For years I'd walk down the street and people would stop me every couple of months. They'd say, "Leonard, how are you?" And I'd say, "I'm not Leonard." And they'd go, "Oh, God. You look exactly like Leonard." So one day somebody said, "Leonard, what are you up to?" And I said, "Hey, who is this guy Leonard? I keep being stopped. Give me his name and his address. Let me get in touch with him." So I got his name and phone number, and I call up this number, and this voice answers, and I said, "Hey, listen, is this Leonard Shapiro?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "Hey, listen, this is going to be the goofiest, stupidest phone call you've ever received but my name is Malcolm Margolin." He goes, "Oh, Malcolm." [laughter]

09-00:36:05

Bancroft: Of course. [laughter] He knew you.

09-00:36:09
Margolin:

So we got together. And then back in 2054 University Madness Network News set up its office. The Network Against Psychiatric Abuse. And there were a bunch of ex-mental patients that were against shock therapy and that was Leonard Frank who ran this organization. And people would come into the building, and they'd just been out of the insane asylum. They had just had electronic shock treatment. They'd see me and they'd say, "Leonard, I've come up to see you." And I'd say, "Listen, you want Network of Psychiatric Abuse. I'm not Leonard." And they'd go, "Don't fuck with me." [laughter]

09-00:36:58
Bancroft:

[laughter] Of course. You aren't who they think you are. You are who you are—that's great.

09-00:37:04
Margolin:

We used to have all these wonderful parties up at the office where the kids would come. And one of these parties I invited these two guys. The other two guys. And everybody at the party was just knocked out. They just couldn't believe that there were these two characters and we all looked alike. We all wore denim jackets and blue jeans. We'd dress alike and go out for lunch.

And the kids are playing around and they're having fun, and finally I come up to them, I said, "Well, what do you think?" And they said, "Think about what?" And I said, "Think about those two guys?" And they said, "What about them?" I said, "Well, they look like me." And they said, "No, they don't." [laughter] I thought that was just so wonderful.

I remember those days as being a steady turnover of people that worked. Francine ultimately left. She worked for a while, then she left. And she went off to Wisconsin. I'm stopping on a particularly vivid memory, and that was how she trapped her husband. I don't think I'll get into this. How she strategized and stalked and trapped. He was a nice guy, they're still married, they have a couple of kids. It's a successful marriage. But it was that hunger. And hunger is good. I'm hungry. Hungry for validation or experience or love or something like that. It's engagement. I guess you can engage through hatred, huh? I guess other people can engage through anger. That's not my idea of how to engage.

09-00:39:36
Bancroft:

So you would say you're hungry for engagement?

09-00:40:03
Margolin:

Yes. It doesn't sound complete.

09-00:40:08
Bancroft:

Will you complete it? Hungry for—

09-00:40:27
Margolin:

Isn't it funny? The image that I'm having is somebody shoveling dirt over an old self and burying an old self and coming out of it all. And that's the image that I have. Other people are into realization of themselves or something like that. I don't think I've been that. I think that there's been some escape from an image of myself or a way of feeling lousy or something like that. And I think maybe I look at experiences in ways of covering something up. It's not as if I have some terrible things that I've committed or I'm a horrible person or anything like that. I don't know, Kim. I don't know. Janeen Antoine dropped up yesterday. She's a Sioux Indian woman. She ran the American Indian Contemporary Art Gallery. And I was looking around with her at these walls. What happens if we turned Heyday Books into an art gallery? And Gayle was just astounded at this. And her statement was, "I wonder what the hell goes on inside your head with all these thoughts." But why not? Why not turn it into an art gallery? Wouldn't it be fun to have art hanging around? We're getting back into this old stumbling and not knowing what. But I don't know what. What I do know is there was a steady turnover of people, there was a chaos. It was always broke. It was always so fiercely broke. We never had the right equipment. Could never pay people well, could never do anything really well. Just always an emergency, just always at the edge.

I was amazed. The other day I looked at that book we did on glaciers and despite whatever problems the place has, there's a firewall between the financial problems and the work that gets done. And the work that gets done is pure. The work that gets done is holy. The work that gets done is gorgeous. It's the best of the human effort, the best of the creativity. It doesn't get infected by this other stuff that goes on. It's like something on an altar. And if you lose that, you've lost everything. There's no purpose to the whole damn thing. And we're turning out some decent books.

I love to go to parties. That was also a big part of that time. You never had to go home. There was always a party. There was always an opening, a reception, a reading, something like that. There was alcohol, there were people, there was life. I built up this place on parties, on people that I've met, on people that I befriended. I went to a lot of parties. And then as a publisher, I went in, I was also a writer. And just in terms of thinking about succession, what happens after me, I have an entrée to these worlds as an intellectual, as a writer, as somebody who's made a contribution to history, to natural history, to Indian ethnic stuff. That I come in not just as a publisher or not just as an interpreter but as part of the fraternity, part of that world. And I just love to mix. I was equally at home with Indians on a reservation that had just gotten out of jail and Nobel laureates and full professors, and I don't think I changed my voice for either of them. I think that I'm just equally at home.

If we get into this stuff, we'll never get out. There are individual stories about being on these Indian reservations, on people that I've talked to, on things that I've learned that are just so wondrous. There are stories that are so great. I tell

them all the time. I build around them. I'm not sure what they have to do with the history of Heyday, but they're just beautiful stories.

There were several big things that happened over there. Amy Hunter came to work for me. And she was great. She ended up being around for six or seven years, maybe eight or nine years. And she came in as sales manager. And there was a sense that I had of friendship and partnership with her that was really great. I officiated at her wedding. Officiated at some employees weddings, which has always been very flattering. And she met her husband on bicycle trips. She loved to go bicycling, and she met her husband on bicycle trips and they ended up getting married. And she was old New England stock. Was Mayflower background. It was real white people. [laughter] There was an amazing propriety to her. A rigidity, a propriety. And I think she wanted me to officiate at the wedding to show her parents that she has become a different person. And she wanted an outdoor wedding. The parents came in, and good strong New Englanders and stuff like that. We had this wedding out in Marin somewhere. And I remember we had a rehearsal and the rehearsal was terrifying. I was supposed to go and pick up the bride's mother and put my arm—then we were supposed to walk down the aisle. I'm supposed to pick up the bride's father, and then we're supposed to walk down. I'm supposed to deposit them here, I'm supposed to do this. It reminded me of square dancing. I was always lost. Everybody else was do-si-doing, and I was kind of bumbling around and I couldn't figure out how to do anything. And here I was supposed to lead all these people around and stuff.

And then I talked about how even though this wedding is different from other weddings and even though it doesn't have the ordinary things that we expect from a wedding, the truth of the matter is it works in the deep tradition. And the weddings are deeply traditional in that in the old days, in ancient Greece and ancient Rome, they would send a cart pulled by bulls to the bride's house to get the bride. And the bride-to-be, like all young women, was responsible for feeding the gods of the house, the *lares* and the *penates* of ancient Rome. And these were the household divinities. And when the bull pulled up with the cart they'd make lots of noise. They'd have bands and they'd have people making noise to let the gods know that the bride was going to some other place. And they'd move away. And this comes down to us today in the jalopy with the tin cans and the crepe and the soap and the garishness. And so it is that they drive away in a jalopy and at this point they go off and behind a tree is a bicycle built for two with tin cans and they drive off. It was so beautiful. So damn beautiful. The marriage didn't last, they got divorced. But it was a beautiful moment, and I hope they remember it as such.

09-00:50:12
Bancroft:

Oh.

- 09-00:50:14
Margolin: Yeah. And then in '87, one of the other big things that happened to me in was my friend Vera-Mae Fredrickson who had been helpful in writing *The Ohlone Way*. Did I talk about this? The creation of *News from Native California*?
- 09-00:50:45
Bancroft: No. Because we haven't gotten there yet.
- 09-00:50:48
Margolin: That she'd worked for the Lowie Museum, which is now the Hearst, and she was a total drunk and she got fired. And I was wondering what the hell you'd do with her. How do you handle this one?
- 09-00:51:06
Bancroft: Is she Native American?
- 09-00:51:08
Margolin: No.
- 09-00:51:08
Bancroft: No.
- 09-00:51:08
Margolin: No, she was from Minnesota. She was loud.
- 09-00:51:14
Bancroft: I did read that. It was just an astoundingly beautiful description of her impact.
- 09-00:51:22
Margolin: Yeah, she was great. When I wrote a eulogy for her, I talked about the first time I met her: "She had a cigarette in one hand and a whiskey glass in the other hand." And I thought, "Thank God we have only two hands." [laughter] I just love that line.
- 09-00:51:32
Bancroft: [laughter] Yes. Well said.
- 09-00:51:35
Margolin: So Vera-Mae got fired and we had to do something. I had to do something with her. So I figured we'd do a calendar of events, because this was before computers, and there were all these Indian things going on and you never heard about them. There was no way of hearing about them.
- 09-00:51:54
Bancroft: Let me just ask, how did she get connected to Native California or Native Americans?
- 09-00:52:00
Margolin: She was an anthropologist. And her husband was David Fredrickson, who was an archeologist. And Dave was the person who revolutionized the relationship of Indians and archeologists. He brought Indians along with him. He worked

with them. He listened to them. He was a quiet man. He was a poet. He was a singer. He knew people like Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer, he was part of that group. He was a folk singer. He's recorded a lot of folk songs. He was quiet. He was decent. He was so lovely. And methodical. Methodical. He kept lists of everybody that had ever entered the house. He had lists of things. He loved to have lists of things. So I went with Vera-Mae and we decided we'd have a calendar of events and we'd just send it out to people, about Indian events. And then we went off to a Chinese restaurant. I think I've told this story before. We went off to a Chinese restaurant and we planned out the calendar of events. And then I figured that during the fall and spring, we'd have lots of events but during the summer—what you got?

So at this restaurant, then I figure there's going to be some space left over, if we have like a folded sheet with some calendar stuff, there'll be some space left over. So I said, "Well, gee, maybe what we ought to as part of a calendar of events, is I'll get Frank LaPena to write an art column. And then I figured, "Gee, maybe we'll get Logan Slagle, this Cherokee lawyer, to write a legal column. And maybe Victoria Patterson can write an education column." And by the time we're through I had sketched out on the napkin *News from Native California*. And the founding napkin has long since been lost but that was the creation of this. It was this accidental creation. It was let's do something.

And then we got David Peri involved. And David Peri was this Bodega Miwok guy. P-E-R-I. David Peri. He taught anthropology and Native American Studies at Sonoma State. And he lived in Sebastopol on Dyre Road, which I always called "dire straits." And his life was a disaster. He was just a disaster. He was just a disaster. His daughter had died from a tonsillectomy. His friends gave him as a gift, to replace the daughter, a parrot. The parrot was sitting there in the living room, squawking away. He was alcoholic. He was promiscuous. He once gave me for safekeeping, he had—Tom Smith was a shaman out in Bodega, one of the most famous and reputedly one of the most powerful. He had Tom Smith's medicine bundle, and he gave it to me for safekeeping. I just hid it. No idea what to do with it. I'd go up there. David had the most beautiful stories to tell. David had a sense of what that old Indian world was like that was so rich and was so deep, and he'd talk about these old stories with Laura Somersall and Elsie Allen. And we just published the twenty-fifth anniversary of *News from Native California*. I just published some of my favorite things. And I published this wonderful piece on the Game of Staves. This wonderful story that Elsie Allen had told him about this woman. Game of Staves is a gambling game. And this Indian woman that comes and she's so rich. She's got a pleated blouse, white blouse, and she's got a jacket on and she's got a valise and she's driving a buckboard. And she's really wealthy. And she starts playing this game, and she's losing and she's losing and she's losing. And she's down to a bra and panties. And they said, "Well, what are you going to bet now?" She says, "I'll bet my husband." And all these other women are thinking, "She's willing to bet her husband. I'll bet he's not any good.[laughter] I'd better not take it." And these funny stories,

these beautiful stories, that older generation. He appreciated it so beautifully, so deeply. And funny. He was the funniest guy. We'd go off drinking and having these long meals. I could listen to him forever. I could listen to him forever. And he had the tone. He had the nuance. There was something about that older generation of Indians. Darryl [Wilson] has a bit of it. There's something about that older generation of Indians, that slowness, that wonderful humor. And he'd tell these stories about Essie Parrish and people like that. It was just so gorgeous. And I'd go up there, and we'd put the first issues together.

09-00:58:30

Bancroft:

What do you mean you'd put the first issues together up there?

09-00:58:35

Margolin:

Well, I typeset them and designed them in the office. We physically put them together in the office. But I'd be up with the articles, and we'd lay them out. God, I really miss him.

09-00:58:56

Bancroft:

When did he pass away?

09-00:59:02

Margolin:

I don't know. About twelve years ago maybe. Fifteen years ago. Something like that. His grandmother was Mrs. [Sarah] Ballard, who was the last speaker of the Coast Miwok language. There was a linguist, Catherine Callahan, would come over to interview this last speaker, to squeeze the last drops out of the cloth that she could possibly get. And David told the story how one day his grandmother asked, "There's a particular word that I'm thinking about. This word is going through my mind, and I don't know what it means. Can you tell me what it means?" And the linguist goes back and she looks up in the dictionaries and in the old vocabularies that people had taken years ago, and she comes back and she says, "Well," she says, "I think it's the second person interrogative preterit of the verb to urinate." And Mrs. Ballard says, "Huh?" And she says, "I think it means, 'Did you pee?'" And Mrs. Ballard goes, "Oh, yes. That's what it was. I remember every night my grandmother would tuck me in and that's what she'd ask." [laughter] And it was this--tales of a dying culture, this tales of a generation.

When I got in, when we started doing *News*, there was a generation of people still alive that had been brought up by people that remembered California before the Gold Rush, before the coming of whites. And there were people around with such depth and such humor and such defeat. You can only be that funny when you've been thoroughly defeated. And there were people around, like the Rislings and Vivian Hailstone and Wallace Burrows and Laura Somersall and Mabel McKay and these grand people. In some ways, *News* was set up to preserve the stories of this culture that was dying. And then it became a vehicle for the continuation of that culture. It became a witness to a culture that continued. It started out to capture the past, and it ended up

creating the future, and it was just such an immensely moving thing to witness.

09-01:02:05

Bancroft:

Let me go back to a couple of other things relating to Heyday as we move into that. So you said in 1986, after publishing the Humphrey book, you had this windfall of money and that allowed you to buy new equipment. So that was a transition. But you also said there was a time where you were just kind of publishing bicycle guides and kind of whatever looked good. Was there a moment when there was more of a kind of commitment, or a light bulb went on, about the identity of what you wanted Heyday Books to be or what it had become in terms of, say, committing to California culture, history, native peoples, et cetera?

09-01:02:56

Margolin:

Well, it defined itself around what I could do and what I was interested in. And I rode a lot of bicycles and it was part of an ecological—it wasn't completely removed from my interests. The California definition came about because this is what I could distribute. This is who I knew. I think it got defined around itself. I never decided to do California. If somebody brought me a book that needed national distribution, I wouldn't do it because I just don't have the capacity to get it out and promote it. I just couldn't do well with it. And one of the things that motivates is shame. To take somebody's work and not do well by it, I'd be ashamed. It's not just pride to do it well; it's shame to do it badly. I'd have to think about it. I'd have to actually look at some of those first books. I think it grew out of my reading and research and the people that I met.

I've always compared Heyday, I'm not sure whether I'm repeating myself or not, but it moves like an amoeba. There are some things that have goals. They see something outside themselves and they set up a goal and they move toward that goal. I've never seen that goal. It's a kind of emotional globby thing. And every so often it puts out a pseudopod into the world and the pseudopod extends out from this globby being. If it finds nourishment the rest of the globby being moves over into it and if it doesn't find nourishment it gets pulled back in and another pseudopod goes out. That's how it advanced, with some pseudopods. But it never gets—

09-01:05:32

Bancroft:

That's an elegant metaphor. But it works. Yeah.

09-01:05:38

Margolin:

It hasn't been the clarity and intellectualization of plannings. No flip charts have been sacrificed. No diagrams have been drawn. It's just kind of moved around. It never gets too far from an emotional core.

09-01:06:00

Bancroft:

And what's at that emotional core?

09-01:06:18
Margolin:

Oh I don't know. Wonder, love, fear. Egotism. Love of beauty. Love of beauty. That's so there. An ongoing kindness toward people. I love to see people prosper. I love it when the best comes out in somebody. I think that's just so beautiful. I never got into the books all that much. I never got into studying how distribution works and stuff like that. And it's not that I have contempt for it. We had this most wonderful person drop by yesterday. It was Tanya, who's from Tongva and Maori from New Zealand and she's from a family of canoe makers. I forget what I was going to say.

09-01:07:58
Bancroft:

Just bringing the best out in people. That was your theme. Was she looking to do a book?

09-01:08:08
Margolin:

Yes. We're working with her and Melissa Nelson on books on California Indian watercraft, on boats. And I want to put it in a worldwide context of what boats mean throughout the world in terms of binding societies together, in terms of the cleverness of the human species, in terms of the skills that you have to know, the way that you have to do things.

09-01:08:46
Bancroft:

Reminds me of your days helping Dan Carr on his—

09-01:08:50
Margolin:

Oh, that's true. That's true.

09-01:08:51
Bancroft:

Boat builder. Your old fascination with boats.

09-01:80550
Margolin:

That's true. There was a wonderful story that David Peri told about going up to a canoe maker, dugout canoe maker, and the guy seemed to have a kind of palsy. Did I tell you this? Was tapping the side of the canoe. He was adzing it out and tapping the side of the canoe. And at first he thought it was kind of a nervous gesture of some sort, but then he realized it was deliberate. He says, "What are you doing?" And the guy said, "I'm listening to the music that the boat makes, the blueprint of it." How you make it, what the thin and the thick parts are was locked into a song. You tapped around until the boat sang the song that you wanted to hear.

09-01:09:37
Bancroft:

That's so beautiful.

09-01:09:38
Margolin:

Isn't that just beautiful? That was David Peri. He's so filled with the beauty of these things.

09-01:09:50
Bancroft:

Well, let me ask you another question about Heyday. And I'm conscious it's about twenty to 12:00 and George is coming.

09-01:09:57
Margolin:

Oh, I've got somebody I'm supposed to see, too.

09-01:09:59
Bancroft:

Okay. You had written and published your own books first as Heyday Books and then you were printing these other books. What happened when you decided, okay, I want to now start publishing other people's books? But you were in charge of the editorial process, not just printing up somebody else's book? Do you remember the first books that you were doing with that or what that process was like?

09-01:10:32
Margolin:

No, I loved being involved in the editorial process. And there is stuff that I'm working on now where I'm much more creative in creating books that other people are going to work on than I've ever been in my own books. I can give you a couple of things that I just wrote out, some plans that I've made. I don't feel I've given up a life of a writer to do something else. I feel that I'm working with other people and I'm creating projects.

09-01:11:01
Bancroft:

But do you remember that process back when you decided, okay, you'd become the editor, you were the editor of *The Way We've Lived* and then beginning to publish other books as Heyday Books? Other people's books.

09-01:11:17
Margolin:

It's what a publisher does, is you work with people. You shape it. It's just a continuation. It's just what you do. And we had somebody come in before you came in, and we worked with him to shape a book that he wants to write. I don't remember a particular time when anything happened. I think I come at it as a writer. I think I come at publishing as a writer, so much more involved in the writing. Usually a publisher, it's a yes or no. Something comes in, it's good or it's bad. For me, something comes in, or we create something, and we'll end up working on it as a writer would work on it. Okay, let's—

09-01:12:20
Bancroft:

Stop there for today.

09-01:12:21
Margolin:

Let's just stop there for today. Before you came I was looking at some photos of these old days to see if I can remember who was around and that was kind of fun. I came upon a letter from Kim Bancroft with a picture of Darryl Wilson.

[End Audio File 9]

Interview 10: August 22, 2012

[Begin Audio File 10]

10-00:00:00

Margolin:

Yeah. It was up in that trail that goes in back of the Wawona and it goes up to the falls, {Children of Luna?} falls or something like that. And I've been up many times. I've been hiking up this trail for years. And I'm hiking up the trail and it's four miles up to the falls and it's a 2,500 foot elevation gain, so it's a fairly steep trail. And I'm hiking up this thing and we come upon this family of five people that are sitting there. And they're sitting there and they're all pooped out and they're drinking their water and they look at me and they say, "Do you know this trail?" I say, "Yeah, I know it really well." They said, "How far are we from the summit?" So I look around. I say, "Oh, you're just another fifteen minutes or so." They said, "Oh, good." So they took off, and I paused. And then I hiked for another half-hour and I come on to them on the trail, and they said, "Gee, we thought you said it was only--" I looked around, I said, "Oh, God," I said, "it's right around that bend." So I then hiked ahead of them, and an hour later I came to the summit. And I realized I wasn't lying. Truth and beauty is always ten minutes away. That I've got an optimism problem. [laughter] But you get there and it's so beautiful. It's just so beautiful. I thought, "I don't want there to be problems. I want everything to be easy." And you get there and there was this pool of water, the granite with the water coming, and water coming over a rock cliff and breaking into little falls that just kind of moved around the cliff and came down. And the water was cool and the rocks were warm, and it was so damn beautiful. And there were azaleas. There were azaleas out there. This flourishing of azaleas. And it was such a beautiful trip up in the high country. Just falling in love with the ordinary flower, those little phloxes that are just so simple it looks like a kid drew them. But just the beauty of ordinary things. The little mountain penstemons which are miniaturized and they just come up in the high country and they just hang in there. They've got a growing season of about three weeks and they just do what they can. They don't grow very big, they don't grow very colorful. They don't have any time to do anything. They just get out there with their fragile little lives and they get pollinated and then they're buried again. It was just so lovely.

10-00:02:39

Bancroft:

Everybody doing their part.

10-00:02:41

Margolin:

Yeah, everybody doing their part, everybody in there.

10-00:02:48

Bancroft:

Well, I thought about, for our interview today, I don't know if you have anything in particular you'd like to talk about. The last time we talked, I was looking at my record, we talked about some of the founding of *News* and we got up through about—

10-00:03:06
Margolin:

Yeah, that was twenty-five years ago.

10-00:03:08
Bancroft:

Yeah. And so there was something that you said in the interview that was intriguing, was about all the time that you spent going to different reservations and Big Times and all of the wonderful talks and you said, “Oh, those years in the eighties. If we start on that we’ll never get out.” And I thought, “Let’s start on that.” And I would love to hear more of your stories about the people and places that you went to. Specific things that just kind of flow out of your mind about specific events that you went to, dances that you remember.

10-00:03:47
Margolin:

I wrote about this a lot. I’ve been writing about it for *News* all these years, so a lot of this stuff is written out. There was an older generation alive back then. There were people like Wallace Burrows and David Risling and Vivian Hailstone. And they had been raised by people that remembered California before the Gold Rush, before whites came. And you’re with people that had this direct contact with that old world. And they also had contact with such tremendous pain and suffering and out of it can come a humor. I’m sorry that humor has to be at such a price. But there was a humor, there was a warmth, there’s a defeat. There’s a deep defeat. And out of that deep defeat comes some of the knowledge of the human race. nAd it was hanging around these people. It was so wonderful. And their resilience was so great. I’ll just ramble.

Because I remember that I was once hired by the state Indian museum to help them put together an exhibit on the Gold Rush and the Gold Rush’s effect on Indians. And I called April Moore. And April Moore, she grew up on Auburn Rancheria and I think her great-aunt was Lizzie Enos. And Lizzie Enos was raised by people that remembered California before the Gold Rush. So April had gotten these stories from Lizzie. And I’d heard some of them. And I called April and I said, “I’d love to hear some of Lizzie’s stories. Can we get together?” And she says, “Well,” she says, “I’d invite you over the house, but you can’t come over the house now because my brother Wallace has just moved back in and my daughter’s moved back in with her kids and the place is a mess.” And she says, “Why don’t we meet at the Placer County Courthouse.” So I said, “Jesus, what a hell of a place to meet.” She says, “Well,” she says, “I gave them my baskets. They have a little museum in the basement and they’ll find us a meeting room.” So I went up to the Placer County Courthouse in Auburn and I met her down in the basement, and she told me stories about the Gold Rush.

The one that I found always the most poignant of all was that—I remember when I was a kid we’d go down to downtown Boston, and you’d get dressed up. You’d get dressed up to be shown-off. You’d wear your best clothes. When they went downtown, they were made ugly. They were given rags. Their faces were dirty because they were afraid of being kidnapped. They were afraid that somebody would kidnap the kids if they looked beautiful.

And just that degree of pain, the degree of ugliness. And we talked about these various things and we talked about the suffering of people. And then we walked out. And she said, "I'll bet you're wondering why I wanted to meet you at the Placer County Courthouse." And I said, "No, you told me your stupid brother Wallace moved back in and your kids moved back in and the place is a mess." She says, "That's all true but there was another reason. Look at that stonework. My grandfather built that. Be sure you include that." And it was this wonderful survival of people through all that pain. It was that need to be modern, that need to be contemporary, that you're part of your world.

Porty Blake, George Blake builds dugout canoes, and a museum hired him up in Hupa. And he was busy. He had a dugout canoe, and he was making it with a chainsaw. He was grinding that out. And the museum came and said, "Hold on--wait a minute. Wait a minute. We wanted you to do it the old way with an adze and fire and stuff." And he says, "Listen," he says, "if you pick it up the old way with a horse and carriage, I'll make it the old way." [laughter] It was a world in which voices were still so much alive.

I was up there with Chuck Donohue, and Chuck also made dugout canoes. And you're up there and you were up in the woods around Yurok country, and this bird starts singing. It was a mourning dove, starts cooing. And he says, "Do you know the story of Mourning Dove?" And I said, "Yes, I do." Ottowi in Yurok language. "But how do you tell it, Chuck? I'd love to hear the story." So he told me the story about how in the old days when the world was first created, when the world was first made, when animals were all kinds of people, there was a gambling game and Mourning Dove was a gambler and Mourning Dove was winning all of the treasures. He was surrounded by Indian treasures. And Chuck told me about these Indian treasures, Kim. You wouldn't believe them. The black obsidian blades, the red woodpecker scalp, the white deer skin, the abalone. These Indian treasures. And these treasures were all divinities that had turned themselves into treasure. And he was surrounded by all this divinity, all these beauties of the world. And then somebody came to him and said, "Mourning Dove, your grandfather is dying. You'd better hurry up and see him." And Mourning Dove said, "No, hold on. I'm on a winning streak. A couple of more games." And he gambles a couple of more times and he wins some more, and his grandfather dies. And when the transformation happened, he became Mourning Dove. And you still hear him mourning for his grandfather, and the flecks of feathers around his neck, you can still see the treasure that he kept. And it's not about mourning. It's about doing your duty. It's about being a human being. It's about that you have certain things that you need to do. And the animals of the world, the animals in the woods, the places, they all had stories. They all told you their stories. And you were living in a moral world. You walk through this world, it was such a moral world. It was such a world filled with meaning. And just these fragments, these shattered nations. Did I tell you the story of L. Frank and the Hawaiian recognition?

10-00:10:44
Bancroft:

No.

10-00:10:48
Margolin:

So L. Frank is Tongva from the Los Angeles area. And when you're a Tongva from the Los Angeles area you're totally screwed. Indians have a tough time anywhere, but when Los Angeles is built on your tribal land, you don't have a hell of a lot there.

10-00:11:03
Bancroft:

It's a freeway. Yeah.

10-00:11:04
Margolin:

And they've got freeways, they've got this brutal culture, this brutal civilization. Everything has been wiped out. The people have lost their language. They've lost their culture. Other Indians claim they're Mexicans. They won't have anything to do with them. It's just total disruption. And somewhere in the middle of this total loss, the Hawaiians, the native people of Hawaii, decided that they would give recognition, diplomatic recognition to other Indian groups, and they came to give diplomatic recognition to the Tongva. And it was this ceremony in UC Riverside. And we had a hall in there. And the Hawaiian nation came, and they came with ambassadors and gifts and protocols and treaties, and this straggly bunch of Tongvas get together and they have ambassadors and treaties, and there are speeches and there's an exchange of diplomatic papers and this recognition to one another. And all this stuff is going on. And there are songs and there are gifts. There are vows of eternal alliance against the enemies. But the whole conversation had to do with parking regulations because UC Irvine had these draconian and completely incomprehensible parking regulations. People had pink passes that on alternate Thursdays you could park on the left side of south facing streets, and on alternate Wednesdays you'd get towed. Whereas the blue parking pass you could do this. And everybody's sitting around discussing their parking passes. And finally L. Frank says, "Oh," she says, "let's stop it. Extinct people can park anywhere." [laughter]

10-00:12:49
Bancroft:

She would say that.

10-00:12:51
Margolin:

I just thought that was such a great line. That was such a funny line. And the funniness of it. I remember when there was the first acorn mush of the year. It was the celebration of acorn. And there was a tray full of little like ketchup cups, these little containers that sometimes ketchup comes in, like little teeny miniature cups. And they were filled with acorn. He says, "Malcolm, can you go give the elders some acorn?" So I come with this tray of acorns. The elders are looking with utter alarm and they're looking with utter confusion. So it turns out it was Lanny's practical joke. The first acorn of the year is supposed to be given by a young virgin. [laughter]

And then there were the stories that you can't record. We helped the Hupa tribe get a grant once to revive their flower dance. And the flower dance is the coming of age dance for a young woman. And we helped them get the grant. They got the grant, but they couldn't find any young women that wanted to be part of the flower dance, so the flower dance never happened. It happened in later years.

And then there was all that wonderful language work. God, there were people that would just so break your heart. They were so amazing. We did a lot of stuff around the revival of birdsongs in the desert. And birdsongs are sung for four nights straight in the middle of winter when the nights are the longest. And they're linked verses that describe the wandering of divinities over the world. And it was Coyote and World Maker and First Man. And they wandered through the world looking for the right place for people to live. And these songs recount their journeys across the landscape. They went here. And their verses. And then there's a board rattle, there's a dance that somebody does. And for four straight nights you follow their journey along. It started to disintegrate, and then we ended up getting some of these older men tape recorders. So when they were wandering around, when they were doing their shopping, they'd suddenly remember one of the songs. And when you remember one of the songs, because they were all linked, you remember the rest of them. And they'd run out and they'd sing these songs. There's been this major revival down there. And my friend Preston Arrow-weed, Quechan, he studied under Jay Silverside, the guy that played Tonto. He studied acting. And Preston Arrow-weed grew up. He's exactly my age. He was born in October 1940. And he grew up in a mud wattle house where they spoke only Quechan and Kumeyaay language. Once a month they'd make a trip to Fort Yuma to buy groceries. That was the only time he ever saw a white person. They'd buy him a candy or something like that. And he saw these white people. And then he went back. Until five years old he spoke no English. He knew nothing about the outside world.

And at five years old they came and they got him and they sent him to boarding school. They took him away from his family, they put him in boarding school. And the first thing that he found out in boarding school was there was so much food. He just couldn't believe that you had all these meals with so much food. And then the next thing that happened was they had a play. And because he couldn't speak any English he had to be the rain and he spread his hands out and he kind of wiggled his fingers like raindrops, and all the kids dropped down to the floor like rain, and he thought it was the happiest moment of his life. And he got into acting. But he ended up singing the bird song. He knew the bird song. And he always wondered why the divinities came down the Colorado River. You could follow the singing. They came down the Colorado River. And then at one point they went five miles to the west. They left the river. And then they went south again for a few miles and then they rejoined the river. And he always wondered why they made that detour. And he was once out with some archeologists and they showed him

that that's where the old channel of the river had been, that the song maintained the memory of that old channel of the river, when the river had long since changed its channel.

And another singer there was my wonderful, wonderful, wonderful friend Ernie Siva, a Serrano singer. And Ernie was singing a song. And I once asked him the meaning of the song. I said, "What does that song mean?" He said, "Well," he says, "if you want me to tell you what the words mean I'll tell you what the words mean. But that's not what the song means. The song is where it is in the sequence of songs. What gave it meaning is who taught it to me. What gives it meaning is who I'm going to teach it to. What gives it meaning is, if we ever sung it at a funeral, whose funeral did we sing it at? That's what gives the song the meaning." There were characters out there.

There was Laura Somersall. She was a Wappo woman in her nineties. I visited her and she said, "Malcolm, did you bring me any cigarettes?" I said, "I don't smoke." And she said, "Did you bring any young men?" I said, "No, I came alone." She said, "What good are you?" [laughter] She was this old basket weaver.

10-00:18:56
Bancroft:

She in the book, the *First Families*?

10-00:18:58
Margolin:

She's in *First Families*. She's on the cover of this. She's on the cover of this issue of *News*, which has David.

10-00:19:13
Bancroft:

Oh, okay. I saw that. Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

10-00:19:16
Margolin:

Here's my friend David Peri and {inaudible}.

10-00:19:17
Bancroft:

Yes, I love seeing that.

10-00:19:19
Margolin:

Yeah. But her nephew Clinton McKay was telling me this wonderful story about her, that he was once going fishing. He was going to collect some abalone at Stewart's Point and she said, "Oh," she says, "when you're going to Stewart's Point, get me some of that good seaweed." So he said, "Okay." So he went to Stewart's Point and he got the abalone and he was in his car and he's driving down the coast and he says, "Oh, shit, I forgot Laura's seaweed." So he stops at a beach, he picks up some seaweed. He brings it back, she cooks it up and she says, "Oh, no. This isn't from Stewart's Point." [laughter] There were stories that David Peri used to tell me about her. Her knowledge was so exact. I'm looking at Mabel McKay up there. Did I tell you the story of Mabel?

10-00:20:18
Bancroft:

No.

10-00:20:18
Margolin:

This is Marshall McKay's mother Mabel McKay. She was a basket weaver. She was fierce. Greg Sarris wrote a book about her in the Portraits of Genius series that UC Press started. She spoke Patwin, she spoke Pomo, she spoke English. She was an impeccably gifted basket weaver. And she was the last speaker of Patwin language. And when she died she wanted to be buried next to her friend Essie Parrish at Kashia reservation. Did I tell you this?

10-00:21:00
Bancroft:

No. I've heard of her.

10-00:21:03
Margolin:

I was up at the funeral there, and it was a rainy miserable day. It was a cold rainy horrible day, and the funeral was completely chaotic. It was a reservation. There's no codes. People are buried haphazardly. It's a cemetery area but it's not well-kept. And it was as if nobody had ever died before, as if nobody knew what to do. There were Christians that prayed, and there were old believers that keened and howled, and there were old prayers and there were new prayers, and there were Mormons that were doing strange things. And then there was this pause, and Frank LaPena was there and he had a boom box and he turned on the boom box. It was Mabel singing her funeral song.

10-00:21:49
Bancroft:

Wow.

10-00:21:51
Margolin:

She was the last person that could sing herself to the other world.

10-00:21:57
Bancroft:

That's powerful. Wow.

10-00:22:01
Margolin:

This is David Risling. And David's father was the richest man on the Klamath River, and it was religious wealth, it was regalia. It was red woodpecker scalp and white deer skin. I remember this old lady up there once, that she just was talking about how all she wished for, all she ever hoped for was that she could live to see one more dance, that the regalia would come out because this was gods that had turned themselves into regalia so you could see the beauty of the other world. And his father that was sick got outfitted, jump danced for all ten straight days, several dances a day with different riggings for all these jump dances. And David, he taught at UC Davis. And I was once doing some research—there was a time in the sixties when all these intertribal organizations were created, Indian, California Legal Indian Health Services, California Indian Education League, DQ University, Native American Rights Fund. David founded all of them. And I was looking and I realized he was the founder of all these things. So when I saw him once, I said, "How the hell did

you do it? How do you found something that lasts?" And it's hard anywhere and in Indian country it's impossible. Nobody does this kind of thing. How did you do it? So the first thing he did was he talked for about an hour-and-a-half on the Hupa chief, on how the Hupa chief was chosen. And I don't quite remember that.

10-00:23:49
Bancroft:

Was he Hupa?

10-00:23:50
Margolin:

He was Hupa, Karuk, and Yurok. He came from the confluence. And I don't quite remember what he said now. I wish I had recorded it. I wish I could remember. But I didn't. There were two things that I did remember. One of them he said was, he says, "Look," he says, "it looks like I created California Indian Legal Services in 1969 in a Chinese restaurant." And I said, "That's the story." And he says, "Actually," he says, "I created it several years before. I started planting seeds." And I said, "Bullshit, man. I've been planting seeds all my life and I don't get prominent institutions." And he says, "No, Malcolm. You throw seeds around. I plant them." [laughter] I thought that was pretty good.

But then the other thing that he talked about was how when he set these organizations up, he says, "Look at who is sitting at the table when I set up California Indian Legal Services. So and so, so and so, so and so, so and so, so and so." He says, "I thought deeply about what an organization needed, and I thought that it needed moral governance, that it needed money, it needed executive ability, it needed somebody that understood the law. I looked at everything that it needed and I made certain that everything was sitting at that table when that was founded." He said, "People think that they have an idea, the money will come, or they have money and an executive director will come." He says, "You have to have it all there at the beginning." He says, "And if it's there at the beginning the organization has a chance of lasting." And it was this wonderful wisdom that he had, this wonderful kindness that he had. He was such fun to be with.

And then the next picture of Bertha Norris. We took that when she was a hundred years old. Aunt Bertha. Did I tell you that story?

10-00:25:51
Bancroft:

No.

10-00:25:53
Margolin:

I was with her when she was a hundred years old in the roundhouse and Grinding Rock {a state park} up in Glenn County, not far from Willows, the Wailaki reservation. And it's the oldest continuing tradition in California. Wallace Burrows died at the age of 104, and Oscar McDaniel had died at the age of ninety-eight, and they had been young men and learned it from the people that knew it before the Gold Rush. And they were already well-

advanced when they had learned it. And they do the big heads. They do the Hesi. Just so dramatic and so beautiful. And I'm sitting there, we're waiting, and the Hesi is where they whistle the Kuksus, the god, in from the woods. And the guard comes into the roundhouse and the drummer has a floor drum, and there's a big stick, and he's banging on the floor drum, and the singers are singing, and the Kuksus comes backing in through the door and there's the fire. And the fire is casting the shadow of the big head masks up on the rafters. They're dancing around, and people are throwing beads and money, and the women have their scarves, trying to contain the power. Just enormous dances. And I'm talking to Bertha. We're waiting for the Hesi to come in. And I said, "What was it like in the old days?" I said, "You've been here for a long time. What was it like in those old days?" She says, "Oh." I says, "Well, what are your earliest memories?" She says, "Well," she says, "when I was a little kid we used to get on top of the roundhouse roof. They told us we couldn't do it but we did it. We went on top of the roundhouse roof because we were so excited and we looked down the dirt road from Stony Ford, and we see these buckboards coming up the road with the dust rising up and the dogs running behind the buckboards and all them Indians coming in for the ceremony, and we looked down the dirt road to Colusa and there's more buckboards and more Indians coming and the dogs running behind. We look up the road to Covelo, and there are more buckboards and they're all coming. And they come and they tether the horses over there and they feed the horses real good. They feed them real good. You got to feed the horses real good. And then we all eat and we come into the roundhouse. And then they build the fire, and the dancers and singers get ready, and they whistle the Kuksus in from the woods and the Kuksus come in and the dancers begin and the floor drum is going. And suddenly you hear this big noise. There's this big noise. And we all look out through the door of the roundhouse, and all the dogs are fighting. "God," she says, "I haven't seen a good dogfight in years." She said, "Don't Indians have dogs anymore?" [laughter] And it was that roundhouse culture.

One of my favorite stories is there was this guy, Bill Franklin, and Bill was a sweet man. Bill grew up in Ione, up in the foothills of the Sierra, near Ione and Buena Vista as you're going up toward Jackson and that area. And there was the famous Ione Roundhouse. And when I first got into this stuff, people would remember these roundhouses. They're like Ivy League colleges. This is where the great singers would be. This is where the people like Pedro O'Connor would sing the old songs. This is where the great stories were told. And the Ione Roundhouse was among the greatest of them. And Bill was a dancer in the Ione Roundhouse during the thirties. And the war came and he went into the war.

And during that period of time, the roundhouse culture collapsed in California. The younger generation had gone to war. Other people found jobs in the city, in the shipyards. An older generation died. And when Bill Franklin came back, the roundhouses were gone. So he did what people did in his generation, which is he got a job in logging and he built a house in Shingle

Springs. He built a house in Shingle Springs and he raised a family. And it got to the forties and the fifties and the sixties, and he suddenly realized it was gone. It wasn't going to come back. So he brought his kids out, and they searched the road. They got road kill, deer and flickers and stuff like that, and they remade the regalia. And he built a rec room next to his house and he brought the kids in to rehearse the dances and sing the songs. And then through the late sixties he got together with Glen Villa and Old Man Burris and himself and some others, and they decided to rebuild a roundhouse. And they rebuilt a roundhouse. It's now at Chaw'se State Park. They wanted it on state park land because it would be—

10-00:30:51

Bancroft:

Be protected.

10-00:30:52

Margolin:

It would be protected and it wouldn't be within one tribe. It could be used by other tribes. It would get it out of tribal politics. So they built the roundhouse, and it was just this beautiful—I don't know if you've been there or not but it was just this beautiful roundhouse. It's big, it's capacious. And every year there's a big ceremony there, and they have the best dancers and the best singers. And you come in late at night and these people come sneaking in to do their ceremonies that they can't do anymore, to name kids or bless the dead. And the roundhouse was built, I think, in 1970. It lasted until 1990 when the roof collapsed. They then rebuilt the roof and it's still going strong. And I was there several years ago and I was talking to Dwight Dutschke. And Dwight was Burris's grandson, and I was talking about how the roundhouse had been built and I was wondering about the construction of it all. And I was looking at why were there four center posts. Why were there four posts in a cribbing instead of a single center post? Why were they tied up the way they were? There was a back door. Did they have to do that for code purposes or was that in the old days? And finally he looks at me and he says, "I know what you're getting at, Malcolm." And I said, "What's that?" And he says, "You're getting at the fact that we didn't build it too good." I said, "Jesus, no, Dwight. That's not what I'm getting at at all." And he says, "We didn't." He says, "We're into construction. We know how to build things. We know that you don't put posts in the ground without creosote or drainage. There was nothing in the old rules that say we couldn't use creosote. But we didn't. We know that you don't tie the rafters. The roof isn't going to last if you tie the rafters with grapevine. We could have used metal, we could have used nails, we could have used struts. There was nothing in the old rules that said you couldn't do that. But we didn't do it," he says, "because there's another rule that we had to follow." And I said, "What's that?" And he says, "We have to build a roundhouse so that it falls apart every twenty years, that every generation knows how to rebuild it." And he says, "If you want to keep a roundhouse alive, you build it one way. If you want to keep the knowledge and the culture alive, you do it another way."

I still go up there, I hang out. I just sit under a tree. People come around, we end up talking for hours on end. The senseless stories. The last time I was up at Ione, Glenn Villa's grandson Connor, I have no idea why they call him Connor, but he's always been Connor. That's who he is. Connor. His name is Glenn Villa, Junior, but they call him Connor. And there was a basket weaver's up at the park nearby, and Connor comes and he says, "Do you want to take a ride over to Ione and I'll show you around?" So we ended up going out to Ione and he showed me around and he showed me where the roundhouse used to be and he showed me where the cemetery was and he showed me the gate that he had built with his father and he showed me the baby smashing rock, where the pioneers had smashed babies' heads. And he showed me where the yerba buena plant grows strongest and he showed me the footprints of the great animals that had once walked the world and he showed me the viewpoint where you could look at Mount Diablo. And he showed me all these different things, and it was this wonderful naming of things. It's senseless. I mean no plot to it. Just this preservation of fact. Just this accumulation of memory. Just this investment in the land, and such sadness and such beauty.

And the language stuff has been oddly wonderful. Several years ago there was still about a dozen Yurok speakers and Georgiana Trull was one of the last of them. But she was the only person alive that spoke high Yurok, the aristocratic Yurok. Other people spoke common Yurok, but she spoke high Yurok. And we wanted to get her an apprentice, but she wouldn't take any apprentice that wasn't of a good family. So we had to find an apprentice from a good family. And we finally found Carol Korb. And Carol Korb grew up in a very good family.

10-00:35:43
Bancroft:

Yurok?

10-00:35:44
Margolin:

Yurok. Oh, yes, yes. A Yurok. Oh, of course. That was without saying. And we apprenticed Carol Korb to Georgiana Trull, and I see Carol a few months later and I said, "How's it going?" And she said, "It's the most humiliating experience of my life." I say, "Why? What's happening?" She says, "I've been studying now for two months and I'm still learning how to count." I said, "What's the problem?" She said, "Malcolm," she says, "there are eighteen different ways of counting in Yurok depending on what's being counted, and Georgiana will tell me, 'How do you say three tables?'" and she'll use the word three and Georgiana will say, "Oh, no. You can't say it that way. Bad things will happen if you say it that way." [laughter] And she was trying to sort out all the different ways of counting that there were in Yurok.

And there was Matt Vera who we got. He was the Yowlumni speaker. And he ended up studying with his mother. And people would ask him, "Why do you study? Why are you learning this language? Nobody's going to speak it in a

few years, there's nothing written in it. It's just a useless language. You're the smartest person in the tribe. Why don't you get a degree in law or social work or something to help us out?" And he said, "There's going to be nobody to speak to" and Matt said, "The world was created in Yowlumni. As long as there are trees and birds there'll be a language of the Yowlumni because that's the language of creation.

There were the old-timers that knew their world. Bun Lucas was my favorite of all. Bun Lucas grew up in Kashaya and didn't speak any English until he was five or six. He was a sweet old man. I got him a job in the linguistics department teaching their field methods course. He worked with Leanne Hinton. And this would be where a student would figure out how you, when you find somebody that has an obscure language, how by talking to them you can get a vocabulary and a grammar and a sound system and how you deal with somebody to get all of these things that you need. And the only place that Bun knew how to get to in Berkeley was my house. So he'd come about three hours early. He'd sit in front of my house reading the *Enquirer*, the *National Enquirer* about crop circles and alien beings and stuff like that, which was just heating up. It made as much sense as anything else. And then I'd drive him over to Cal and he'd teach this course. And I remember there was one time. I forget what the word was. It had a guttural in it. Maybe it was the word "ha" for land. And there were six different gutturals in Kashaya [guttural sounds], different parts of the throat. And the students just couldn't get it right. And they just weren't saying it right, and they had their hands on his Adam's apple. They were trying to figure out where the sound was coming from. And finally they had it right. And he says, "But that's not how my Uncle Marvin used to say it. Uncle Marvin came from Rock Pile," which was another little Indian community two miles away. And his Uncle Marvin had a different way of pronouncing it. And when they finished that he said, "That's not how my Uncle Addis pronounced it." And you ended up having these little communities of such distinctiveness, of such difference. They were so proud. They were so invested. We live in a world of homogenization, where everything is becoming the same. But this was a world of dispersal, where everything was becoming more and more separated. Languages were splitting off. There was a different force involved in that world.

And I once brought Bun up to the foothills. He wanted to see other Indian roundhouses. So I went with him and me and Jake. And Jake was just a little kid. And we'd drive up, and I think what he was looking—he was looking for a bear skin and I think it was potency, is what my suspicion was, because he was looking for a grizzly bear skin. But he wanted to visit other people, roundhouses. I had asked him about the grizzly. There used to be grizzly bear shamans up at Kashaya that could turn themselves into grizzly bears, and they would turn themselves into grizzly bears and they could prove their power because Kashaya was like about ten miles from the coast. And they turned themselves into grizzly bears, and within a half-hour they could come back with shellfish and stuff like that. And I said, "Are there still grizzly bear

shamans?" and he says, "I don't think so." He says, "We don't need them anymore. We have cars." [laughter]

10-00:40:50

Bancroft: When you say he was looking for a grizzly bear skin, meaning that somebody would have tucked one away for their family, their different generations?

10-00:41:01

Margolin: Yeah, yeah. I think he wanted a bear skin. I'm not a hundred percent sure, but this is what he was interested in.

10-00:31:09

Bancroft: Did you ever see one?

10-00:41:10

Margolin: No.

10-00:41:11

Bancroft: No.

10-00:41:14

Margolin: So we ended up one night in a campground, me and Jake and Bun, and it was this campground and we were in the overflow area. And I set up a tent, and Jake and I had sleeping bags, and Bun had a rat's nest. He had this bunch of blankets. It looked like a garbage heap. And he's weighed down with amulets. He's got various amulets because he's in a strange country and he's afraid of being spooked and bad spirits and stuff like that. But he's also very friendly. And into this overflow campground comes this bunch of bicyclists, and they're all trim and neat and they're in spandex and they've got little teeny backpacks with little teeny tents that open up and sleeping bags that open up and everything is neat and compact. And they look over and there's me, Jake, and this old Indian in a rat's nest. But Bun was very friendly, and Bun would come over and he'd look at their bicycle tires and he says, "I know something about those bicycle tires." They said, "What do you know?" And he says, "When your car gets stuck," he says, "they're so strong, you can take the bicycle tire, you can move it around from one bumper to another bumper and you can tow a car." And they're looking at him as if this is the most horrifying thing that they'd ever heard.

He talked about how he went into the war. He grew up in Kashaya and there were seven people from Kashaya reservation that went to the second world war. And all seven of them, Essie Parrish, the shaman Kashaya, sewed a magic handkerchief and this magic handkerchief had a symbol on it, a shamanic symbol on it, and while at the reservation every night she'd pray and dance the power into that symbol so that it would protect the people that were in the war. And of the seven, six came back. One died, and the one that died didn't have this handkerchief. And Bun talked about how when he came back from the war, he was drummed out of the military. They let him off back east and he somehow found his way, a bus across the country, and he went up to

Cloverdale, and then he had that long walk up that Cloverdale Stewart's Point road, past places that he used to talk about, where there were monsters and historic sites and massacre sites and places where there were sacred rocks and places where a monster lived on one lake. And he walked past on that and when he finally got to Kashaya reservation and there were two roundhouses then. There was Essie's roundhouse and there was the old roundhouse. And the old guys would sit around. There was a bench outside the roundhouse, and if it was warm you'd sit facing the sun, and if it was warm, you'd be in the shade, and if it was cold, you'd be in the sun. And they'd move around the roundhouses as the sun moves. And Bun came there and they stopped and they looked at him and they said, "Hello. Bun, you're back," in Kashaya. And he says he couldn't find his Kashaya. This was the language that he was born with and he couldn't find it. He just didn't know where it was. And he was so crushed that he couldn't answer them that he went back to his mother's house and he stayed there, and he said finally it was as if the Kashaya was—he had a lid on it and he was protecting it. And then there was this hole that went finally through the lid and the Kashaya came pouring out and he found it again. And I always thought of that as something about tradition returning. There was one old guy. He was an Ohlone from the Fremont area. And he talked about hunting, fishing, catching sea lions in Mowry Slough during the Depression and he'd tie ropes around them and he'd haul them through the streets of Fremont up to his house, and they'd cook them up and they'd eat them.

10-00:45:33

Bancroft: What an image.

10-00:45:35

Margolin: He was always afraid of being caught by the police or by the game warden so he was always looking for other places. And one day he was moving it along, he was hauling the sea lion along a part of the marsh that he'd never been to before and the sea lion suddenly fell into a groove and he hauled it along that groove, and he realized he'd found the place where his ancestors had been hauling sea lions for thousands of years, and it now moved easily along. And it becomes a metaphor for reviving traditions, language, the things that follow with it.

There was another Ohlone guy, Ray Marquez. And Ray told his extraordinary story of, in the fifties and sixties he was a garbage man in Watsonville, collecting garbage. And in the fifties and sixties it was shit to be an Indian. They claimed they were Mexicans because to be an Indian was just the dirtiest, most wretched thing you can be. So they claimed to be Mexicans, which was partly true. There was some Mexican blood there. But they were mostly Indians. And then along came the sixties and the hippies and Alcatraz and there suddenly became a pride in being an Indian and he began to wonder about his Indian past. And then he went to his mother and he said, "What do we know about our past?" "Oh," she says, "it's too bad your uncle died

because he was the last person that really knew a lot of things.” So I don’t know much but I do know one thing. That it was a mountain that you could go to. And I think it was Mount Madonna but I’m not sure. And he says, “You could go to that mountain,” he says, “and if you go to the top of the mountain, if you fast,” he says, “if you fast for three days and then you climb to the top of the mountain, and at the top of the mountain there’s supposed to be a village site. And if you stop at that village site and you scrape up earth from where that village site is, you hold on to that earth and close your eyes you’ll be given a vision and it will bring you back to the old days.” So Ray, this garbage man, fasted for three days and then he climbs up the mountain and he finds the place where there was obviously a village site. It was just clear that there was a village site there. And he scrapes the earth together and he holds onto the earth and closes his eyes and he has a vision. And the vision, he’s now at the bottom of a mountain looking up and as he’s looking up he sees the old style houses up there and he starts to climb toward the mountain. But as he’s climbing toward the mountain, people come out and they grab him and they punch him and they claw him and they push him. And finally he couldn’t stand it any longer, and he drops the earth. And he goes back to his mother and he says, “What happened?” And she says, “Those are our people. To get back to the past you’ve got to go through 200 years of suffering and nobody can do it. Just pay attention to the present.” So he opened up a little clinic in Watsonville to deal with pregnancy and employment.

There was just this cast of amazing characters, just amazing people. And such a wealth of stories. Linda Yamane, who did that basket, when we first had *News from Native California* she was married to this Japanese guy, Glenn Yamane. And I’d get these letters from her in impeccable little handwriting wanting to know more about her past, wanting to explore who she was. And I watched her get into this language stuff. And she would talk about how she would get these wax cylinder recordings of her ancestors and she would put her kid Robby to sleep at night and she would turn on these wax cylinder recordings and through all the scratchings you hear this old voice come and she would make out a word and she would look in the old syntaxes and old vocabularies, and she’d find out what that word meant, and she would have that word. And she’d talk about the tremendous tension that she felt in bringing up, saying that word. For the first time in seventy-five years this word would be alive again. And finally bringing it out and giving the word life, bringing that language back.

10-00:50:13
Bancroft:

Tell me about the organization for the survival of indigenous languages, because L. Frank mentioned that and your role in it, and how did that come about? Advocates?

10-00:50:29
Margolin:

Yeah, yeah. After I started *News from Native California*, there was Marion Weber, who's Laurence Rockefeller's daughter, came by. And she wanted to start a foundation to support Indian things. She gave 100,000 a year for it.

10-00:51:58
Bancroft:

What was the purpose of the money? Was it related to the language preservation?

10-00:52:06
Margolin:

No, it was just for Indian stuff. But this was the foundation. And then we gave him the 2,500 bucks and he drank it up and my solution was you give him another 2,500 bucks [laughter]. He was feeling embarrassed. Buy him a log or something like that. We made a mistake. He didn't make a mistake. We made a mistake. But then somewhere in the first couple of years of this, Native California Network was the name of the foundation, I think I was the one that suggested we do a language conference and that we get together the last speakers of the language, of the California languages. And we had a conference up in Marin, and we got all these people that came up from Southern California, from Northern California. Mary Jones, the last speaker of Konkow language was there

10-00:53:08
Bancroft:

Of which?

10-00:53:10
Margolin:

Konkow. Although she said, "You don't say Konkow. We're not cows. You say Konkow." So she was very precise about what to say. And we must have had about thirty people there. I've got a picture of it. I don't know whether Darryl [Wilson] was there or not. And we had this despair over the loss of language. It was just despair. And then came the question as to what you do with it all. And there were these courses that people were trying to get it into the curriculum of schools. And I don't have much belief in schools. This is not how you teach anything. People just don't learn that way. It's a failed institution. And you'll end up teaching them a couple of words, and they'll take a test and they'll forget the words. I know you're a schoolteacher but I just have no—

10-00:54:14
Bancroft:

I agree with you actually.

10-00:54:16
Margolin:

This is just a waste of time and a waste of money.

10-00:54:17
Bancroft:

I was one who was trying to make something happen within a failed institution, but it finally got the better of me.

10-00:54:24
Margolin:

Yeah, it was just a failed institution. So then it was Leanne Hinton who was there as the linguist, and she suggested a master apprentice program. And the master apprentice program started from that conference that I created. And then we kept it going for years. I published a newsletter which helped them get grants. They're going to be meeting here next month. The board is going to meet here. I'm still involved with it. L. Frank had some differences with them, but L. Frank has had differences with everybody. It's just such a beautiful program. What we heard at the Oakland Museum was so extraordinary, and it kind of grew out of that. There was the master apprentice program and then came this languages, life and—

10-00:55:37
Bancroft:

Breath of Life?

10-00:55:37
Margolin:

Breath of Life. The Breath of Life. And these people getting together with their fragments of language, their wax cylinder tapes, their linguist, and somebody getting up there and saying something in their language. "My name is Sharon Smith. I am speaking the Wukchumni language. Welcome to my land." And everybody just burst into tears because it's just so lovely. It's so dramatic. But on the other hand I don't have an ongoing role in it. I had lunch with their executive director, with their coordinator, with Marina Drummer a couple of days ago. I'm still involved in it. I'm still a friend of the family.

We helped start the basket weaver's conference. One of the great memories that I have was with Julia Parker, who's a wonderful basket weaver. And it was in the early days and we'd look out. We were up at a reservation where the basket weaver's conference was, and I'm looking out, and Georgiana Trull was there, this aristocratic Yurok woman, and Eileen Figueroa from Hupa and Norma Turner from North Fork and Vivian Hailstone and all these great old weavers were there. And I look at Julia and I say, "Isn't it wonderful how basketry has attracted the best people in the world?" She says, "No, Malcolm, you don't understand. The baskets make us this way." [laughter]

10-00:57:19
Bancroft:

Very nice.

10-00:57:20
Margolin:

Julia, we're doing a book with Julia now. We did a book on Julia's acorn processing and when I met Julia she had jet black hair and her hair was so black it was almost purple. And black eyes like root beer. They sparkled. And she was just strong. She's now in her eighties. She's strong and vivacious and beautiful. And we did a book on her acorn processing. And I got this photographer, Ray Santos, to go in to photograph her and follow her around the various steps. And I'm in the office, and the phone rings, and it's Ray Santos saying, "Malcolm, you're not going to believe this." And I said, "What?" She says, "Julia just dyed her hair blond and got a perm." [laughter]

So I said, “You’re kidding?” So I said, “God, put her on.” So I said, “Julia, what the hell did you do?” She said, “I didn’t want to be one of them museum Indians. I’m a modern person and I want everybody to know it.” But it was black and white photos, so the hair turned out to be white. But we’ve got another book of hers coming out that is so gorgeous on her basketry traditions.

10-00:58:37

Bancroft: I don’t know if it’s a mockup of a cover above Gayle’s desk of California roundhouses?

10-00:58:44

Margolin: Oh, yeah.

10-00:58:46

Bancroft: Is that a book?

10-00:58:47

Margolin: No?

10-00:58:48

Bancroft: Oh? Was that a cover of a—

10-00:58:50

Margolin: No, that was just a poster for gathering.

10-00:58:52

Bancroft: Oh, my gosh.

10-00:59:01

Margolin: These roundhouses are like, you go into them, it’s like you’ve always been there. It’s like the center of the world. It’s like everything outside of them is just a daydream. It’s just a fleeting fancy. You just get inside them, and it’s contained and the light is always the same and the fire is always the same, the jokes are always the same, the dances are always the same.

10-00:59:26

Bancroft: So what was it like for you being in all of these places with all of these people? Again the question of the insider/outsider. I presume by the late eighties you were well-known, accepted?

10-00:59:44

Margolin: No, I’ve always felt like an outsider. I’m well-known and I am accepted. But I feel like an outsider everywhere, and this was a place where it was sanctioned.

10-00:59:56

Bancroft: Interesting.

10-00:59:57

Margolin: This was a place where I really was an outsider, so I didn’t have to feel bad about it because this is who I was. When I’m with other people that I’m supposed to be an insider, I feel like an outsider. It’s a bit awkward. But here

it wasn't awkward in the least. No, I feel very privileged in the acceptance of the community and very lucky. And I've been a good friend of the family. I've furthered people.

10-01:00:35

Bancroft: What do you think helped you become accepted where other whites were not?

10-01:00:46

Margolin: Well, first of all, I have something to offer. So I have something to bring to the public. I can feature people, I can photograph them, I can write articles about them. I can reflect them onto themselves. I'm not exploiting them. That basket weaver that made that basket, she came with her cousin, Judy Tulegon. I knew Judy's folks, Joe and Marge, were good friends, and Judy's now sixty. Either her or Timo was talking about how whites would come in, anthropologists, and they'd write something and they'd go away and then you'd never see them again.

10-01:01:36

Bancroft: And they'd benefit from their writing at some point.

10-01:01:49

Margolin: And they'd benefit. They'd get tenure or they'd get publication credit. They were taking things away from the community. Theresa Harlan once wrote something very funny about me. Well, she'd just always see me hanging around. That was Clifford Geertz's--he was an anthropologist--that was his definition of anthropology.

10-01:02:07

Bancroft: Deep hanging out.

10-01:02:07

Margolin: It was deep hanging out.

10-01:02:13

Bancroft: L. Frank said that some of the old folks would say, "Who's that old miner?"

10-01:02:21

Margolin: [laughter] Yeah. Yeah, I don't know. It doesn't seem very hard to be accepted. Other people tell me that it's very difficult and that it's a suspicious community and that it's hostile. It's vulnerable. It's been wounded. I just never found it very hard. I probably do more good than harm. I'm a good writer, and I think that I reflect people's values. I think they see themselves. I think I accept people on their own terms and respectfully so. That if somebody's a Christian, I'll talk about their being a Christian Indian. I'll talk about their being a church member.

There's my wonderful friend Alex Ramirez, who's an Ohlone guy. And his grandfather, Onesimo, had a little shack up on the crossroads of Carmel, from the town of Carmel going into Carmel Valley, and then you had Route One coming up. And he had a little shack there. And the anthros used to hang

around because all the Indians that were coming up from Big Sur or coming down from the Santa Cruz area or coming in from the Valley, the Salinas Valley, would stop there because the grandfather grew marijuana. They'd also have a joint. They'd light up and the anthropologist could find these old-timers and speak the language and stuff.

So we had a conference once in Monterey that Linda Yamane's husband, Tim Thomas, ran when he was working for the Maritime Museum. And it was a conference on missions and Indians and it was the most badly run conference that I'd ever been to. It went on much too long. It just was days and days of being around. Monsignor Weber came and gave a speech on the sainthood of Junipero Serra. And it was the stupidest speech I had ever heard. I could have made a better case for Serra than he did. But then he talked about three miracles, they needed three miracles to make Junipero Serra a saint and they had two miracles in the can. And then they thought they had a third miracle, it was a cancer cure, but the Church disallowed cancer cures. So there were nuns that were pounding up Junipero Serra's bones and giving it to people with lupus to cure them of lupus. So I was sitting around listening to this. You talk about Indians being bizarre, these Catholics are something else.

And then we'd drink a lot. There was Doug Monroy and Ed Castillo and me and some other people there. And the conference went on so long that--Gregg Castro was there, Linda was there. It went on so long that we got through our elevator speech, and we actually had to think about what went on during the missions. We actually had to figure out what the hell was going on over there. What were those priests thinking? What were those fathers thinking as people were dying? What was the relationship between people? Why didn't people escape? Why wasn't there more armed revolts? And we really just tried to figure it out. And finally the last day of the conference there was a plenary session at the Serra house, and I was up there and Doug Monroy and Alex Ramirez, this old Indian, was up there. And when it came to his turn to speak he says, "We began this conference talking about three miracles." He says, "I'm here, I'm going to tell you about three miracles." He says, "I got three real miracles. One miracle is that I walked into the front door of the Serra house. When I was a kid, we had to come through the back door." He says, "Another miracle is I'm sitting here with all these white people talking and I'm an Indian and you're listening to me. That's a miracle. But," he says, "those are small miracles. I'm going to tell you the big miracle. In 1923 they wanted to rebuild Mission Carmel." He says, "Everything we talked about, how the missionaries robbed us of land, robbed us of language, enslaved us, we knew all that. That was no secret." He says, "Everybody knows that." He says, "When they went to rebuild the mission, my grandfather Onesimo came and laid the cornerstone. That's the miracle." And it was that capaciousness, it was that embrace. It was that refusal to say that there's only one way of being an Indian, that there's a right way and a wrong way.

And I think that in my general confusion I just allow everything to happen. I think I allow things to happen around me and I think that I allow people to be who they are. It's not as if I like everybody Indian. I've met some lousy people. I've met some horrible people. But I've met some utterly marvelous people. And I love listening to people's stories. I just love listening to people. I love a good story.

10-01:08:24
Bancroft:

And it's such a valuable service, in a sense, that you wanted to hear their stories. Because even in that little story that you're saying, Alex Ramirez said, "I'm an Indian, and white people are listening to me. This validation that our stories matter now where they were literally burned up or people were killed with their stories." But now there's somebody who wants to preserve them in the present time, listening as well as, of course, ultimately creating books and articles and essays and news.

10-01:09:02
Margolin:

Yeah, and it was also accepting them for who they are. Not comparing them to a standard of purity. This is a pure Indian, and you're an impure Indian. It's the miracle of who somebody has become.

10-01:09:19
Bancroft:

And also I was thinking about your story about David Peri and what hardship he went through and many experiences with drinking too much. You weren't there to convert anybody or make them healthy or get them off the bottle or do anything besides witness and participate and listen. And sometimes that must have been hard to do when you see people who you know are struggling and you can't save them in whichever way that—

10-01:09:56
Margolin:

I have no instinct to save anybody. It's not hard to do. I have sympathy, I have pity. I'm sad to see it. People suffer. That's what we do. That's what happens. People suffer. I don't feel particularly responsible for it. I don't feel I can correct it.

10-01:10:29
Bancroft:

Though it's interesting that you helped start this organization or supported an organization that was trying to help the indigenous languages survive and help the basket weavers survive and help the stories survive through *News From Native America*. So you used what means you could to provide the preservation in ways that you could. Maybe you weren't shelling out money and sending them to a drunk tank and that wouldn't have been appropriate. But what you could do you did do.

10-01:11:12
Margolin:

The metaphor I often use is they asked Willie Sutton why he robs banks and he says, "That's where the money was." And I'm a publisher. I need stories. I need things that are passionate. I need something to believe in. This is where the stories are. And they're great stories. And once again I just keep coming

back to it. I'm puzzled that there aren't twenty-five Heydays around mining this stuff. The stuff that slips through my fingers is just daunting. We had that wonderful party over here, nobody thought of taking a picture. I think it's like on that trail. Everything is fifteen minutes away. I think I live in a world of abundance. I realize that other people live in worlds of scarcity, where they feel they don't have enough or there's not enough around for them. For me the world is just so damn full of stuff. I can't believe it. And to have a nation state with a hundred different languages, 500 different tribes, a complex history like this. It's my idea of paradise. I'm going to put together, I think, a book of California Indian creation stories. And I love the Eastern Pomo story. Those dances up there were from Elem, from Clear Lake. And the Clear Lake creation story begins, there was the old man, his name was Marumda. He lived in a cloud house, a house that looked like snow, that looked like ice. And he thought he would make the world. He says, "Maybe I will go see my older brother. Well", he said. "What shall I do now? Eh," he said. And to somehow or other have a world that begins not with a god that's a chief executive, that says, "Let there be this, let there be this," and knows what he's doing, you have Marumda, to make the world, "Maybe I'll see my older brother. Well, what shall I do? Eh?" And it's like, how the fuck do you make a world? And the world that he makes is just the greatest possible world.

10-01:13:53
Bancroft:

That's more bumbling around.

10-01:13:55
Margolin:

Oh, this is a bumbling creation. They make it five times. They have to keep destroying it because it's not right.

10-01:14:04
Bancroft:

That's so very human.

10-01:14:25
Margolin:

Oh, here we are. So he decides to make the world and then he goes to see his older brother, the Kuksu, and they do various things. There's just this endless number of turning around four times and smoking tobacco four times and putting things in pouches and taking things out of pouches. And then comes the making of the world. And then the Marumda scraped himself in the armpits. He scraped himself and got out some armpit wax. He gave the wax to the Kuksu. The Kuksu received it. He received it and stuck it between his big toe and the next. Then he also scraped himself in the armpits. He scraped himself. He rolled the armpit wax into a ball. His own armpit wax he then stuck between Marumda's toes. Then Marumda removed it and blew on it. Four times he blew on it. Then the Kuksu also removed the armpit wax and blew on it four times and after that he sat down. Then Marumda went around the Kuksu four times and then he sat up. Then the Kuksu, he got up. He got up and four times around the Marumda. He sat down. He went, then they both stood still. Now they mixed together their balls of armpit wax, and the Kukus

mixed his hair with it, and then Marumda also mixed some of his hair with the armpit wax. This is the making of the world. [laughter]

10-01:15:45

Bancroft: Surviving through the days.

10-01:15:46

Margolin: Isn't this an amazing world? Doesn't that explain a lot? The Christians could never figure out how an all-knowing omnipotent god can make an imperfect world. The Indians had it figured out. They knew how to do it.

10-01:16:05

Bancroft: And it allowed for imperfection in ways that—

10-01:16:10

Margolin: It accepts imperfection. The world was made by coyote. The world was made by these bumbling creators.

10-01:16:20

Bancroft: Jesus wasn't much of a trickster, either. Well, I guess he had his tricks but the whole image of coyote just leading people, leading animals. A sense of humor. It's about having a sense of humor, too.

10-01:16:35

Margolin: Yeah. People ask me why I'm into this Indian stuff and very often I'll say it's just for the laughs. It's just because it's so damn funny. People are so funny.

10-01:16:50

Bancroft: Well, that's a goodly amount of stories.

10-01:16:57

Margolin: Are you aware of the laughter of people when we talk? Are you aware of the wonderful sound of their voices?

10-01:17:00

Bancroft: I always hear that. Yeah. That's one of the things I keep hearing, talking to people. They enjoy working together. Even if there's some disagreement about how something should happen, it's like family, that we know each other and we know we're going to have a little struggle over this, but we work it out and we genuinely like each other, we respect each other. You know how to pick them. Actually I thought about when you mentioned David Risling and setting up all of these organizations and how to make them work, that it's about having the right people who will work together and make things happen, and that seems to be what you do here, especially with people who stick around for years and years and find it worthwhile.

10-01:17:54

Margolin: Yeah, there's been a filtration. Some people come and they go, and people don't last and projects don't work out.

- 10-01:18:00
Bancroft: I mean Sylvia. I just met her and she's left or leaving. But it's not because she was unhappy here. There was just a sense that she gained something and you all gained and then—
- 10-01:18:13
Margolin: Oh, she found out who she was.
- 10-01:18:15
Bancroft: Yeah. But it's not somebody like Josh having to leave his workplace because he can't stand his boss and he's tolerated it for too long.
- 10-01:18:28
Margolin: I've had people that I haven't liked, that haven't liked me. But I find that if I ignore them they eventually go away.
- 10-01:18:38
Bancroft: [laughter] And somebody who can appreciate your style and that of everybody else around here. Actually going back to what you just said about enjoying the Native American stories, because it's a way to enjoy laughter, the playfulness of it. And when I talked to David yesterday I said, "So you've participated over the years in helping hire a lot of people. What are you looking for?" And one of the things he emphasized was a sense of humor, that people who come to work here need to have a sense of humor.
- 10-01:19:22
Margolin: I'm not sure I can find this.
- 10-01:10:15
Bancroft: That's okay. I'm hanging.
- 10-01:20:19
Margolin: Give me about five minutes.
- 10-01:20:20
Bancroft: Yeah. That's okay. I'm breathing.
- 10-01:23:23
Margolin: This may explain something. So we're hiring somebody for the roundhouse to run the Indian stuff and one of our board members, this Indian woman, Theresa Harlan, asked if we have a scoring system for hiring somebody. So I said, "Scoring? We never really did this. But if I had to list qualities and give them grades here's what it might look like." And this is cheating a little bit because there's somebody that I want to hire in this and so I kind of stacked it to this person's qualifications. But to give you an idea.
- 10-01:24:24
Bancroft: Oh, interesting. Nice. Yeah.

10-01:25:01

Margolin:

There's something else that may explain something. We're doing a book on the history of the federal court and there were a bunch of lawyers over there, so they wanted a contract. So I wrote up a contract and they loved it. Put them completely on tilt because they said they'd never seen a contract like this and they said that their contracts that they're used to have this sense that you're in opposition. But this is a contract, so it has a clause like this. "It is understood by both parties that this agreement is entered into with a spirit of celebration, adventure, and a sincere desire to bring valuable knowledge to the public. And both parties pledge their best efforts toward making the book and our collaboration and it's doing a rewarding, humane, joyous experience." [laughter] So they'd never seen language in a contract like this.

10-01:26:14

Bancroft:

Right, right. That sounds like a hippie contract. Actually, it's funny. Jack mentioned that the two most important things that he could say about Heyday and why Heyday itself is important is because there's a commitment to beauty and to relationships. And as an example of the commitment to relationships he mentioned that he was most of the way through the book when you finally said, "Maybe we should have a contract." And he said, "Yeah, that's a good idea." And you finally sent the contract and then he forgot to sign it." And as we were talking he said, "I should probably sign that and send it back to them." But it was an example of how the con—

10-01:26:58

Margolin:

Hasn't he done so?

10-01:26:59

Bancroft:

No, he has not done so.

10-01:27:00

Margolin:

That's an example of complete incompetence, actually.

10-01:27:02

Bancroft:

Well, no. He said that's just an example of how much he felt that there was trust in the relationship, and it was so valuable that it was understood. Not that you shouldn't have a contract, but it was the contract had already been signed through the relationship, in essence.

10-01:27:27

Margolin:

Well, contracts are just paper. They're good for clarity. They're good so that you understand as you're entering into it what you're agreeing to and what you're going to do and what you're not going to do.

10-01:27:42

Bancroft:

But there was a strong understanding there already.

10-01:27:48

Margolin:

Was having a drink part of this arrangement?

10-01:27:54
Bancroft: Who? To you and I?

10-01:27:55
Margolin: Yeah.

10-01:27:57
Bancroft: Oh, that would be great.

[End of Interview]

Interview 11 September 6, 2012

[Begin Audio File 11]

11-00:00:00

Bancroft: I know. I was going through that. It's really very amazing. It's amazing to me, too. I remember my father, you've now met by phone, used basket weaving as the example and I think it was not just him alone but as an example of how you could waste your time in college by taking a class on basket weaving. Do you remember ever hearing that?

11-00:00:29

Margolin: Yes.

11-00:00:32

Bancroft: So just hearing that. I haven't thought about it in years. Another way that so many cultural native folk traditional arts have been underestimated for their value and their beauty and the skill.

But yeah. Let us talk about you. So I sent you a bunch of questions, but I also wanted to just—the first thing was I wanted to get to talk about whatever you would like to talk about. So I don't know what you would like to—where you'd like to go today.

11-00:02:33

Margolin: The one question that I felt that I could answer better than—these questions of the worst moments and stuff like that—firing people is always great fun. Money problems are always great fun. Something where you put something out into the world and it comes back and it's not quite what you had imagined. It's a misprinting or the colors aren't right. I can talk about it, it just doesn't seem like it has much purchase. The place lives on its daily life. The place lives on this archipelago of projects that kind of—tied with one another and tie up people. And I think that just going over what I do in the course of a day, going over a calendar might be interesting. So that struck me as kind of useful.

11-00:04:02

Bancroft: Just to say, Lee Swenson made the point that you used to be in here at 5:30 every morning, and Jim made the point about how much time you've spent writing beautiful amazing letters to people. So reinforces that sense of what has composed your daily life here.

11-00:04:25

Margolin: Yeah, yeah. Oh, I got in this morning. Yes, I did. Yes, I did. I got in this morning.

11-00:04:38

Bancroft: At what time?

11-00:04:39
Margolin:

This morning was late. This morning was about seven o'clock when I got in, so that was later than usual. My friend David Fredrickson died and Dave was Vera Mae's husband. He was a wonderful archeologist. And he was a quiet man, he was a dignified man. He was very orderly. As an archeologist he loved to assemble things. He loved to put things in order. That he had a list of everybody that ever came over the house. He had a diary entry for them. When they came over, what time they came over, when they left. He was a detailed record-keeper. And then when we created *News from Native California*, this guy, he was the best archeologist in California, he created this archeological center over at Sonoma State. His great pleasure was to do our subscriptions, to enter subscriptions, enter them on a computer system. And he was so helpful in that. For somebody that was as quiet as he was, he was a wonderful folk singer, and Smithsonian Folkways did some recordings of him singing old western California songs. And when he came in here, he knew people like Spicer and Duncan and that whole crowd. He probably knew Ariel [Parkinson]. Knew all these people.

So I came in, and I heard yesterday that he died. One of his daughters had emailed me and said they want to start a fund in honor of him, do I have any ideas. So I emailed back saying, "Yes." I said, "Why don't we start a Dave and Vera Mae Fredrickson fund, and we'll have it for California Indian scholars and writers, and we'll administer it through Heyday." And I ended up spending a couple of hours writing out this proposal for starting this fund. And I figured out how it would work and where the money would come and how we'd be responsible for it and who would be part of it. It was just this complete plan that I figured out in about an hour, hour-and-a-half, and emailed it to them.

Then we're dealing with Joe Blum. And Joseph Blum is a photographer. Did you see his photos?

11-00:07:25
Bancroft:

Yes. Of the bridge.

11-00:07:27
Margolin:

Of the bridge. And on Tuesday we sent out an email to everybody, all the companies that had worked on the bridge saying we were doing this book, that we wanted them to buy it, that we'd be willing to sell them copies, that I want them to give copies to all of their workers. We'll make a deal, stuff like that. So I got a couple of responses back and answered those responses. What else happened this morning?

Oh, I ended up having a talk with Marilee about board morale, and the board feeling panicked about money and wanting to manage things. How everybody seems to have gotten into worrying about money. What I'm going to do to just get them the hell out of that. There's just something wrong with it all. So I

ended up thinking about that and I'll do something about that. God, there were a couple of other things that I did today.

11-00:09:05

Bancroft: She's feeling better than she was yesterday when I talked to her, so whatever you said was good.

11-00:09:10

Margolin: Who was this?

11-00:09:12

Bancroft: Marilee.

11-00:09:13

Margolin: Oh, good. Yeah. I just live with these things. There have been money problems for thirty-seven years and there'll always be money problems. You just kind of live with them. I got in touch with Kat Taylor. And Kat Taylor owns banks, and she has a ranch over in Pescadero that's 2,000 acres they're restoring to native California habitat and managing the cattle on there to replicate the grazing of elk and stuff like that. And she's fronted some of our books. And I emailed her to let her know that Laura Cunningham will be up here, that we have a show at the Brower Center of Laura Cunningham stuff and she ought to come up for that. And I sent her some images from Cris Benton's photography of the South Bay and said that I owe her a gift, that Cris and I will come over there, we'll spend a day on her ranch and we'll take some kite photographs of her ranch. And I would love to do this as a gift. And then she wrote back this long letter about how we're on her mind and the Coyote Point Museum is celebrating its sixtieth year and they want to do certain things. We're going to get together and do all these projects together. So I then answered that.

I then had this guy that was over, was somebody I met on the hiking trail, and he's an unemployed academic. He can't find a job. So when I was down in Los Angeles I gave this keynote speech at a conference of—Mediterranean climate conference. And there were all these wonderful people from Chile and from Africa and from the Mediterranean and from Australia. It was so much fun. It was just so much fun. And I gave this speech about how environmentalism has been taken—that you're all scientists. It's been taken over by science. But at the heart of it there's art, there's beauty, and there's poetry and this is what set it off. That the Bay area, Save the Bay, was not created by people who wanted to save the environment. They wanted to save their view. And I read some stuff and everybody was swept away by it. We talked about having something that scientists could read at the beginning of a class, something that would just provide people with that sense of inspiration, provide that sense of beauty. So I compiled some things that I wanted. We originally were going to have the woman that you're going to see tonight, Lucy Day, she's a poet. And I tried to get her to do some, collecting some stuff that would be inspiring. But it turned out to be inflated. It turned out to

be these nature poems that were all spiritual and isn't everything wonderful. And the stuff that I like is stuff that's—that makes you feel alive, that makes you feel the raw power of things. The things that I like are Steve Kowit's poems and Russell Edson's poems, Dan Gerber's poems and poems about animals and poems about specificities and poems that have physicality to them, and things where you end up feeling just the life of something. And when you read them you just feel strong rather than puzzled and rather than mushy. I don't like to feel mushy. So I got some stuff together for him.

And then at two o'clock we had David Rains Wallace come. Do you know David? *Klamath Knot*? He's a wonderful nature writer, and we're doing something on the Pacific Flyway. We've got a book and some museum stuff that we're doing on the ducks and the geese of the Pacific Flyway. So I had David Rains Wallace. We sat and discussed with him how to do this book and what it would be composed of. God, it seems there was something major that I did today that I'm not remembering.

Oh, I know. I'm pissed off that various of our books aren't selling any better. So I ended up hiring somebody to come in and just concentrate on selling certain books, just get them out into this world, just call everybody, just throw himself into it. So got him started today.

And then I ended up looking at Lucy Day's stuff because I'm going to have to introduce her tonight and thought that I'd better have something to say. I think this was it. Oh, I ended up—

11-00:14:41

Bancroft:

And then this gentleman who is right—

11-00:14:44

Margolin:

He's the one that I wanted to collect poetry and prose for this anthology that I want to do that was based on that experience at the Mediterranean climate conference. I want to have illuminations. I want to have things that—

11-00:15:05

Bancroft:

It's not just on Hetch Hetchy?

11-00:15:07

Margolin:

No, no, not at all. I can give you some examples. Do you know the poetry of Russell? You know who Russell is?

11-00:15:21

Bancroft:

I've heard of his name. I haven't read it.

11-00:15:23

Margolin:

Russell Edson is so wonderful. This is not typical of what's going to be in there but Russell Edson was one. He lived off in New York. He lived on like Seventh Street or Saint Mark's Place and he wrote ten poems a day and he'd give them to people and he'd say, "You like them?" If a lot of people like

them, hand them back to me and if nobody likes them just throw them away. And things would come back to him. And he just kind of came up with these poems. Let me just read you one. They're so funny. He's so funny. This is a poem, *The Adventures of a Turtle*. Now I think you've always wondered how turtles work. This will tell you how a turtle worked.

The turtle carries his house on his back. He is both the house and the person of that house. But actually, under the shell is a little room where the true turtle, wearing long underwear, sits at a little table. At one end of the room a series of levers sticks out of slots on the floor, like the controls of a steam shovel. It is with these that the turtle controls the legs of his house.

Most of the time the turtle slits under the sloping ceiling of his turtle room reading catalogues at the little table where a candle burns. He leans on one elbow, and then the other. He crosses one leg, and then the other. Finally he yawns and buries his head in his arms and sleeps.

If he feels a child picking up his house he quickly douses the candle and runs to the control levers and activates the legs of his house and tries to escape.

If he cannot escape he retracts the legs and withdraws the so-called head and waits. He knows that children are careless, and that there will come a time when he will be free to move his house to some secluded place, where he will relight his candle, take out his catalogues and read until at last he yawns. Then he'll bury his head in his arms and sleep... That is, until another child picks up his house...

Isn't that wonderful?

11-00:17:29
Bancroft:

Yes.

11-00:17:30
Margolin:

Doesn't that capture a turtle?

11-00:17:30
Bancroft:

Most definitely. Yeah. Very cute.

11-00:17:33
Margolin:

It's just utterly delicious and there's something about that kind of thing that I find so surprising and so wonderful. And I just spent a couple of hours collecting some of my favorite poems and giving it to him so he can get an idea of the kind of thing that I'm looking for. Steve Kowitz's wonderful poem on beetles and such a great poem on beetles. So that was today. Yesterday I went to the ballgame with Jim Quay.

11-00:18:17
Bancroft: He told me. I asked him if he got the story about Louis Sagansky and he did.

11-00:18:24
Margolin: Yes, he did.

11-00:18:26
Bancroft: As well he should have. It's a very appropriate story. And Ted Williams.

11-00:18:29
Margolin: And Ted Williams. Yes, he did.

11-00:18:32
Bancroft: That's interesting. So then Lee was wonderful. It was really great to talk to him.

11-00:18:35
Margolin: Oh, yes. That temple was where I went with Lee.

11-00:18:39
Bancroft: Yes, exactly. But you told the story a lot better than he did, which is not a surprise.

11-00:18:44
Margolin: Oh, I can tell stories much better than Lee anytime.

11-00:18:48
Bancroft: Which he admitted. He said, "Oh, Malcolm knows how to tell stories." "Yeah, he was telling me about the visit to the temple." But with you I was feeling all of the mush of the crowd and the heat and the food. So that's great that you got to go to a ballgame. What else?

11-00:19:12
Margolin: Well, that took up a large part of the day.

11-00:19:14
Bancroft: I'll bet.

11-00:19:15
Margolin: And I tried to be a man of the people. I wore blue jeans. I wore a hat with a visor. I decided I would appreciate it. It was so dull. It was just so boring. It was a lousy game. They were clumsy.

11-00:19:32
Bancroft: Who was playing?

11-00:19:32
Margolin: Oakland A's and the Angels. The A's lost badly. There was no grace to it all.

11-00:19:38
Bancroft: When was the last time you had gone to a ballgame?

11-00:19:41
Margolin:

A couple of years ago somebody took me to a Giant's game and that was a lot more fun. I did not enjoy it. I did not enjoy it. And I was planning to enjoy it. I compliment myself on being easily pleased and enjoying a large range of activities. I felt manipulated. I felt there were all these bright lights and the interstices between the innings and stuff like that were filled with video presentations and music. You were told when to clap and you were given little slogans to say. There were shills in the audience that would get up and yell things. And I felt the whole thing was a manipulated experience. And there's something about large crowds roaring their approval that is thrilling. It's thrilling to be part of that. But I wouldn't want to go again. Jim has been sick lately. I don't know if he's mentioned this. It was good to go with him. It was good to go with him. He knew me when Heyday was still operating out of the house. He came over to interview me as a radio--did he talk about that?

11-00:21:18
Bancroft:

Yes. Well, and he said also that he had shared lunch with you once a month for all of these years, and the friendship was as important as the association. But we talked a lot about the California Council of the Humanities and just the role it played in trying to support Heyday anthologies, his view of community coming out of both the council and out of Heyday.

11-00:21:40
Margolin:

Yeah, and he's got a pacifist background. He's a principal. So in the morning, at 9:30, Susan Snyder came by with Mary and discussed this latest book that they want to do on cats.

11-00:22:05
Bancroft:

Yes. The companion? [To the calendar of dogs.]

11-00:22:07
Margolin:

Yeah, but this one is different. This is going to be a book rather than a calendar.

11-00:22:27
Bancroft:

I know she said that this book was probably a disappointment to Heyday because it hasn't sold well. But they really are such wonderful photos.

11-00:22:41
Margolin:

Oh, they're wonderful photos.

11-00:22:42
Bancroft:

And the captions and the other little pieces. Actually Jack London's story of his dog is in here.

11-00:22:53
Margolin:

Oh, the story of Jack London's—

11-00:22:54
Bancroft: Dog. You said you were going to tell me the story. I don't know if it's the same one.

11-00:22:75
Margolin: Did I not tell that story—

11-00:22:58
Bancroft: No.

11-00:22:58
Margolin: —about Bart Abbott?

11-00:23:00
Bancroft: No.

11-00:23:01
Margolin: Oh, God, it was such a great story. It was such a great story. It was such a great story. It's relevant, too. This is even relevant. So we did this book, *Jack London's Daughter*, that Joan London, one of Jack London's daughters, had written. And she couldn't get it published and she died. And then the grandson, Bart Abbott, Joan's son, brought it to me. And I thought it was a wonderful story and I decided to publish it. And it was the story of Joan and her sister, Becky, were from the first wife, before he ran off with Charmian. And for them he was this distant figure, that he'd run off. And as he grew more and more famous, he grew more and more distant. And it was this young girl worshiping her father and just craving some kind of approval, some kind of association, something that she needed badly. And in the end she writes him a letter asking him for some small sum of money, and he writes back saying, "There's something you should know about me. When I close the page on somebody I've closed it forever. I've just closed the page on you." And it was such a cruel letter. It was such a cruel letter. And Milo Shepherd had the Jack London estate. He was Jack London's cousin. He had the rights. And the rights to use a letter reside with the person that wrote it. So I wrote to Milo saying, "I'd like to use that letter." And Milo says, "You can't do it." He says, "I'm not going to let anybody use that letter, reprint that letter." And I wrote him back saying, "If you don't let me reprint it, I'm going to paraphrase it. And by the time I'm through paraphrasing it, you'll wish I had quoted the original." And so I went up there, and we had a good talk, and I got the letter from him. And we published the book.

Then Bart Abbott had eight kids. He and Helen had eight kids. He weighed about 350 pounds. He lived up in Calaveras County. He wore Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts every day of the year. It could be twenty-five degrees out, but he had enough groceries that he was carrying that he'd—

11-00:25:12
Bancroft: He stayed warm.

11-00:25:13
Margolin:

He stayed warm. And he had an old pickup truck and he always traveled with a dog. So I got him this gig, the Michael Krasny show. I got him on the Michael Krasny show. And he comes in from Calaveras and he picks me up, and I'm sitting in the pickup truck, and it's me and him and the dog, and we're driving and there's a traffic jam at the bridge and we're going to be late. So I said, "Hey, listen, there are three of us. Let's take the carpool lane." So we move over, me and him and the dog, and we take the carpool lane and we slide on through. [laughter] And we're on the other side and he says, "This reminds me of a story." So I said, "Well, what's the story?" [laughter] And he says, "The story is that me and my wife Helen were in Mexico, and we had the dog with us, and it was really hot. It was a hot day, and the dog was suffering. The dog had its tongue hanging out. We were afraid we were going to lose the dog. So we ended up putting an ice pack on the dog's head and tied the ice pack with a cloth and the dog is sitting there with this ice pack on its head, and we're driving along and we come to a checkpoint. And the cop looks in, says to me, 'Can I see your identification please?' And I show him my driver's license. And he says to Helen, 'Can I see your identification?' And she shows him hers. And he looks at the dog and he says, 'Let me see your identification.' And Bart said, 'It's a dog.' And the guy said, 'Oh.' Bart goes off. And he's thinking that he's just seen the stupidest guy in the whole world. The guy couldn't tell a person from a dog. But then they got a mile down the street, and he began to think, 'Maybe he wasn't stupid. Maybe he was enlightened. Maybe he saw through the surface of things into the soul of things and he realized the basic similarity between people and dogs. Maybe I just met the Buddha and I didn't know it.'" Isn't that a beautiful story?

11-00:27:10
Bancroft:

Oh, that is. And I'm sure it was one of those old ice packs, you know, too, the cloth.

11-00:27:17
Margolin:

That's right.

11-00:27:17
Bancroft:

So it could look like a hat. That's great. Yes. Yeah. That's a good story.

11-00:27:26
Margolin:

I came back from the ballgame. I didn't get back until about 5:00. And then it was just a matter of catching up on emails. There's a flood of these damn things. It's remorseless. The day before I was at California Historical Society. I'm helping them through their publishing. They're taking the journal out in the backyard and shooting it, so they're not going to have a magazine anymore. And it's a matter of what to do for members that need books, that need to keep in touch, and I'm kind of on their publications committee and thinking about what to do. But last night we had Susan Straight, the novelist, reading and Gayle introduced her, and we had this author, this black guy, Keenan Norris, whose book we just accepted as part of the Jim Houston

Awards. And he was there. And we all went out for dinner with Susan and Kate Moses, who's a wonderful writer, and Gary Kamiya. So went out for dinner. Lillian and Lillian's partner, Zoe, and Gayle. It was really fun. It was really wonderful.

And then there's the flow of stuff that happens. Want to find out what kind of emails have come in?

11-00:29:25

Bancroft: Well, I was going to ask. So is it fifty a day?

11-00:29:30

Margolin: Oh, come on.

11-00:29:31

Bancroft: At least a hundred? What? Because I know I get forty a day. So if I get forty—

11-00:29:41

Margolin: There's forty-five. It's just checking.

[asides deleted in editing]

11-00:32:56

Bancroft: So would you say you spend a couple of hours a day on email? No?

11-00:33:03

Margolin: Well, it depends. [clicking through various emails]

11-00:39:37

Margolin: Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston wanted to do a musical comedy about Manzanar. [laughter]

11-00:39:44

Bancroft: Well, actually, there is a musical that just came out about Japanese internment camps. I think it's in New York. [music playing]

11-00:40:00

Margolin: No, I like this. That was Rachel Meyer.

11-00:40:10

Bancroft: Oh, that's your pe—no.

11-00:40:12

Margolin: Yeah.

11-00:40:22

Bancroft: Everybody else wants to bend your ear.

11-00:40:25
Margolin:

This is Exhibit Envoy. These are the people that do traveling exhibits that we deal with. Editor referral. Rene Yung, who's doing Chinese Whispers, wanted to have an editor recommended. Boston Latin School has a reunion. California Native Plant Society. Can they help CNPS with a \$2,500 grant? I'd be glad to. So we have some interns coming from UC Berkeley that I'll be interviewing. This is somebody who wrote an article and sent some pictures about this Indian guy. San Juan Capistrano, David Belardes. He's written the goddamned article. "As for interviewing Mel Vernon, I was semi-serious about that. Suddenly I would like to do this, although I was thinking mainly for increasing my own background knowledge and to have a document for him and his tribe similar to the one I can now give to David and the Esselen for their own historical archives. I would like to approach Mel to see what he thinks about such an endeavor. A similar piece would result for *News from Native California*. I have to say I couldn't get to it until early next time but I could talk with him in November. I have other outside writing projects to keep me busy until the new year." That's okay.

Jodi Throckmorton is the curator at the San Jose Museum of Art. I wanted to get together with her. Drawing Birds thing is over at Charlene Harvey's house. And I think this is just stuff. Beloved Malcolm. This is Zenobia Barlow of Center for Ecoliteracy. So there's enough stuff in there. To answer all that stuff. And this is all today.

11-00:43:45
Bancroft:

Right. How do you do it? Because I have fifteen minutes left with you and then I'll let you answer some of them. How do you do it?

11-00:43:55
Margolin:

Well, since I'm completely disorganized and I have no idea how to put emails in files and folders and stuff like that, and since I just kind of—there'll be stuff that'll stick in my mind that I'll do and there'll be stuff that I'll forget and I won't do. Just because somebody wants something doesn't mean I have to do it. And sometimes I'll just give it to Mariko, I'll shoot it over to her. And she's new, so she's probably baffled entirely by what's happening here. And sometimes I'll just answer it briefly. Sometimes I'll say the truth, that, "Hey, listen, in a better world than this I'd give it all the care and attention it deserves, but I'm just over my head. I just can't do what you would like me to do and I would like to do."

11-00:44:53
Bancroft:

Because you have all of them in there. You have 13,000 letters in your inbox. So do you just go through and say, "Oh, I remember that one. I do need to respond to that." And you just hope you get through the ones, as you're going through every day, saying, "Okay, I'm going to spend some time with this one."

11-00:45:13
Margolin:

There's no system. That I looked at it, there was somebody that wanted an appointment tomorrow at 10:45, so I thought I should let her know right away. Kat Taylor, oh, this one I mentioned to you. The Coyote Point Museum. "My mom was instrumental in founding that environmental organization." It's just overwhelming. And one of the things I determined is not to be a slave to the inbox. So I was in here this morning making certain that I got done what I wanted to get done. Oh, then you end up as part of everybody's tragedy. This is somebody that applied for a job and didn't get it, and I wrote a note that she didn't get it, and she responded this way.

11-00:46:22
Bancroft:

Oh, my God. Yes.

11-00:46:31
Margolin:

So direct. So uncushioned, unmediated.

11-00:46:41
Bancroft:

My God. Wow. Yes. And you're so right and kind to right back. You're reporting that news and sharing a poet, telling me about a poet I should be paying attention to.

11-00:47:00
Margolin:

We're doing something with California National Wildlife Federation. So there's a meeting over on the 15th in Los Altos. There's a party that I should attend. There was something that I was actually doing that was interesting. Here's the people that are coming to the event tonight, including Kim Bancroft. This one will knock you for a loop. There's a couple of things.

11-00:47:51
Bancroft:

Oh, Fred Setterberg's coming. How fun.

11-00:47:58
Margolin:

Let's see. Naomi Ota. Do you know Naomi Ota?

11-00:48:01
Bancroft:

No.

11-00:48:02
Margolin:

She's a Japanese artist. She sent me this. Which is a loop. Oh, this is so funny. This came yesterday.

11-00:48:27
Bancroft:

Oh. Oh, my gosh.

11-00:48:29
Margolin:

This is the "Ohlone Esalen Costanoan Esselen nation previously acknowledged as the San Carlos Band of Mission Indians, the Monterey Band, also known as OCEN or Esselen Nation"—they change their name every week. And this is a letter from them. Well, this is the kind of thing that I tend to just do. The second paragraph.

11-00:48:55
Bancroft: This is their thank you.

11-00:48:58
Margolin: This is their thank you that this is what we do.

11-00:49:02
Bancroft: Yeah. Here's that. Oh. [Indian language]

11-00:49:19
Margolin: Yeah, no wonder that language went extinct. [laughter]

11-00:49:26
Bancroft: Well, there it is again. [Indian language] Well, that's wonderful.

11-00:49:30
Margolin: Spellcheck must have—

11-00:49:31
Bancroft: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, that's wonderful. Ah, so these are all the goodies they're sending you in thank you.

11-00:49:39
Margolin: So these are the goodies they're sending me. Crayons.

11-00:49:41
Bancroft: Pass those right along to Arden.

11-00:49:47
Margolin: And I never know what to do with stuff like this.

11-00:49:50
Bancroft: Yeah. No, I know.

11-00:49:52
Margolin: Never do.

11-00:49:53
Bancroft: It's beautiful and needs to be recycled. Arden will enjoy those.

11-00:50:09
Margolin: Los Malcolm Margolin.

11-00:50:11
Bancroft: Los Malcolm Margolin. That's kind of funny. Heyday Books. You could probably have a whole wall papered with all of the certificates you've received over the years, huh?

11-00:50:32
Margolin: We could have a full-time archivist just handling stuff like this. But this is interesting to me. I've never really gone over it with anybody.

11-00:50:47
Bancroft: Here we go.

11-00:50:49
Margolin: Good.

11-00:50:49
Bancroft: More.

11-00:50:50
Margolin: And then this one I think will be of some familiarity to you.

11-00:50:59
Bancroft: No. Well, not overtly. Oh. That's all it took, was one letter of the capital letters and the table punches.

11-00:51:12
Margolin: Yeah.

11-00:51:13
Bancroft: That's all?

11-00:51:14
Margolin: No, this is going to be an agony for me.

11-00:51:17
Bancroft: Oh, my God.

11-00:51:21
Margolin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know. I know.

11-00:51:23
Bancroft: So I worked with him on the second version and I said—it's kind of like the Ariel Parkinson story, where there's only so much you can push somebody. And I said, "You know, a lot of this actually sounds like your first book. How will this be different? Now, why will Malcolm and Heyday want to publish something that sounds similar?" The later part of it is different. But he's also not in a stage of his life really to be going back through the deep work of deep editing and—

11-00:52:04
Margolin: No, he's not. I loved parts of it.

11-00:52:09
Bancroft: Yeah. Everything I tell him about, everything from commas to don't repeat yourself and clarify, it didn't happen. Okay, so there it is. Oh, my gosh. Well, I guess just that's the question. I'm going to close with how do you prevent yourself from getting overwhelmed? What's the psychological, emotional approach to dealing with all of this stuff where people are coming at you?

- 11-00:52:42
Margolin: Well, the truth is I feel badly about it. I wish I could be what people wanted me be. That people have these needs and it's genuine. All these things that people are presenting me with. I mean, Darryl is presenting me with something meaningful to him, something that's hopeful to him. That what these Esselen people are doing with their crayons and stuff like that. All these people. I just wish I could do more. So I do feel bad.
- 11-00:53:17
Bancroft: Now you said Esselen folks are thanking you for what you did so, so you can feel that you made a con—
- 11-00:53:22
Margolin: What we did was we declared the Esselen gathering as a project of Heyday Books and we put it under our insurance policy. [laughter]
- 11-00:53:28
Bancroft: So you did something there. But yes.
- 11-00:53:31
Margolin: No, I do a lot. I do a lot. How do I put it? Oh, I get up at five o'clock in the morning and I work late and I work weekends. And a whole lot of it is not all that laborious. Kat Taylor, they're planning a hike from the Bay Shores to the ocean over the Coastal Mountains and they want to come up and take photography, do some kite photography. Zenobia Barlow wants to use some stuff that we printed. It's not as if you're seeing anything mean in here. Tamsin Smith wants to do Pie in the Sky. Amy {Uneck?} wants to have an animation book for her stuff.
- 11-00:54:38
Bancroft: So just keeping it in perspective.
- 11-00:54:39
Margolin: Photographing the range. Doing museum shows with them. Mary Rudge can't make it today. They're giving me an award on Saturday that's—
- 11-00:55:00
Bancroft: In Sacramento?
- 11-00:55:02
Margolin: No.
- 11-00:55:02
Bancroft: No.
- 11-00:55:02
Margolin: No, no, no. This is the Dancing Poetry Festival. I just don't want an award. [laughter]
- 11-00:55:25
Bancroft: Why?

11-00:55:25
Margolin:

They want me to come and then if I can't come they want to know if I want to send somebody. [laughter] It's kind of stupid. And here's Lindsie Bear. "I've cut my notes down by a hundred words or so. The new version, which I actually think is much better, is attached. I'm happy to cut more if space necessitates. I really enjoyed the cooking metaphor and the inclusiveness of the list, so I'm hoping that it doesn't need to be edited down too far." What I wanted to do is introduce her to the readers of *News*, so I had a paragraph saying that we've got a big feast coming up, I'm now assembling the ingredients, and I list all the wonderful books we're doing, the articles and news we're doing, the archives we have, the plans we have for different things. I said, "We've now got all the ingredients but you ask, who's the chef? Funny you should ask. Guess who just walked in the door. Lindsie, can you introduce yourself?" So I set it up for her to introduce herself.

11-00:56:25
Bancroft:

One thing that's so central to your being is playfulness, so I see how that's even a method of coping. How can I have fun with this and alleviate the tension when possible?

11-00:56:43
Margolin:

Yeah. People's kids die.

11-00:56:47
Bancroft:

Yeah. And to keep it all in perspective.

11-00:56:51
Margolin:

I don't know how I deal with it except that there seems to be a shunting that goes on. You can care about just so much. And you can just love so many people. There's a part of me that's in a daydreamy world, and I just don't give a damn. I'm not quite sure I believe in the reality of this world. I don't care. When something's put in front of me, I care about it. When it goes away, I don't care about it that much. I don't know. This is becoming a common theme in our conversation, which is I don't know.

11-00:57:54
Bancroft:

But you try. You try. Now, actually, I think you did answer it. Okay, I'm going to let you—

11-00:57:59
Margolin:

I think what it is, Kim—and I think part of not being very introspective is I think I live in the moment. I think that I live in what I do. Here's my father and this is my—oh. Just stuff that is just so wonderful. Vivian Snyder.

11-00:58:45
Bancroft:

Dear Mr. Malcolm. Wow. Oh, my goodness. That's the other thing. You're getting these solicitations for I don't even know what. Amazing. Oh, their home in Hupa.

11-00:59:26
Margolin:

Let's see, this came a couple of days ago. Was people from Los Angeles. The natives there are redoing their calendar, their traditional calendar, which is a ten-month calendar. It's got different time divisions. It depends on different things. And they want me to come down and talk to them about how they can get something published and do a calendar. Isn't that wonderful? Here's the interview and information on the Brooks family at the mouth of the Klamath River. "My name is Jane Whartman, and I am the granddaughter of Geneva Brooks Mattz, who lived at the mouth of the Klamath River in Klamath, California. I recently purchased a historic Requa Inn on Requa Road just a little over a mile from my family lot, which is Yurok Indian. First I would like to invite you to come to stay at the inn as our guest. Your contribution and your commitment to the native people is awe inspiring. I'm also hoping you might have some information and some direction to help me fulfill a lifetime of work. I'm in the process of compiling information on Requa, the families that have lived here for generations. My sister, Diane Bowers, mentioned that you did a lot of interviewing for members of my family and you spent significant time here on Requa. My husband Marty always says the space between heaven and earth is the thinnest on Requa. I'm sure you would agree. I look forward to meeting you in person and, again, any help or direction you could give on discovering and documenting Requa will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance." Requa was at the mouth of the Klamath River and it's where Merkie Oliver lives and his great aunt was Florence Shaughnessy, who sang the songs that brought the salmon to the country. This is where the salmon came up.

11-01:01:10
Bancroft:

Some of this stuff, it sounds like with interns, if you have interns here—

11-01:01:14
Margolin:

This is what I'm going to—

11-01:01:15
Bancroft:

Yeah, exactly.

11-01:01:15
Margolin:

I'll have them research the Klamath River. So this was—

11-01:01:21
Bancroft:

Oh, wow. Well, this is really amazing stuff.

11-01:01:25
Margolin:

This is amazing stuff.

11-01:01:28
Bancroft:

But lots of opportunities. It sounds like you have a good way of trying to preserve that. Well, you have a very rich life and connections to interesting people and places. I don't know how this—oh, that's from Maine.

- 11-01:02:10
Margolin: "Many things stood out from your letter, including the sentence, 'Some things I don't talk about because once you let it out it loses something.' I think I know what you mean. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that words cannot capture all the tones and nuances and shadows of depths of the past. And once you put them into words, the words tend to take over the memory. Is that what you mean? There are things that might be best not to talk about, and I thoroughly respect that. But I'm a writer and a publisher. The books and magazines that we do are the baskets I weave and present to the world," she's a basket weaver. "And like basket weavers everywhere, I keep my eyes out for beautiful raw material. I see it there in your stories and your memories, your way of capturing not just historic facts but the very root and soul of the area and those who rose out of it. I don't want to intrude, but if you'd like I'd be pleased to visit you and work with you for a day or two to weave a basket of words out of your wealth of memory, depth of feeling."
- 11-01:02:58
Bancroft: Beautiful.
- 11-01:03:01
Margolin: That's pretty good.
- 11-01:03:02
Bancroft: You know what? I was actually thinking today, because Jim said what a beautiful letter writer you are and how much time you spend, and he mentioned you're in here at 5:00 in the morning or 5:30 writing these letters. And I was thinking in the book it would be lovely to have a couple of examples of—
- 11-01:03:22
Margolin: I usually don't keep copies of them. I usually just—
- 11-01:03:26
Bancroft: Okay. Don't throw that one away then. Aren't they stored somewhere on your hard—
- 11-01:03:34
Margolin: No, I just erase them.
- 11-01:03:35
Bancroft: Malcolm.
- 11-01:03:36
Margolin: I store the stuff that comes in. I just erase—
- 11-01:03:39
Bancroft: Oy, you're going to give an ulcer to an archivist or to an archivist's great-great-granddaughter.

11-01:03:53
Margolin:

This is what I wrote the other day, September 4th, telling people that we'd hired somebody else. I'm writing, "Dear Friend, to let you know the position you applied for, Director of Heyday's Indians programs went to someone else. I'm sure we would have enjoyed working together greatly. And while I'm thrilled with the person we selected I'm genuinely sorry it didn't work out. Let me explain. I feel it's the least I can do given our longstanding friendship. Just let me know."

11-01:04:20
Bancroft:

Yeah, I know. That's the longest letter, pink slip I've ever seen. That's very wonderful of you to spend that much time to connect with them.

11-01:04:33
Margolin:

When we first announced the position we got several applications, many to my horror from close friends. The agony of choosing among friends was so distressing to me that I removed myself from the hiring process, turning the whole thing over to staff and a couple of members of the native community, leaving to myself only veto power if I couldn't stand the person they selected. I did it in part to save myself from the pain of having to reject people I know and admire, but mostly to make sure that whoever we hire entered Heyday not just as a friend of Malcolm's, but as someone whose skills were impartially evaluated and got the enthusiastic approval of community, staff, and board. I then describe Lindsie and say, "The hiring committee recommended her for the position." When I say that I'm sorry, I'm not just being polite. I am sorry that it didn't pan out. I hope we can find ways of collaborating and working together in the future." And just some personal stuff in there.

11-01:05:24
Bancroft:

That sounds very nice. This is the person that's going to help run the roundhouse? Is that part of it?

11-01:05:30
Margolin:

Yeah.

11-01:05:31
Bancroft:

Oh, excellent.

11-01:05:32
Margolin:

She's great. She's so great. So fun.

[End Audio File 11]

Interview 12: September 26, 2012

[Begin Audio File 12]

[This interview occurred at Kim's cabin in Willits, CA.]

12-00:00:20

Margolin:

Well, you're trying to give a flow and a plot and a beginning and a middle and an end, and I want to make it into a scrapbook. And maybe the ending should be a scrapbook ending. Maybe it should be ten different possibilities for the future. We've done so much that it's going to have a future whether it exists or not. It's going to have a future, what other people have carried away with it. It's going to have a future in what other institutions that have been set off. Maybe there ought to be a question that we ask several different people, that if I were to hand over the reins of the horse to you, where would you take it? God, there was something that I was thinking of that I thought was the most wonderful idea, and it flickered in the distance. It was over the ridge. I could just see that flickering. You know, it exists on the kindness of the world. It exists on the goodness of people. It exists on people that give me money. It exists on people that give me manuscripts. It exists on people that are part of it. I keep saying if this were a dog eat dog world, I would have been eaten a long time ago. There's something in the structure of it, that it has a backlist. It has assets. And viewing it as a publishing company rather than as a cultural institution. They're not cash cows. A cash cow you're continually milking. A publishing company is a cash pig and you have to feed it. And then at the end you kill it and you get the benefit of it. And somehow publishing companies, as long as you're producing you're always in trouble. As long as you're putting out more things, you're always in hot water. Once you stop, then you sell out the back list, you have your inventory, you have titles that we have that continue to sell, that you can create something smaller and something stable, as long as it doesn't do anything. And that's a possibility. That's an economic possibility. I'm not too interested in it but that's an economic possibility.

12-00:04:48

Bancroft:

Just keep thinking.

12-00:04:50

Margolin:

I'm actually thinking. Oh. Well, I think I have it. And I think that one of the most wonderful metaphors that I keep coming back to: When the first Polynesians settled Hawaii and they came from the Polynesian islands and they set out at sea and they brought twenty-seven things with them, I think. I forget the exact number. It was twenty-three or twenty-seven things. And they brought bread fruit and they brought taro and they brought ki, those leaves which you wrap things. They brought pineapple. They couldn't pack too much on the ship but they packed a certain amount of useful things. As Heyday heads to the future, what do we pack onto the ship? What do we bring? What would we like to bring with us? We have no idea what the future's going to bring. We don't know where we're heading. What of this asset do we have that

we put on the ship to send out to the future? And maybe we end it in a poetic way rather than in a “what's the future of Heyday?” That seems to be a good way to end it.

12-00:08:06

Bancroft: Well, I think any metaphoric way of stating all of that is good. And actually what you're saying goes back to the theme of the journey.

12-00:08:18

Margolin: Yeah, it does. It does.

12-00:08:21

Bancroft: And that's a nice way of looking at it. What needs to be packed for the journey into the sea?

12-00:08:29

Margolin: Yeah, the journey into the future. The journey after me.

12-00:08:33

Bancroft: Right. Yeah, for example, when I ask people what, in this transformation and change, what's most important to keep Heyday or to preserve in Heyday, what is so valued now, and some people say things like the values that Malcolm brought to it need to continue on. The sense of generosity, commitment to beautiful work, having positive relationships with community and with authors, cooperative workplace. So there's those values that have been imbued in Heyday need to be packed along and continue if it's going to continue in the same way that it was. The leadership. What can happen with a leader who is as well connected or who's willing to be out in the world and be gregarious and maintain connections that you've already connected, things like that. I think those are some of the sign posts, some of what gets packed in.

12-00:09:56

Margolin: There's something very satisfying about setting out on a boat, about packing certain things, about going to an island, you're not sure where it is, about what do you need for survival on that island. There's something very satisfying about this. I love the idea of having excerpts from the different books, of having covers and excerpts and kind of retrospective of what we've done. It actually stuns me. I actually look around, there's so goddamn much. And I forget it all.

12-00:10:54

Bancroft: I wanted to go over with you one time all of the little—you have objects. People have given you things, they're sitting on shelves.

12-00:11:04

Margolin: Oh, God, there are boxes of them all around the place.

12-00:11:08

Bancroft: Oh, I bet. And another time it's like going through your email. Now I want to go through some of those objects.

- 12-00:11:15
Margolin: I have no idea what half of them are.
- 12-00:11:17
Bancroft: But the ones that are there and that you can see. You hear the stories about anything that you remember from who they came from and what they meant. I'm sure you've got amazing stories about all of that stuff, too. I love that book, you probably remember, I think it was Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried With Them*. Do you know that novel?
- 12-00:11:39
Margolin: No. Not at all.
- 12-00:11:40
Bancroft: Oh, it was a wonderful novel by a man who was a soldier in Vietnam. So the book was talking about, for each man, what were some of the things in their pack that were either found with them when they died or they took with them over to Vietnam and what they represent. We can put on more lights if you like.
- 12-00:12:19
Margolin: My foot fell asleep.
- 12-00:12:23
Bancroft: Ah.
- 12-00:12:28
Margolin: So this is what your nights are like, huh?
- 12-00:12:30
Bancroft: Yeah. I cozy up with a good book. I travel a lot though, so it feels still all too rare that I get to be here.
- 12-00:12:54
Margolin: When you're here, do you find excuses to head down to Willits?
- 12-00:13:01
Bancroft: Sometimes. There are a couple of times I went to a play in Willits that was put on, written by a local guy. Sometimes there's a good film. But sometimes I just declare, okay, I'm on the mountain. I refuse to go anywhere. There is a good little pub that has some good music every now and then. And I saw a fabulous flamenco dancer. I saw a Native American man, a Navajo man come and play acoustic guitar. There's some good performances. There's stuff going on here.
- 12-00:14:13.
Margolin: Do you go to Ukiah at all?

- 12-00:14:15
Bancroft: Sometimes. There's even more going on there. The Sun Museum is interesting. I went there for a couple of exhibits every now and then. Or the Grace Hudson Museum. It's the Sun House.
- 12-00:14:35
Margolin: The Sun House.
- 12-00:14:35
Bancroft: Right. Now, it was interesting talking to Jake. It was kind of unfortunately New York cellphone connections. But he said he has a lot of wonderful memories and he seems to remember stuff. He said, "I have the same gift of memory that my father has." And he told me about, just thinking about you traveling, and I mentioned that in one of the things about your going into Native California. He mentioned going to somewhere. He couldn't remember where it was. But arriving and there was these pits. He thought it had to be like fifty yards long of fire burning and salmon roasting. And he remembered that in particular. And he also had a really description. He thought it was Kule Loklo, and going into a roundhouse with the big head dancers. I don't think that was there.
- 12-00:15:51
Margolin: No, it wouldn't have been Kule Loklo. It would have probably been Chaw Se'. I don't think I ever brought him to Grindstone. I don't think I ever brought him to—
- 12-00:15:58
Bancroft: But it was a very wonderful description from a kid's perspective of what it meant to be in the dark with sort of the awesomeness of these heads coming in, the big head dancers, and the songs. And he said, "Strangely I still have that song stuck in my head."
- 12-00:16:21
Margolin: Oh, no kidding?
- 12-00:16:23
Bancroft: Yeah. "And just that sense of falling asleep while everybody was—falling in and out of sleep with all of this activity and my father being right there next to me." It was very beautiful.
- 12-00:16:48
Margolin: I don't quite understand it, Kim. That we had these Indians up on Monday and my new assistant Mariko was taking notes. And afterwards she talked about how uneasy she felt being there. There was all this emotion, there was all this intimacy. There was all this talk. It was a different culture. And I guess I felt that. But I guess maybe I'm just feeling at home with it.
- 12-00:17:32
Bancroft: Maybe that's part of her youth, too, that she hasn't really been that exposed to being—I don't know what her ethnic background is.

- 12-00:17:44
Margolin: Hapa.
- 12-00:17:46
Bancroft: Hapa, yes. So I would imagine that she's had some exposure to what it means to be the other in some senses. But maybe Native California is still even more other than anything she's experienced. But yeah. You've lived it. It's interesting what you were saying about even the conversation about how things have changed for people in that community, where it went from being twenty-five years ago, everybody being angry with each other or defensive. I certainly remember that from my various interactions with the Native community as a white person and where do I fit in.
- 12-00:18:51
Margolin: I'm not sure how it's going to come out. George went and he had a meeting today with John King, who's the architecture critic for the *Chronicle*.
- 12-00:18:59
Bancroft: George Young?
- 12-00:19:00
Margolin: George Young who works for me.
- 12-00:19:02
Bancroft: Yeah. I wrote to him, George Young, yeah, whose wife recently passed away. That was so sad.
- 12-00:19:09
Margolin: Yeah, it is sad.
- 12-00:19:13
Bancroft: In fact, I just wrote to him and I said, "So I sent you the transcript." I don't know if he sent it back to you yet.
- 12-00:19:20
Margolin: No.
- 12-00:19:21
Bancroft: He said, "Oh, it arrived just when my wife was dying." I said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize." What happened to her?
- 12-00:19:29
Margolin: Oh, she'd had breast cancer for years. She fought it for seven or eight years. It finally did her in.
- 12-00:19:36
Bancroft: Okay. Well, anyhow, you were saying—
- 12-00:19:38
Margolin: But he's got a meeting with John King, who's the architecture critic for the *Chronicle*. John did a book with us called *Cityscapes*. And what John wants to

do is a book on things that never came to pass, on architectural drawings and plans for San Francisco that never was.

12-00:20:02
Bancroft:

Really?

12-00:20:02
Margolin:

I mean, it's freeways through Golden Gate Park.

12-00:20:04
Bancroft:

Oh, God.

12-00:20:05
Margolin:

And some of it is utterly utopian and some of it is utterly amazing. But there was something about it that's such fun. Isn't that fun?

12-00:20:17
Bancroft:

Yes. You certainly delight in odd ideas that can come to fruition.

12-00:21:12
Margolin:

Oh, thank you.

12-00:21:13
Bancroft:

You're welcome. I actually wanted to hear, too. Well, there's lots of things I want to hear about. I was interested in your story about going with Reuben to Mexico. I know you went, but I didn't get to hear anything about where you went or what you did.

12-00:22:06
Margolin:

Does Reuben remember it better than I do?

12-00:22:10
Bancroft:

Well, he did not have very much time to talk because it was a week away from when his baby was expected and he had some big show. So I didn't get to go into that. But he did mention it.

12-00:22:29
Margolin:

I'm not sure, but I think I went with Reuben to Mexico when he was little. We went with Sadie and Rina and Reuben. And then there was a trip that we took when he was sixteen, and then I think we went one other time.

12-00:22:41
Bancroft:

Oh.

12-00:22:51
Margolin:

But I'm not sure of that. There was a trip with Lee.

12-00:22:56
Bancroft:

Where did you go when you went with him? Just in what part of Mexico?

- 12-00:23:03
Margolin: We went to Mexico City. And we stayed with Gustavo Esteva, who had been minister of culture under one of the presidents. And he was one-quarter Oaxacan Indian and three-quarters pure Castilian, and he was an aristocrat with an Indian understanding of things. He was an amazing character. And we stayed with him, wandered around. And then Reuben and I split off from everybody else, and we went to Guanajuato and spent some time in Guanajuato.
- 12-00:23:47
Bancroft: You know that's where I lived for three-and-a-half years.
- 12-00:25:10
Margolin: Did you? What were you doing there?
- 12-00:23:53
Bancroft: I was teaching at the language center.
- 12-00:23:54
Margolin: In Guanajuato?
- 12-00:23:55
Bancroft: In the university. And I ended up living there with one of my stepsisters. I went to Guanajuato just because it was a beautiful place. I was actually on my way—
- 12-00:24:10
Margolin: It's so beautiful that—
- 12-00:24:10
Bancroft: —to Nicaragua.
- 12-00:24:12
Margolin: For political reasons?
- 12-00:24:14
Bancroft: Well, yeah. So I was going to Nicaragua to study. It was during the summer and I wanted to study Spanish and I had decided to study in Nicaragua because it was the time of the revolution, so it was a way of learning. So it was, what, like nineteen, I don't know, eighty-eight or so. And so I was going to a language school but it was to teach us about the revolution as much as to teach us Spanish. And I lived with a family that had fought in the revolution. Very—
- 12-00:24:47
Margolin: This was in Nicaragua?
- 12-00:24:48
Bancroft: Yeah, Nicaragua. But in order to get to Nicaragua—since we were at war with Nicaragua you couldn't fly directly. So you had to go to Mexico first and then get a flight to Nicaragua from there. So a friend say, "Oh, well, if you're

going to go to Mexico you should go to Guanajuato. It's one of the most beautiful cities in all of Guanajuato. So I went to Guanajuato and I had a few days. I went to Nicaragua and I came back and I had a couple of days so I took a bus to Guanajuato and I met somebody there who was teaching at the language center, at La Universidad. You remember the big university? And I said, "Oh, are you hiring?" because I actually had sort of gotten laid off from my job. I was teaching high school in San Francisco at the time, and they always laid everybody off in May and then you were rehired in September probably. So anyhow, he hired me. This guy hired me because I was a natural, real English teacher. Usually they had tourists coming through saying, "Oh, I want to really stay here. Can I teach English?" But I actually was an English teacher so I lived there.

12-00:26:01

Margolin:

So you taught English language to Mexicans?

12-00:26:02

Bancroft:

And composition. I taught the more advanced students so they pretty much already—

12-00:26:10

Margolin:

And you lived there for three years? What'd you do for three—

12-00:26:11

Bancroft:

Three-and-a-half years.

12-00:26:12

Margolin:

—and-a-half years there?

12-00:26:14

Bancroft:

I taught. I was a university professor.

12-00:26:16

Margolin:

Where'd you live?

12-00:26:17

Bancroft:

Well, actually, I ended up—this is another strange story—buying a wreck of a house. I don't know if you remember El Paseo de la Presa, the street that goes out of town and up to the dam at the other end of town across from—

12-00:26:37

Margolin:

So dimly.

12-00:26:38

Bancroft:

Across from the governor's mansion. Well, first when I lived there, I lived with a family and then I lived with—she was la senora and she just thought I was the most bizarre person she ever met because—I don't know. You probably went hiking. You know up in the hills right above Guanajuato there are these big bluffs and they called it La Bufa. And I loved hiking up there. And she thought I was crazy. Said, "Que estas loca? Why do you want to go

climb there by yourself? Do you need a psychiatrist?” She literally asked me that. Like, “What is the matter with you?” So I lived with the family for two months and then I ended up living with a young Mexican woman who was a wild thing. And then my sister came to visit and she needed to get out of the Bronx, So I invited her. We found this wreck of a house. She was into renovation and rebuilding. So we jointly bought this wreck of a house and she renovated it and I ended up living there in the last year. So that’s another story.

12-00:28:12
Margolin:

Why’d you leave?

12-00:28:13
Bancroft:

I wanted to go back to the United States and continue on with my career here.

12-00:28:34
Margolin:

Yeah. It was over. It was over. Have you been back since?

12-00:28:41
Bancroft:

Mm-hmm.

12-00:28:41
Margolin:

Do you go back often?

12-00:28:42
Bancroft:

I think I’ve only been back once. But it was an amazing, wonderful opportunity. When you were talking about even hanging out in Mexico for a couple of months, you and Rina, even a month—and really in Mexico, not in Club Med or something like that.

12-00:29:05
Margolin:

No, no.

12-00:29:05
Bancroft:

But to be in Mexico. And I think any of us get a chance to do that as Americans, it’s such a great opportunity to see the world from a different perspective. I was there when the first Iraq war happened and people were saying, “What’s the matter with your country? Why are you always attacking other people?” and having to explain that.

12-00:29:33
Margolin:

Yeah. And then there’s just the pacing of people, their sweetness, their kindness.

12-00:29:40
Bancroft:

Oh, my God.

12-00:29:41
Margolin:

Their amazing generosity.

12-00:29:43
Bancroft:

Yes.

12-00:29:44
Margolin:

Their astonishing generosity. Their playfulness.

12-00:29:50
Bancroft:

I was often still on this “I have things to do.” And I’d go and stop by somebody’s house and hang out for a little bit and say, “Well, okay, well, I’m going.” Like, “Kim, why do you have to leave already? You just got here.” Maybe I’d been already there for an hour, two hours. But I remember this one guy telling me, “You Americans, you just live to work. We work to live. And this is important work here. Why do you have to leave? This is a great thing that’s happening here.” It was just such wonderful cultural differences to explore.

12-00:30:29
Margolin:

I remember coming back from Mexico once, across the border at El Paso, and just realizing, just being shocked by America. The real culture shock was not going to Mexico, it was coming back to the United States and realizing that I’d learned something that I’d never forget. And many months later that I had kind of forgotten. You just kind of move back into where you were.

12-00:30:56
Bancroft:

Yes.

12-00:30:58
Margolin:

It was hanging out with Reuben. I remember shooting pool with him at a pool hall, which was great fun. I remember he went out to buy a stamp. He went to mail a letter. He went out to buy a stamp and he wanted to go by himself. He thought that he could do this by himself. So I said, “Okay, go ahead. Just see if you can find your way back.” So he went out and he came back later and there was some tremendous misunderstanding. What he had done was he had gone someplace—he said, “I want to buy the post office.” [laughter]

12-00:31:49
Bancroft:

[laughter] Oops.

12-00:31:50
Margolin:

He got the wrong word.

12-00:31:52
Bancroft:

We love those misunderstandings.

12-00:31:56
Margolin:

Reuben was always easy to be with. He was always just fun to be with and easy and adventurous. I don’t remember too much about the trips to Mexico. I don’t.

12-00:32:12
Bancroft:

Well, that’s something.

- 12-00:32:18
Margolin: I probably talked about this. When he was little, we were in Merida.
- 12-00:32:27
Bancroft: No.
- 12-00:32:28
Margolin: And we had to get back to Mexico City and I discovered that I had screwed up the money and I didn't have enough money to get us all back to Mexico City. We didn't have enough money for the train.
- 12-00:32:38
Bancroft: Oops.
- 12-00:32:38
Margolin: And Rina was totally pissed at me, and Sadie was just too frightened and exasperated. Here he's done it again. And Reuben goes, "Oh, boy." [laughter] "Oh, good, now what's going to happen now?" And he was always so adventurous. He was always so wonderfully adventurous.
- 12-00:32:55
Bancroft: He mentioned that he remembered when you all had the opportunity to live at the lighthouse and he thought that was such a great idea, and Sadie sort of nixed it, and he said, "I think I've finally forgiven her about that." Would you like any tea or anything?
- 12-00:33:40
Margolin: Oh, no thanks.
- 12-00:33:41
Bancroft: Want some vino?
- 12-00:33:43
Margolin: No, no thank you. See, I'm picturing these scrapbook pages, and then I'm picturing the house of Heyday and picturing it being built up throughout this thing. It was kind of like maybe a chapter heading. Maybe some kind of a sense, something that runs through it. Not exactly a timeline but like stepping stones, like the number of books, the number of people. A visual sense of it. A graphic sense of it.
- 12-00:34:41
Bancroft: Well, that's where I was thinking—go ahead.
- 12-00:34:45
Margolin: That's sort of like what L. Frank was saying in some ways.
- 12-00:34:49
Bancroft: Well, again, that's a little bit where I had this idea of the expansion. Again, going back to the map and the journey. So there's this sense of Heyday starts with *The East Bay Out*. It's one book and one place. And then it becomes these other—I'd love to see some of the old catalogues or whatever of it.

12-00:35:12
Margolin:

I threw a bunch of stuff out but I've got some—

12-00:35:15
Bancroft:

And then it's *The Ohlone Way*, which kind of takes you into the larger Bay area. Because some people have talked about it along the way. Like, well, there was the bicycle guides and nature guides but then I don't have a sense of the trajectory of kind of what came and what was in the eighties in particular. But that sense of how those books then become—now there's ten books. And even talking to you about it there was this sense, well, okay, first we were printing other people's books but they weren't Heyday books. You were just kind of the ones facilitating.

12-00:35:56
Margolin:

Yeah, I didn't keep any of those.

12-00:35:57
Bancroft:

So then that's where I'm still unclear. Who were some of those first Heyday books? Were they bicycle guides, the nature guide?

12-00:36:09
Margolin:

Diane, she's got the archive of just about all—some of the books are gone. I have no idea what happened to them. But there's an archive there, and it's listed alphabetically. We could do it by year.

12-00:36:22
Bancroft:

Yeah, and I think that would be cool to see. Even having to, say, one of the kind of sidebar pages, okay, as you're saying, "This year there was five books published and then ten books." Just even looking at the titles, just to get a sense of, "Wow, it went from this to this to this focus."

12-00:36:49
Margolin:

That could be done.

12-00:36:50
Bancroft:

Even if some of them aren't—

12-00:36:52
Margolin:

That could be done. Like a bookshelf.

12-00:36:56
Bancroft:

Oh, that's a nice idea.

12-00:37:01
Margolin:

And that could be done.

12-00:37:07
Bancroft:

And then the other thing that a couple of people have mentioned is just something to think about, for me, in researching this. It's the context of the time. Like, for example, when you're developing your connections to Native California, and then what are the larger political things going on? You

mention that with the environmental movement and the *Whole Earth* catalogue. But, for example, somebody said, “Well, there was Alcatraz Island happening.” How was AIM [American Indian Movement] taking root and taking action during those years? And also other small presses? Like somehow trying to look at what would happen to some of the other presses? Even a scrapbook. Imagine a kind of page of, here’s what was going on with Serendipity—

12-00:38:01
Margolin:

Oh, that would be interesting.

12-00:38:04
Bancroft:

—and North Point and various other presses.

12-00:38:09
Margolin:

Yeah, I was on a panel, I think last Thursday at City Lights, with City Lights and McSweeney’s and a couple of other presses talking about best course publishing and I was talking about those early days.

12-00:38:28
Bancroft:

Was anybody recording that?

12-00:38:31
Margolin:

Probably. I don’t know.

12-00:38:42
Bancroft:

So that would be nice to have. I’m talking to Don Cushman, but he was more involved in the printing, right? You mentioned him.

12-00:38:54
Margolin:

Yeah, he was a printer. He’ll give you a sense of the texture of those early days. Have you talked to him?

12-00:39:06
Bancroft:

No, I’m going to talk to him.

12-00:39:07
Margolin:

Have you called him at all?

12-00:39:09
Bancroft:

He was not available, so I’m going to meet with him in November.

12-00:39:14
Margolin:

Oh, so you have talked to him. You’ve communicated with him.

12-00:39:15
Bancroft:

Well, we’ve emailed. Yeah. But if there are other small press publishers, sort of—

12-00:39:29
Margolin:

You know, Kim, maybe what we ought to do is start composing this scrapbook and just see what needs to be filled in. Get big blocks of newsprint

and just paste stuff into it. Paste pictures into it, paste things. Just see how we can pose each of these pages. Maybe that's the thing to do.

12-00:40:12

Bancroft:

Right. And I can see going back and taking some of these interview sections and highlighting some key words and themes in them as I've been kind of going through, to just kind of paste onto the newsprint as the sort of working copy or starting point. And I don't know if you want to do this with me or you with Rina. But she had a lot of great photos. Some of them I wrote down. She didn't want to do a formal interview, but she had the photos and a timeline. So trying to go back and pick out photos that would be useful.

12-00:41:09

Margolin:

She's got photos, I've got photos.

12-00:41:14

Bancroft:

She had some photos of like Heyday, early Heyday parties and stuff.

12-00:41:17

Margolin:

Yeah. I think I've got some of those. I'm not sure how much I've got.

12-00:41:23

Bancroft:

So do you want to go through those with her and pick out ones that you'd like to see in the book?

12-00:41:34

Margolin:

Yeah, I can do that. Actually, I like the idea of composing this book. Just jump in and throw stuff in and see what's there. Just see how it works out. Just take a section and see what it looks like.

12-00:42:06

Bancroft:

You mentioned Lorraine. I don't know if it was about this book. No, maybe you mentioned Lorraine with *Literary Industries*. So is that something that you're sort of thinking of, assigning *Literary Industries* to? I don't even know how that works particularly, that you sort of assign it to somebody. Like you want to assign *Literary Industries* to her?

12-00:42:34

Margolin:

She's the art director. Gayle—

12-00:42:38

Bancroft:

So then she decides who. I interviewed her, and she said sometimes it'll be somebody in-house, sometimes out, yeah.

12-00:42:47

Margolin:

Diane. Yeah. Yeah.

12-00:42:51

Bancroft:

Like, for example, with *Literary Industries* you say, "We're working on this," and then she'll decide whether she should work on it or somebody else in-house or somebody out?

12-00:43:03
Margolin:

No. What there is is there's an initial commitment to publishing. Usually Gayle and I will end up dealing with the roughing out, getting the stuff together. Then when all the pieces are together, we have a launch meeting. And at that launch meeting we decide who's going to design it, what's the size of it, what's the price. We give it the physical form. But it doesn't happen until later.

12-00:43:38
Bancroft:

Well, in this case, say with the Heyday book, because I even talked to Lorraine about this because she said, "Well, some books are pretty text heavy." I think she had a particular word. "Whereas others—" she mentioned a book that she—because I often ask them, "Well, what's a book that you particularly loved working on or that you're proud of?" Oh, actually it was Rebecca. Rebecca LeGates.. I talked to her, too. And Rebecca mentioned an art—oh, maybe it is this art book. She just said it was particularly art heavy as opposed to other books that are mostly text and don't require that much design. But in that case, isn't the designer kind of involved a lot sooner because there's a lot more pieces, artistic pieces to put together?

12-00:44:53
Margolin:

The designer is kind of there as the thing is being assembled but doesn't really start really working on it until it's ready to be worked on. And it's partly because it's very difficult to work on something unless you know what the whole thing is. That they start working on stuff. You get your page design down, and then some other whole thing comes through that doesn't fit that page design. And designers don't like to do things until they can see the whole thing. So it's a matter of assembling the whole thing. What did we do?

12-00:45:48
Bancroft:

Who worked on the Brian—it's Brian Beebe?

12-00:45:51
Margolin:

The latest book? That was actually jobbed out. Lorraine? did the cover and somebody—we jobbed out the interior. That was a pretty simple book in some ways. It was graphically beautiful, but it was easier than you think. Oh, I know what it was. It was *State of Change*. It was *State of Change* that we had in four gigantic notebooks. Things pasted in and clip art and text tipped in and it was completely chaotic. It was just wonderful.

12-00:46:46
Bancroft:

Well, we can do something like that. Even just getting big pieces of paper like this.

12-00:46:50
Margolin:

That's what I would do. I just love to see how it works out.

12-00:46:54
Bancroft:

Oh, it would be fun.

- 12-00:46:56
Margolin: Maybe the next time we get together, we'll take some stuff. We'll take a particular section and see what it looks like and see how we condense stuff and just see what it looks like.
- 12-00:47:09
Bancroft: Speaking of, I'm going to be back in Berkeley at the end of October, before I go off to Southern California where I'm going to see—I have a date with David Kipen and Patricia Wakida.
- 12-00:47:56
Margolin: Well, you've become nice company.
- 12-00:47:59
Bancroft: Do you want to go outside? Have something you want to eat? It's the day before your birthday.
- 12-00:48:14
Margolin: The twenty-sixth.
- 12-00:48:16
Bancroft: Yeah. What are you doing for your birthday?
- 12-00:48:18
Margolin: I made sure that we had an event up near Sacramento.
- 12-00:48:28
Bancroft: The day before your birthday?
- 12-00:48:29
Margolin: No, the day of my birthday.
- 12-00:48:30
Bancroft: Oh, you're going to an event in Sacramento?
- 12-00:48:32
Margolin: Damn right.
- 12-00:48:32
Bancroft: What is it?
- 12-00:48:34
Margolin: The glacier book. We're having a day devoted to glaciers on the twenty-seventh.
- 12-00:48:39
Bancroft: Nice. Oh, okay. In fact, I have a really good friend in Sacramento who's a geologist who I gave—
- 12-00:48:44
Margolin: This is Sierra College. We're doing it in Rocklin.

- 12-00:48:47
Bancroft: No, I'm sure he would love to go.
- 12-00:48:49
Margolin: Great.
- 12-00:48:50
Bancroft: I just gave him *Rise of the Ranges of Light*—
- 12-00:48:54
Margolin: Oh, that's such a good book.
- 12-00:48:57
Bancroft: Okay, unfortunately I'm sort of now—I see these books. I say, “Oh, my friend would love it.” So I just gave it to him and I haven't finished reading it. I do not know science, rocks, but I loved how it began with the spiritual Hindu analysis. So the twenty-sixth. Are you free?
- 12-00:49:20
Margolin: Yeah, I'm free.
- 12-00:49:22
Bancroft: Okay. So what's good? Shall we say 1:00, 200?
- 12-00:49:33
Margolin: Yeah, how about 1:30?
- 12-00:49:39
Bancroft: One thirty is perfect. Okay. So it would be helpful for me if we could pick a section that we think we want to work on so that I could make sure I got all of the—I want to reread the relevant interviews and try to kind of cut and paste. So I don't know if there's anything in particular that you're interested in working on. You don't have to decide right this moment but—
- 12-00:53:59
Margolin: Well, it could be almost anything. It could be the early days of [break in audio]. Let me see. What time is it getting to be?
- 12-00:54:42
Bancroft: It is 10:30. So—
- 12-00:54:46
Margolin: Let me show you what I'm going to be doing in Ukiah Rennick. I think I've got some stuff in the car.
- 12-00:54:59
Bancroft: Okay. What's your bedtime?
- 12-00:55:07
Margolin: Eleven, 11:30. What about you?

- 12-00:55:08
Bancroft: Yeah, that's good for me, too. I presume you're up early and you probably need to be—
- 12-00:55:13
Margolin: I'm afraid so.
- 12-00:55:15
Bancroft: Yeah, me, too. Okay. So now, let me just tell you. We've been conservative about lights. So we have lots of energy so at any point in time feel free to turn things on.
- 12-00:55:31
Margolin: Okay, great.
- 12-00:55:31
Bancroft: There's light—
- 12-00:55:32
Margolin: Oh, there's a shower?
- 12-00:55:32
Bancroft: Yes.
- 12-00:55:33
Margolin: Oh, good.
- 12-00:55:33
Bancroft: An actual bathroom.
- [break in audio]
- 12-00:57:42
Margolin: And it was a story that Jordan Thorn told me and Jordan has been part of the Zen Center for years. And he talked about how when Suzuki Roshi came over from Japan to create the Zen Center in San Francisco, that it was in the sixties. And he set up a Zendo and he had the morning sittings. I think the morning zazen. At four o'clock in the mornings the students would arrive, and they'd all be wearing their identical robes and they had their identical pillows under their arms and they would all bow to the master and then they would all sit in the lotus position. They would meditate for two hours. And then at 6:00 in the morning Suzuki Roshi would sound the gong and the morning sitting would end and they'd go off, have breakfast, and begin their day. And the next day at four o'clock in the morning they'd all arrive and they've all got their identical robes and their identical pillows, and they all bow and they all sit down in lotus position for two hours and then bong, the bell rings, and they get up and they begin their day. So this goes on and on. But it's the sixties and these are sixties kids. So they decide to have a party and they invite Suzuki Roshi and he walks into this room, they're all wearing tie-dye and they're all wildly dancing, and there's all this flamboyant exhibit, and he's looking around and

he's looking around with complete puzzlement. He stays for a while. And then the next day at four o'clock in the morning, somewhat bleary-eyed, they all come in, and they've all got their identical robes and their identical pillows, and they all bow to the master and they sit down. And he says, "You know," he says, "it's not customary to speak during the morning sit-in. But something happened last night that was so remarkable I felt that I had to tell you. When I saw you last night in all of those colors and all that wild dancing and all that wild behavior, you all looked the same, and I couldn't tell you apart. Now when you are sitting here in this position I realize you're all different people." [laughter] Isn't that a wonderful story?

12-00:59:39

Bancroft:

Yes, yes. That's funny. Because as you were describing it, too, of them all coming in and looking the same, their identical clothing and stuff, I thought, God, part of the Buddhist study is to efface yourself, your personality, efface your being as you're trying to transcend and become one with a greater existence. But that captures it very well. Okay, I have that story now. Yay. [break in audio]

12-01:00:54

Margolin:

There was this Indian benefit that was happening at the Hyatt Hotel in Oakland and it was for some urban Indian group. It was supposed to be a dinner and an awards ceremony at 7:30. And people began to assemble around 7:30 and we're sitting hanging around the bar and it got to be eight o'clock and it got to be 8:30, it got to be 9:00. And finally at about a quarter past 9:00 the door opens up into the banquet hall and everybody kind of sits down. And Marty Waukazogets up and he looks at his watch and he says, "My God," he says, "it's a quarter past 9:00. This is the earliest we've ever been late." [laughter]

12-01:01:37

Bancroft:

[laughter] That's pretty good.

12-01:01:39

Margolin:

I do not worry about being on time with Violet Rennick.

12-01:01:45

Bancroft:

Yes, I know. Well, definitely. It's funny because you and I have mentioned this, too, about going places. That there's Indian time. And actually I went to an event the other night in Willits and it started late and somebody said, "Oh, we're on Willits time because it's rural and country." And then there's CP time.

12-01:02:04

Margolin:

What's CP? Communist party?

12-01:02:04

Bancroft:

No, colored people.

- 12-01:02:05
Margolin: Colored people. Whoa.
- 12-01:02:07
Bancroft: Yes. That's what Henry Gates wrote in his books, Skip Gates, and I've heard this among my African American friends, that it was called CP time. And it's the same thing. In fact, when I was teaching my class about sort of multicultural perspectives, my English classes always had that as a theme. They'd have students from everywhere and they talked about somebody from Brazil. Or when you live in Mexico, if a party is supposed to start at 9:00, you don't show up until at least 10:00 or 10:30. It's only Americans are—
- 12-01:02:40
Margolin: You call it Indian time or Mexican time or CP time or Willits time. It's as if we're the standard and everything else is a deviant from the standard. This exactitude, this punctuality is so strange and weird and unnecessary and inexplicable.
- 12-01:03:04
Bancroft: And it's actually really not the norm.
- 12-01:03:04
Margolin: It's not the norm at all.
- 12-01:03:07
Bancroft: But just because Anglos and Americans created—well, Mussolini made the trains run on time, so what can we say. Okay. Would you like another cup of coffee or anything like that?
- 12-01:04:09
Margolin: No, that's fine. Thanks. I'm not sure what this is, but it was in my bed.
- 12-01:04:39
Bancroft: It's a rawhide.
- 12-01:04:40
Margolin: Oh. It's Sats's?
- 12-01:04:43
Bancroft: Yes.
- 12-01:04:44
Margolin: Oh.
- 12-01:05:09
Bancroft: You're welcome to sit on the deck.
- 12-01:05:11
Margolin: Yeah, I think I'll sit on the deck for a while. Let me look over this manuscript.

[End Audio File 12]

Interview 13: October 25, 2012

[Begin Audio File 13]

[Begins reviewing papers related to planning for the book]

13-00:00:04

Margolin: So the founding of *News*, picture of the first one, Vera Mae Fredrickson with her picture and then some words that I've written about her and maybe a quote from her.

13-00:00:14

Bancroft: So would this be like, this is a page? It's three columns?

13-00:00:17

Margolin: Yeah. And then this might be David Peri, with a full picture like this here. Something here and then maybe a quote from David Peri and maybe a picture of something.

13-00:00:32

Bancroft: Like, for example, Mabel McKay?

13-00:00:34

Margolin: Something like that. And then something on Frank LaPena and something on Logan Slagle. Just cover *News* and then this would be the founding of *News*. So that's the kind of thing that I had in mind.

13-00:00:49

Bancroft: Okay, I think that's good. So you're thinking about this as *News from Native California*. So I envisioned something actually just like that but also—

13-00:01:03

Margolin: California Indians—

13-00:01:06

Bancroft: Yeah. And so that this could be like a section perhaps within a larger chapter about the California Indians, the relationship of Heyday to California Indians. Okay. Now, actually, I could just send this to you if you would like. I did, kind of in preparation for this—one thing was an overview of the interviews I've done with you so far.

13-00:01:36

Margolin: That'd be great.

13-00:01:37

Bancroft: So that's about five pages. I did the first one in detail but then since this *Literary Industries* came in I haven't done as much. But you can—

13-00:01:49

Margolin: So this is like an annotated—

- 13-00:01:51
Bancroft: Yes. And I mean it to get more annotated. But, for example, here's the interview, when we did it, how many pages, and kind of what—
- 13-00:02:00
Margolin: Oh, that's so good.
- 13-00:02:01
Bancroft: Okay. So that's that. And I can just send this to you right now.
- 13-00:02:08
Margolin: Why don't you send it now?
- 13-00:02:08
Bancroft: I'll show you. That looks blank but it's not. Then I went back through the interviews, so related to Native California, and I pulled out some passages that I liked that I thought were interesting. Again, but I wasn't thinking of it just as about *News*. So some things about—like from L. Frank on beginning to work with Malcolm, about your personality, stories about Malcolm, importance of *News* and Heyday, about advocates, about Malcolm's relationship to the Native community, and then Leanne, what she said about *News*. Darryl on *News*, on working with Heyday folks, impact of *Ohlone Way*, about Malcolm. So actually, as I was just going back and pulling these out, it made me aware of different kind of topic areas, some that's specific to *News*, some that might be about Heyday, some that's about you. And then also some of this doesn't necessarily belong. The impact of Heyday on Darryl's life, Frank, importance of *News*. Like, for example, what you're thinking here, maybe some of that can go in there. And you mentioned cutting pieces up and pasting them in. But I'm going to send this to you also, and you can print this out. Jeannine, what she had to say.
- And then the other thing was I went through some of your passages from interviews. So I just picked out things that I thought were interesting. And, again, this was not just about news. So I loved your Ray Marquez story. And some of these I'm wondering if you actually either—I mean, we have them in the interviews or if you ever wrote them down.
- 13-00:04:06
Margolin: Some of them I did.
- 13-00:04:07
Bancroft: You did?
- 13-00:04:08
Margolin: I don't think I ever wrote Ray Marquez's story down. But some of them I did.
- 13-00:04:11
Bancroft: So, for example, I think I said I liked his story as how—it came up in connection to *The Ohlone Way* and how it helped create connections for you in the Ohlone community. And then in interview ten was when we were really

talking about some of your connections to Native California. There was the mourning dove story. So I thought some of these stories—

13-00:04:32
Margolin:

The mourning dove story I may have written out.

13-00:04:35
Bancroft:

Okay. There was the story about L. Frank and the Hawaiian diplomats that I loved.

13-00:04:40
Margolin:

Oh, that was funny.

13-00:04:41
Bancroft:

That was funny. The recognition of the Tongva.

13-00:04:44
Margolin:

I was telling somebody else that. I don't think I remembered the wonderful anecdote that fits in on that. Jimi Castillo was one of the Tongva and it's J-I-M-I. Jimi Castillo. And we were watching. They had their presentments of hula dances and Jimi is this kind of rough, background of prison, kind of rough character. He ended up softening up and becoming a health advocate. He's a prison chaplain for youth. He's into reform. But there's a kind of rough street quality. And he's around prisons. So he's standing watching the hula dances, the hula dances. And there was this huge—the nature of hula dances. And then there were these beautiful young women. And then she says to us, she says, "And with this next dancer—" we noticed a funny expression coming across their face because "this is a dance we do for our genitalia." And then they begin the dances. A wonderful expression comes, and I look over at Jimi and tears are coming out of his eyes. And he says, "How could they hurt people like this? How can people come in and hurt people?" He was talking about the Hawaiians, he was talking about his own culture. He was talking about raiding the beauty of the world, he was talking about. I mentioned that to somebody else in reference to Jimi Castillo. He'll call me back. I'm sorry.

13-00:06:11
Bancroft:

Okay. I'm going to turn this off.

13-00:06:18
Margolin:

You want some water or anything?

13-00:06:21
Bancroft:

Water would be great. Okay, I just sent that to you.

13-00:10:26
Margolin:

Want me to print it out?

13-00:10:29
Bancroft:

I think so, if that helps. Then we can—

- 13-00:10:56
Margolin: Oh, this is so valuable.
- 13-00:10:59
Bancroft: Good. See, I just got a letter from my father about—I sent him a draft of my preface. He said it was good. Malcolm. So beautiful.
- 13-00:11:58
Margolin: Isn't that beautiful?
- 13-00:11:59
Bancroft: I read the latest, or parts of it so far.
- 13-00:12:06
Margolin: You read the what?
- 13-00:12:07
Bancroft: Well, I just got my copy of it as I was leaving Willits. So it was fun to see your interviews, like your interview with Greg.
- 13-00:12:23
Margolin: Yeah. Well, I've been back into this Indian stuff big-time since Margaret left. And just wonderful.
- 13-00:12:31
Bancroft: Okay. So I'm going to do the little introduction of Lindsie. How shall we proceed?
- 13-00:12:52
Margolin: Let's see. We could just put some stuff together to see how it all looks.
- 13-00:13:30
Bancroft: Right. We could just take, let's say, I don't know how big of a—if you're imagining even a book like this, this size, let's say.
- 13-00:13:44
Margolin: Well, you don't put it together, the writing and the design at the same time. So you end up just giving blocks of text. You end up having like a file folder. So it might be the founding of *News* file folder. Then you have different texts and different elements in there.
- 13-00:14:02
Bancroft: That's good.
- 13-00:14:04
Margolin: And then we go to the designer and say, "Here."
- 13-00:14:08
Bancroft: "You do something with it." [laughter]
- 13-00:14:09
Margolin: "It's all yours." [laughter]

13-00:14:09
Bancroft:

Yeah. That's good. I like that. Okay. Do we have to think, then, about—like say if we're taking text, for example, here when you're saying this is one about David. We can't put in three pages of text obviously because it wouldn't fit if you're thinking about one page of material.

13-00:14:39
Margolin:

Well, if it goes up to a page and a half, if it goes into three-quarters of a page.

13-00:14:44
Bancroft:

Then that's fine. Okay.

13-00:14:45
Margolin:

It works out.

13-00:14:49
Bancroft:

Okay. You've done this a lot more than I have so I am happy to follow your lead and throw in ideas. If we think about just even the *News from Native California* stuff, I don't know if you want—you can use this as sort of a length—because the *News* section will be one thing. For example, here's language, revitalization. I just put everything in here together. But I can actually create a separate little file that's just focused on *News*, and then you can print that out and have that in a file folder. I'm using file folders in this sense.

13-00:15:42
Margolin:

You have this carefully indexed, don't you?

13-00:15:45
Bancroft:

I don't have it carefully indexed it. For example, this was my initial stab at it with the umbrella of *Native California* and then as I was going through each of these interviews or your interviews, I was beginning to say, "Okay, here's something about advocates, here's about Malcolm's relationship to the Native community." No, some of this stuff, like "random love," that doesn't necessarily belong in there.

13-00:16:13
Margolin:

What is—

13-00:16:14
Bancroft:

I called it my category of random love. This is from L. Frank. "I really love Malcolm. I'm so excited that this is being done." So this is my first stab at just kind of going through and saying, "Okay, I'm looking at each of these interviews." It was with an eye of taking it for a chapter on Native California, what's relevant. Not all of it's going to be relevant, but this is just the first run through. And I'm presuming I'm doing more and more run throughs, finding what is essential. Like, for example, there would be a separate one. This was Leanne's about *News from Native California* and spinoffs. So she gets into AICLS [Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival], for example. And going through this and saying, "Okay, here's *News from Native*

California, but then there's another little subsection that will be about language revitalization," that will include Leanne and maybe some articles from *News* specific about that. And then there's the basket weavers. L. Frank mentions it. So I think when I think about this umbrella, even of a chapter on *Native California*, there's all of these little subsections. So we could just focus right now on just the pieces from—

13-00:17:39
Margolin:

Well, let's see. The way I would end up doing it is in a milk crate. I would end up having a milk crate with file folders, and I would end up with a scissors, and I would end up putting things in little files.

13-00:18:01
Bancroft:

Right. But that's what I can do on the computer. Like, for example, I've done that. So this is a file on *Native California*. But then I've already subdivided it up. So what I think is, what we can do is I can start a new file right here, right? And then let's say if you're going through this and you see, for example, where there's something specific to *News*. Let's say we just want to focus on *News*. Or as we're going through it, let's create all of the different files. There can be, like I was saying, a file on language revitalization, a file just on *News*. Shall we do it that way? Like when you're thinking about your milk crate, you tell me about the files you want, and I can create those files. And then as I go through all of these interviews, and again, this to me is a process of various iterations, I can cut and paste this stuff and just put it into these separate files. We don't have to do scissors because the computer will give us the scissors.

13-00:19:41
Margolin:

If we're going to do this, we're going to spend the next hour just being quiet and reading some stories. Just read it over and think about it.

13-00:19:50
Bancroft:

Okay. What I want to do is try to then take some of this stuff that I've created, subcategories, and then start initial separate files.

13-00:20:01
Margolin:

Okay. Why don't we do that? And let me just sit down and read some of this stuff.

13-00:20:04
Bancroft:

Okay. [break in audio]

13-00:20:40
Margolin:

[Reading from a piece he wrote] Some fifteen years ago, when David Peri, Vera Mae Fredrickson and I were planning this magazine, I would travel to his home, then in Sebastopol, almost on a weekly basis. I would sit at his large dining room table with worrisome questions on my mind. "How, for example, should we treat a particularly emotional or controversial subject?" David would listen to my questions without a pretense of patience. [laughter] There

were things he wanted to talk about. His Miwok upbringing along the shores of Bodega Bay, for example. The traditions that were passed down and the nuances of the wonderful Coast Miwok language. He would then tell stories of the elders he had known, people like Essie Parrish and Laura Somersall, of trips to the woods to hunt deer, excursions into the wetlands to gather basket root, and long conversations in kitchens, woodsheds, and seminar rooms. Then he might reminisce about his training in anthropology under Alfred Kroeber or his fieldwork with Samuel Barrett. Periodically he would disappear into yet another room of his house to bring forth a stack of field notes, a recording, a rare and beautiful artifact. Then it was back to the stories. Funny, outrageous, copious. I remember once laughing at a story which set his parrot off in gales of laughter, which made me laugh even harder, and made the parrot even more hysterical, until finally I had to beg him to stop because my side was hurting so badly. I was afraid I'd injure myself if he continued. When you were around David the world seemed fully alive, charged with energy, chaos, and humor. I listened with enjoyment, a sense of privilege, really, as he unfolded for me the absurdity, greatness, poignancy, and grace of what it meant to be Indian in the modern world. The worrisome question I had arrived with often never got answered, but at the end of a long day's conversation it didn't seem to matter. I walked away enriched by his stories, and at the end I think he taught me to ask much better questions.

We'll be putting together a more formal and fitting tribute in the next issue of *News*. I don't think we ever did. David did much more than co-found this magazine. He taught anthropology at Sonoma State University for twenty-five years, co-founded Yakaama, produced award winning ethnographic films, was a member of the Coastal Conservancy, wrote widely, and had a memorable influence on all who knew him. For now that we use this space to acknowledge my sadness in his passing and my indebtedness to his friendship, I'll try to keep alive in the pages of *News* something that he implanted here at the birth of this magazine, something of his humor, his slyness, his realness, his deep understanding of human frailty, his capacity to celebrate and rejoice in human greatness. I owe him a lot, and if you have been enjoying *News* over the years, so do you. He inspired much of what is good and enduring in this magazine. I'm grateful to you, David, for your wisdom, big-heartedness, honesty, and extreme generosity. Rest in peace."

13-00:23:31

Bancroft:

Very beautiful. I was thinking that, sadly, for several of your friends—

13-00:23:47

Margolin:

A good obit—

13-00:23:49

Bancroft:

I know. The one about Vera Mae was really wonderful.

13-00:23:51

Margolin:

That was funny.

- 13-00:23:55
Bancroft: And about Jeff [Lustig]. There's something you wanted to say about David Peri, you said it. How much more beautifully could you—same thing for Vera Mae. You have it here.
- 13-00:24:15
Margolin: I think if that was {inaudible}, maybe I would give David Peri a couple of pages.
- 13-00:24:27
Bancroft: So in accumulating pieces for the pages about David, say, or about Vera Mae, if we want to use, say, that piece, is it already in a file somewhere that's usable?
- 13-00:24:48
Margolin: I don't know.
- 13-00:24:51
Bancroft: Because some of the pieces will be in back issues but, for example, this is—
- 13-00:24:55
Margolin: This one dates to 2000, so I'm not sure we have the—you can optically scan it.
- 13-00:25:10
Bancroft: Well, retyping it isn't that big a deal.
- 13-00:25:11
Margolin: Oh, then retype it.
- 13-00:25:12
Bancroft: I'm just saying that if it were available. But do you like the idea of you using that to—
- 13-00:25:23
Margolin: Yeah, I like that idea a lot.
- 13-00:25:23
Bancroft: Yeah, okay. And where you have something here about the founding, we can decide whether you want to use a little piece of the interview where you discuss it. Again, just kind of—
- 13-00:26:00
Margolin: No, this sounds good. And then what I would probably do is put a piece of David's writing in and maybe one of his Dr. Coyote columns and that little image of Dr. Coyote. Do you know that image?
- 13-00:26:14
Bancroft: Mm-hmm. But, see, so when I go onto *News*, the only two pieces that were mentioned here are these pieces, but I'm quite sure there are other ones.

13-00:26:05
Margolin:

So beautiful. And Elsie looks so lovely in there.

13-00:26:49
Bancroft:

I don't know if that's the picture, because you mention you want a picture.

13-00:26:55
Margolin:

I want a picture. There's this picture. I didn't realize there were this many pictures of him. There's that picture. There's that picture of him on the log. This is David. This is David.

13-00:27:23
Bancroft:

Okay. So how about finding the other pieces? How do we go about doing that? And this is stuff I'm happy to—

13-00:27:38
Margolin:

Let me see if I can—

13-00:27:40
Bancroft:

—hunt down. [break in audio]

13-00:28:26
Margolin:

I'd much rather be a small fish in a healthy pond than a big fish in a pond that's drying up. What we depend upon is public interest, review space, quality of intelligence that turns people on to a subject area. And the more it shrinks the less of a hold it has on public imagination. And the more the book world, the physical book shrinks, the more you end up losing the infrastructure, the sales reps that go to put it into bookstores, the bookstores themselves, the printers that have the skills, the editors, the designers, all of that kind of thing just kind of—the whole infrastructure begins to wither. There was something I was reading that was so interesting. I was reading in the history of the cities that in the early days, in the center of the city you'd have craftsmen. And these would be like silversmiths or printers or people with a particular craft and they'd take in apprentices into their shop and they'd work closely with the apprentices around the skills that they developed. Then when the factory got developed, when the factory systems got developed in the 1830s, 1840s, you ended up having labor degraded into routine work, and you had foremen supervising the workers, and the owner now became a planner and a finance minister. And this place has still been in that craftsman stage. It's still an apprenticeship system that goes on. And this is not true of other places.

13-00:30:21
Bancroft:

Were you conscious of making it an apprenticeship model?

13-00:30:24
Margolin:

No. I was not conscious of making it into an apprenticeship model, but I was not conscious of models. What shall we do today?

13-00:30:36

Bancroft:

Okay. Because I'm just asking that because actually Francine used that very word. She said, "I was trying to think about my experience with Malcolm, and it really was an apprenticeship. He was teaching me to do these things I didn't know that I could do." So anyhow, I was just aware of that, that that was your very first employee saying that that was what the model was without your being conscious that that's what you were doing. Okay. So I just had to get that on tape. Let's see. I don't know if there's anything else about *Literary Industries* that we should talk about and get that out of the way.

13-00:31:18

Margolin:

What kind of annotation are you going to be doing? How laborious is this?

13-00:31:25

Bancroft:

I think—

[End Audio File 13]

Interview 14: December 19, 2012

[Begin Audio File 14]

14-00:00:00

Bancroft: How are you doing today, by the way?

14-00:00:04

Margolin: Well, I'm trying to finish up. Well, I'm heading off on Saturday for a week, so I've been just kind of jamming to get all these things that I've been avoiding done here.

14-00:00:13

Bancroft: Yeah. We have a date on Friday.

14-00:00:14

Margolin: Friday, that's right.

14-00:00:15

Bancroft: But if you want to we can just see how things go today and—

14-00:00:20

Margolin: Why don't we do that? Why don't we do that? That might be a blessing.

14-00:00:22

Bancroft: Yeah, definitely. And I think that really we're at the next stage, especially for me to organize a lot of this stuff and put it together. And today do you want to work till 5:00 and then—

14-00:00:36

Margolin: That sounds great.

14-00:00:37

Bancroft: Okay, good. And we can end earlier.

14-00:00:41

Margolin: No, 5:00 is fine.

14-00:00:42

Bancroft: Okay. It's good for me to get all of this stuff organized. Well, I just have various questions. And even before getting into specific ones, as I think about things that people have said about Heyday, one of the most consistent responses is that Heyday produces beautiful books. And so I just wanted to get a thought from you about that because you're obviously a guiding spirit in that. I don't know if you can break it down. What does it mean to you to make a beautiful book? What do you feel like you've tried to tell people here, from writers to especially designers about creating a beautiful book? Books.

14-00:01:36

Margolin: Well, I think I may have mentioned this before. Part of it is shame. Part of it is I'd be ashamed to do something that wasn't beautiful. That somebody puts years of work into something, they've got all their aspirations in it, they've

got all their ego in it, they're putting it out into the world. They're giving me the best piece of their work, and you're going to do a lousy looking book? I'd be ashamed to face them. So it's partly pride in what we do, but it's partly just cringe with embarrassment if something doesn't turn out very well.

14-00:02:06
Bancroft:

Well, when you think about it, then switch to the positive when you're thinking about beautiful books and maybe using examples. And we've talked about some specific things. But if you were to tell somebody, "Create a good publishing company by creating beautiful books--"

14-00:02:29
Margolin:

Gayle, are you going to be in early tomorrow?

14-00:02:33
Gayle:

Yeah. Well, I'll be in at 10:00 for the Cargill meeting. Do you want me to come earlier?

14-00:02:36
Margolin:

Can you come a bit earlier?

14-00:02:37
Gayle :

Yeah, sure.

14-00:02:37
Margolin:

Yeah. I want to go over that state parks thing, and I want to go over the Pleistocene.

14-00:02:47
Gayle:

Okay, great.

14-00:02:48
Margolin:

So the state parks and Pleistocene are going to—

14-00:02:50
Gayle:

Okay, good. Nine thirty or 9:00?

14-00:02:53
Margolin:

Nine.

14-00:02:53
Gayle:

Okay, good.

14-00:02:54
Margolin:

Yeah, great. Thanks.

14-00:02:55
Gayle:

Sure.

14-00:02:47
Bancroft:

So just if you were telling somebody here there are a few things that you really need to consider, what's guided me that should go into the books? I'm thinking about designing—

14-00:03:13
Margolin:

You know, Kim, it's so puzzling. Why isn't everybody doing beautiful books? Why do a book if it's not beautiful? Why do something ugly? Why is this a question? Why does this—I'm not accusing you of it because I understand that people do ugly books. But ugliness is always a puzzle to me. I have never quite understood it. Beauty puzzles me. Beauty puzzles me. And there's that wonderful Rilke quote from the fourth Duino Elegy, where he's wondering what beauty is. Do you know that one?

14-00:03:48
Bancroft:

I don't know that one in specific.

14-00:03:50
Margolin:

He's talking about if the angels should embrace me, I die of terror. His word is beauty but the edge of a terror we can scarcely bear to endure. And there's something about beauty is not pretty. Beauty is something else. There's a ferocity to it, there's a power to it. I collect quotes about beauty. I think about beauty all the time. I think about beauty. If a day passes where I haven't thought about beauty, just for what it is, just in the abstract, it's probably an odd day. I have a cold or something.

I remember once going into the back, there was this restaurant in Berkeley that was called the No Name and later on it became the—what is it called now? It's that French restaurant with a wonderful courtyard in the backyard on Shattuck Avenue.

14-00:04:51
Bancroft:

Yes. Not La Note?

14-00:04:52
Margolin:

Yeah, La Note. Now, you sit in the back of La Note. Now, why is it? It's just so simple. There are a few trees, there are a few tables. There's a wall. It's just so lovely out there. It's so easy to create beauty. Why isn't it everywhere? Why aren't people just doing it? Why do they tolerate this kind of ugliness of personality? It's one and the same. It's one and the same as the—you know, there's just no other way of doing it. (laughter) Let me give it more thought.

I remember one of the scariest things that ever happened to me was when Tom Killian first brought me that big book of Gary Snyder. It was a limited edition and it was this big beautiful limited edition that he did, and I think a hundred copies, and he wanted us to do a trade book. And I was going to take something beautiful and make it ugly. [laughter] That kept me up nights. I mean, you may as well ask why I breathe. You may as well ask why I—

14-00:06:31
Bancroft:

Well, okay. I'm not even asking so much why as how. So when everybody's commenting on the beautiful books, and they're saying they're beautiful images and all of that, I just wanted to get a sense from you, as the sort of directing force here, how you have imparted to others, that the books can be beautiful, clearly you want them to be, but what are things you're looking for, you want to make sure go into books so that they come out beautiful?

14-00:07:09
Margolin:

There's my wonderful friend, I'm sure I've talked about, Dashrath Patel. And Dashrath Patel, when he was active in the politics of Bhulabhai, he created the Ministry of Beauty and he wanted to have a Ministry of Beauty because tourism had somebody to speak for it, commerce had somebody to speak for it, the environment had somebody to speak for it, but who would speak for beauty? And he made certain that there was somebody in that ministry that would speak for beauty. The way it happens--I'm getting around to this question--the way it happens is when we have meetings, other places have to talk about—we talk about the bottom line. We talk about profit, we talk about cost. But it doesn't have the same sway as it has in other places. What the main question is is how you make this damn thing beautiful, how you make it work. And it just has a voice in there, and people are rewarded for doing beautiful work. They're praised for doing beautiful work. When somebody comes in with something beautiful, I'm just so damn delighted by it. When Diane comes in and she's brought a book in under budget, I compliment her. When Lorraine comes in and she's done a beautiful cover, I'm gushing all over the damn place. And this just happens to be where I am and it just happens to be—

We had a meeting this morning about what to do with that book that we're doing on the salt flats. And there was some talk about keeping it within budget but that was just so damn minor. The real conversation was, what should it look like? We spent a whole lot of time on these books thinking about what their soul is, thinking about what motivates the author, what's in there that, when somebody goes into that book and they're going to come out of that book, they're going to be a different person when they come out, how are they going to be changed? What do we do within that book to facilitate that change? And this is all matters of beauty. Why else would people work here? For the laughter, I suppose. But the laughter would go away if these things were ugly. The whole thing would collapse. The whole thing would collapse. It's just the *sina qua non*. The way I do it, I guess, is I hire people like Lorraine and give her the best of my feedback, give her the best of my thoughts. Make certain that she's got enough time to do something wonderful. And frankly, to a certain amount of protecting of people's capacity to do beauty and make certain that there's interference run when need be. There was something interesting that Patricia said about my taking blame. I hadn't been aware what that meant for people but it is. If something goes wrong I'll take the blame for it so that they can do beautiful work.

There's that wonderful story of, what was it, Moses Mendelssohn. Do you know the story of Moses Mendelssohn?

14-00:10:48
Bancroft:

No.

14-00:10:49
Margolin:

It was a great story. Because Moses Mendelssohn was the grandfather of Felix Mendelssohn, and Moses Mendelssohn was a Talmudic scholar, and he was also an enlightenment philosopher. And he was very famous for his—
[Interruption. Portion deleted.]

14-00:11:12
Margolin:

And he was an enlightenment philosopher. He was very famous. He had various theories about light. He was also a very famous Jewish scholar and he was one of these people that straddled both worlds. He was also deformed. He was a hunchback and he was crippled up and he was ugly as hell. He was a hunchback. And when he was a young man, there was a marriage that was arranged for him, somebody from a distant place. And on the day of the marriage the bride came and looked at him and saw him for the first time and said she couldn't go through with it. So the relatives of the bride tried to talk to her. They tried to talk about how beauty is skin deep, that he is the best, most capacious soul that the world has ever seen. That he's kind and he's brilliant, that she would be happy with these eternal qualities. She just couldn't take it. She just couldn't picture herself with a person like this. So finally the relatives come to Moses and they say, "Listen, here's what's happened. We're going to have to call the wedding off. We'll settle with the dowry." Moses says, "Listen," he says, "I understand this. I understand why she wouldn't want to marry me. But I ask for a ten-minute conversation with her." So they agree, and she comes in very reluctantly with this ten-minute conversation, and what he says is this. He says that, "There's an understanding that before we're born we're in heaven with God, and in heaven we discuss Talmud and Torah with the angels, we worship, we're in total bliss. And at some point or another we see what our lives are going to be. And at birth that knowledge is erased so that we can begin our life afresh. For some reason or another it was not erased for me. I remember that old world. And when I asked to see who it was that I would marry, they brought before me a hunchback woman, and I said, 'No. *She* must be beautiful. Let *me* have the hunchback.'" So there's something about creating a place where other people can do beautiful work. And if I have to take the blame, I'll do it.

14-00:13:30
Bancroft:

Very good. Well, that leads me actually to another question that came up. And both Peter Nabokov and Leanne Hinton, when I talked about what is, or asked them to talk about the significance of Heyday, both of them mentioned about-- this being like a humanistic endeavor, an important place for modeling what

enterprise can be. That people who work here do seem to be happy and satisfied. Some people go away. It's not what they want, getting a pittance or whatever, but there's something in the work.

14-00:14:08

Margolin: Some people sell out for a dental plan. [laughter]

14-00:14:10

Bancroft: Exactly, exactly. [laughter] But what are some of the things besides them working for beauty and creating beauty that you think make this a good workplace, that was part of what you have intended for this place?

14-00:14:34

Margolin: The first thing that comes to mind is people can talk in their real voice. They don't come in and pretend to have professional voices, professional demeanor. That people talk from who they are. And there's tremendous force and power in who people are. So that's part of it all. It's funny. Every so often somebody thinks it's a model, and they come and they just go away and they never come back. Did I mention when the State Department was sending people over?

14-00:15:16

Bancroft: No.

14-00:15:15

Margolin: So when Russia fell apart the State Department was sending people over to see how we did *News from Native California*. And this was for these tribal groups in Turkestan and Uzbekistan and all these -stans.

14-00:15:28

Bancroft: Really?

14-00:15:28

Margolin: And I thought that it would be really interesting if they came over to Heyday and saw how somebody created something for the tribes. And I remember this woman came. She was gigantic and she had tattoos on her face and she had spangles and she had an interpreter. And the first question she asked me was, what do you do when there's an ink shortage? [laughter] And I realized I had nothing to offer these people. Is it a model? Oh, are we talking about model of corporate entity? Are we talking about a model—

14-00:16:09

Bancroft: In some ways an anti-corporate entity. I guess in a way I'd rather hear you name that. But just the idea of Heyday serving the community, for example. There's what Heyday does out in the world, but I'm trying to get at also what it does here for people who work here. For example, I think Peter said if other people look to Heyday, they think, "I want to start my own publishing company," or "I want to start my own--"—whatever small business it is. And here's one that's running on the fumes of gas at times, but it's endured and it's created these beautiful products. In a sense how can you teach—

- 14-00:17:11
Margolin: This is a good question.
- 14-00:17:12
Bancroft: Teach others to do the same and not give up.
- 14-00:17:19
Margolin: Well, it helps when you're virtually unemployable. [laughter]
- 14-00:17:27
Bancroft: [laughter] You don't have any other choice.
- 14-00:17:29
Margolin: So it helps when you've burnt all your bridges and you know you don't have a résumé that can stand up to scrutiny. Do you think I'd make a good employee for somebody else? Do you think I'd make a good employee?
- 14-00:17:48
Bancroft: Only in a place like Heyday where you were given as much freedom as possible to express—
- 14-00:17:55
Margolin: Exactly, exactly. How many places are there like Heyday? I'd make a terrible employee.
- 14-00:18:02
Bancroft: Because?
- 14-00:18:11
Margolin: I tend to get my way. It's lucky that my way isn't a way that puts other people down and exploits them. But I tend to just go ahead and do stuff that is completely unconventional and self-defined. Yesterday I had an hour free so I dropped in to see the head of the Sierra Club to talk about publishing their books. Just totally impromptu. We ended up having a meeting with their head of communications. And if I worked for somebody else, I'm not sure I could do that. I'm not sure. I'm not sure that I could do stuff like that. I couldn't get away with this stuff with somebody else. There's a tremendous amount of self-indulgence in my life. See, what am I trying to get at? What I'm trying to get at, Kim, is something like this. And it has to do with some concept of work, some concept of enterprise, that it has to be self-sacrificing. That for me to do good means that I am leading some kind of a life of denial. And this is just not the case. This is just not the case. And people around here, it's humane. People come in when they come in. I'm not sure anybody's counting hours. I'm not sure anybody's counting vacation time. I'm not sure anybody's counting benefits. It's just assumed that people are going to do their best work, and they're going to do their best work because they would disappoint the people around them.
- What advice would I give if somebody wanted to set up a Heyday? Well, it may be boasting but I would say that you end up having to set an example.

That if you want people to work hard, *you* have to work hard. And I work hard. I work long hours and I'm fairly effective at what I do. So it's not as if I'm out there just having lunch and screwing around and shirking responsibility. So I do my part. And that instead of having to demand that other people work, it's setting an example. There's also the fact that we do worthwhile things. We do tremendously valuable things, and they're valued by the people that work here. And I'm not all that competent in certain things. So people come in and they rescue me. [laughter]

14-00:21:54
Bancroft:

And you're willing to be rescued. [laughter]

14-00:21:55
Margolin:

I'm perfectly happy to be rescued. [laughter]

14-00:22:05
Bancroft:

And that makes them feel good and important and valued.

14-00:22:07
Margolin:

They value their role. I think people have genuine power here. I don't think that I've stolen all of the juice, all of the power. There was something that people were talking about, about my capacity to choose good people. And people talk about the interviews that I would have with them, in which I never asked them whether they could type, never asked them. But I wanted to know who the hell they were. That's the big question.

14-00:22:44
Bancroft:

And what is it that you're looking for?

14-00:22:43
Margolin:

I'm not sure. I'm not sure. Oh, God, I did have a list. When we hired Lindsie, I created a list of what we were looking for.

14-00:22:54
Bancroft:

That's right. I remember that.

14-00:22:55
Margolin:

And the list had to do with laughter and a positive outlook and funny. And a whole bunch of other qualities that made for a good person. And this may have to do something with the harmony of the place. I had a lunch yesterday with Tony Platt. He wrote a book with us, and he had a background in left-wing politics, and he was talking about how harsh the university is and how you have a place like Berkeley, people have just clawed their way to the top. And once they're at the top they keep clawing. And I don't like people like that. The people that are working here are not like that at all. And when you run an enterprise, you think you have to hire people like that. You think you have to hire people that are ambitious, that people are going to get ahead. People are going to screw over other people. And I just don't think that's true. I think you end up hiring people that are fun to be with, that are kind, that are

smart. Smart and funny are two important things. And funny is really important. There was a wonderful quote that somebody had.

14-00:24:46

Bancroft: Is that your book of favorite quotations?

14-00:24:47

Margolin: Yeah, every so often I'll write a quotation down.

14-00:24:49

Bancroft: Oh, I have one of those.

14-00:24:51

Margolin: The world's best surfer is the one who's having the most fun. [laughter] That was Bob Kaufman. "Bird legs." I'm not sure that this is true, but I think that there's a relative egalitarianism among the people that work here. That the job descriptions are not too tightly defined. People move around. And the jobs are built around people. People aren't built around the jobs. So we don't have an organizational chart. As much as people claim that we should, as much as people say that this is what we should have, that we should be more organized, that it would be a lot better if people knew exactly what they were responsible for. In some ways it's a game of chicken. [laughter]

14-00:25:52

Bancroft: Patricia even said that at the very beginning, about answering the phones when you were all at the building over there. Like who's going to answer the phone? Nobody's even designated to answer the phones.

14-00:26:02

Margolin: No, somebody better answer them. [laughter] And I suppose that in some ways it would look smoother. You and I both grew up in a culture of criticism, and we both know how damaging that is. So this is not a culture of criticism. And it's not the phoniness of positive reinforcement either. I don't have a theory about it all. But I genuinely appreciate what people do. I'm just astounded at people. I was watching Gayle the other day do something. It was so astonishing. It was so wonderful. It was just such a thrill to see it. I guess it has to do with working among friends. I always claim that that's the first rule of publishing, is you deal only with people you like. And the second rule of publishing is anything that gets you out of the office is good. But I think it's dealing with people you like. And it's being loyal to them. There are people here that are not at the top of the professional form, but they're all friends. At some point, if they become so damaging, you have to do something. Let's see.

The other thing about the place is it's not narrow. That it's not specialized. So you end up having cross-currents. You end up having natural history, you end up having Indians, you end up having Japanese, you end up having poetry, you end up having art, you end up having social justice. So there's enough in there that kind of keeps the thing stirring and not just burrowing into one particular area. But I don't think I have a strong sense of competition. I don't

think I have a strong sense of—and I certainly don't have any sense of, what do they call it? There's a word for it. For somebody to win, somebody else has to lose.

14-00:28:41

Bancroft: One-upmanship, perhaps?

14-00:28:43

Margolin: No, no, no. I'll come upon the term in a minute. But there's a term for like there's a limited amount of goods in the world. And for somebody to get some, somebody else has to have less.

14-00:29:05

Bancroft: Well, there's scarcity, so operating out of a sense of scarcity.

14-00:29:09

Margolin: Doesn't operate out of a sense of scarcity but zero sum game. I don't feel that. I feel that the place is infinitely expandable, full of opportunity. And the other thing that I keep coming back to is I've been lucky. Things came along at the right time, so I've been lucky. And sometimes you're lucky and you end up attributing your luck to your wisdom.

14-00:29:39

Bancroft: I'm trying to think of conflicts that may come up dealing with people in businesses that often can undermine the spirit of the place. Now, here, people, you're assuming that they're going to get their work done and sometimes it's very flexible if they come in later, if they stay later, or they take a day off because something's happening and then they're going to do it another time. And there's an element of trust there that is not built into places that have the timecard and they're sitting at their desk eating their—

You know, you could have a café down there where people come in, and you've got a couple of nice easy chairs, and they sit and they read and they pour themselves a cup of coffee and hang out and talk about books.

14-00:33:03

Margolin: We had a couch at one point. Did I tell you about the couch?

14-00:33:06

Bancroft: No.

14-00:33:09

Margolin: So all my old buddies used to come in and sit on the couch and nobody could get any work done whatsoever. And the moment came, there was somebody working for me named Karen Rossman and this grungy publisher, Michael Helm came in, he lounges on the couch. And Karen comes by, and he says, "Honey, can you get me a cup of coffee?" The next day the couch was gone. [laughter]

14-00:33:27
Bancroft:

Oh, that's very funny. Well, Francine actually talked about how cool it was. She mentioned the couch and that you especially had a lot of your Indian buddies coming by and hanging out, and sometimes you'd say, "Hey, come here and hear this story." And she said, "I can't believe I'm being paid to listen to these wonderful Indian stories."

14-00:33:53
Margolin:

Well, this happens. That I'll lead people around, and people will be invited in. There was one time, I remember it was more than one time, but one time I actually articulated it. Somebody came in, and they were so damn wonderful, I began to be guilty that I was having it all for myself, and I invited other people in just for the guilt.

14-00:34:16
Bancroft:

Well, okay. So actually that goes back to the question I was asking, which was what happens in a work situation when people feel—like if you got a sense that somebody was sort of taking advantage?

14-00:34:29
Margolin:

I fire people.

14-00:34:31
Bancroft:

Yeah. So you do get a sense of that at times from somebody.

14-00:034:35
Margolin:

Yeah, I fire people. And it's been really hard. I do not enjoy it. And, as a matter of fact, it's been traumatic for the whole damned office whenever I fired anybody because there's no job descriptions. So there's this feeling that everybody's dependent upon my good will, and there's no performance, there's no evaluations. There's none of the ordinary protections that you have.

14-00:35:00
Bancroft:

So in that sense it's not entirely egalitarian because you can make that decision.

14-00:35:06
Margolin:

That's right.

14-00:35:07
Bancroft:

And it may come as a surprise to other people.

14-00:35:07
Margolin:

Oh, it's not egalitarian. Oh, I'm clearly at the top of the thing. I'm talking about everybody else. [laughter] It's so funny that this place should be held up as a model. This is too long a story. The the Kwakiutl shaman.

14-00:35:33
Bancroft:

No, you told me that story. I love that story. Yeah.

14-00:35:37
Margolin:

But it's like somewhere else there, people who are doing it better. It's peculiar, the reading about this place as if it were a model for something. It seems like a third world country sometimes. Maybe that's the model. Maybe that's the model.

14-00:36:04
Bancroft:

Well, part of the issue, then, thinking about the transition and somebody taking over one day, if the way that people relate is built around a certain loyalty to you, a loyalty to the founder, to the director, a certain sense of trust that's not necessarily verifiable because there aren't these performance reports and other ways that we measure, and our society has become very much about measuring things and standards and regulations and all that. How would somebody take over from you and be able to elicit that same kind of—

14-00:36:58
Margolin:

They probably won't. They'll change.

14-00:37:03
Bancroft:

Because?

14-00:37:15
Margolin:

Well, I've created a place that's wrapped around my own personality. My strengths and weaknesses and you're not going to get the same personality that's going to step into it. You're going to need somebody that's going to need a different structure, you're going to need somebody that isn't going to work all the time. You're going to need somebody that has maybe keener talents in some areas and less in other areas. The structure's going to change. I have a tremendous amount of power as the person that created it and the person that's identified with it and nobody's going to have that same power. So they're not going to be able to get away with the stuff that I've gotten away with. It'll change. Yeah.

14-00:37:56
Bancroft:

And how do you feel about it changing? It's hypothetical, of course, right now, but—

14-00:38:07
Margolin:

No, it's not all that hypothetical. There's a part of me that looks onto this whole thing as a dispassionate observer and is curious as to how the outcome is going to be. Who's going to come in, who's going to step in, how the board going to function, who in the staff is going to step up, what new people will come in, how the lack—and it's a kind of curiosity. And I don't have plans. I'm completely inept at systems. I can't use computers very well. I don't have organizational charts. And I don't have any sense. We've been talking about succession a whole lot. People are writing things about succession. The board is going to have the succession consultant come in to talk about succession, which ought to be interesting. I don't know how it is, Kim, that I have—on one hand this is my place, this is an extension of my personality, and at the

same time I have a sense of detachment from it. And it's not that I feel it's unimportant or something. It's out of my control. It's completely out of my control.

14-00:39:47

Bancroft: Is it a little bit like watching your kids grow up and you see that, as the *Sweet Honey* song says, they come through you, they are of you, but they are not you.

14-00:39:57

Margolin: Yeah, yeah.

14-00:39:58

Bancroft: There are things that reflect your interests and abilities and talents and in other ways you're just like, "How did this happen? I don't recognize this in my child." And then there's the next generation that comes, and you have to trust that they're going to raise their children in the way that you think is good. And you can have some input, but you can't control it.

14-00:40:19

Margolin: Yeah. Hey, listen, I can't control myself [laughter], let alone control my kids, let alone control anybody else. I'm forever making resolutions to be a better person and failing at them. So if I can't control myself, what the hell hope is there that I can control the future of Heyday? It's not like driving a car, it's like sailing a boat. And you just have winds and currents and you just tack and you just rudder and you caulk the planks and set the sail and you pull in the sail. You're forever screwing around. And you hope you have a destination and you hope you won't sink.

14-00:40:59

Bancroft: And sometimes the wind just dies, and you're out there.

14-00:41:02

Margolin: And sometimes the wind just dies and you're out there, in which case you better have a chessboard.

14-00:41:07

Bancroft: I don't know if you enjoy going out to see movies or see them at home ever. But I just saw *Life of Pi*.

14-00:41:14

Margolin: I saw that. What made you mention that?

14-00:41:18

Bancroft: Because you were talking about sailing and being out on the ocean.

14-00:41:22

Margolin: With a tiger. [laughter]

- 14-00:41:24
Bancroft: You know, talking about things you can't control. Or you decide when you could really let that tiger die, that you invite it back onto the ship with you and learn to control it.
- 14-00:41:40
Margolin: Yeah, that's not bad.
- 14-00:41:45
Bancroft: Okay. Well, that's good. I wanted to get some of your thoughts on that. I don't know if there's anything else you want to add.
- 14-00:41:54
Margolin: Other people may have better thoughts on this, Kim. This assumption that I know what I'm doing is vastly overrated. [laughter] In all these pages, this assumption that I know what I'm doing is completely overrated. When I interview people and I want to know who they are, it's not that I have a theory about it. It's the only question I know how to ask. I think that my advice to anybody that wants to start this thing is to learn to be entertaining. [laughter] Learn to tell good stories, learn to entertain people. And there's a level of honesty to the place. There's not much hidden. There's what people earn, the economics of it all, the way it functions. It's not like you're dealing with secret cabals and power structures. There was somebody around here that tried to do that. There was somebody around here that tried to shake the place up, and she's no longer here. Did anybody talk about Kate Brumage?
- 14-00:43:40
Bancroft: Un-unh.
- 14-00:43:41
Margolin: No. I think that she's been erased from the collective memory.
- 14-00:43:48
Bancroft: Well, that's one of the issues, once there gets to be more bureaucracy. There's more and more levels that create alienation between the bottom and the top. And when you have it, as you're saying, if there's other kind of egalitarianism around the level of people who work here, then you're still very close to them. You're not so far away and you're able to communicate with them, and they with each other. That seems to be one factor.
- 14-00:44:19
Margolin: Yeah. And my sense is when I introduce people, I'll say something like—not “this is somebody who works for me” but “this is somebody who works *with* me.” And I'm very clear about that. I'm very clear that this is somebody that works with me.
- 14-00:44:31
Bancroft: Right. And, because, as you just said, there are things they are doing that you can't do and you couldn't do this. I always remember one of your statements,

laughing at how you started Heyday, because you wanted to be able to work for yourself and be completely independent and self-reliant.

14-00:44:51

Margolin: Yeah, right.

14-00:44:52

Bancroft: [laughter] Now look at what's happened. You said, "Now I rely on all of these people to be able to create the beautiful books that I--"

14-00:45:00

Margolin: Oh, if they were all to walk out on me, I'd just walk out with them. [laughter]

14-00:45:03

Bancroft: Right.

14-00:45:06

Margolin: And join them.

14-00:45:07

Bancroft: General walk-out.

14-00:45:08

Margolin: If they were carrying picket signs, I'd go out and carry a picket sign with them.

14-00:45:16

Bancroft: That's a great concept. Okay. Well, let's see. How about if I get to ask you some questions about some of the specific people. Is that good?

14-00:45:28

Margolin: Sure.

14-00:45:29

Bancroft: All right. Now, I wanted to go through some of the people on the list, and I guess starting with Patricia. When is she coming? When is she arriving here?

14-00:45:41

Margolin: She's going to meet with Carrie Avery later on this afternoon, maybe around 2:30.

14-00:45:46

Bancroft: Okay. That's 2:30. So it was funny. Part of checking with you about the interviews is to hear what other people have said and remembered and then what jogs your memory and your perspective on things. So the way she told the story about the two of you arriving in L.A. when it was the Democratic Convention.

14-00:46:09

Margolin: I'd forgotten completely about that. I'd completely forgotten about that.

- 14-00:46:13
Bancroft: So I want to hear your version of that story.
- 14-00:46:14
Margolin: I don't remember it all that well. I remember there were national guards we were skirting around. And she's so damn funny. She's the funniest person in the world, and she has this sense of perfection about her. So I felt it was my duty to introduce her to complete chaos. And she gets very upset when things don't work well. I mean, she really wants things to work well. What I saw in there was an artist. That's who I saw. Do you know her artwork?
- 14-00:47:00
Bancroft: No. That's lovely.
- 14-00:47:22
Margolin: So there's a kind of polymorphous creativity and a tremendous zest for life. A tremendous engagement. Just a tremendous getting her hooks into life, a fearlessness, a social fearlessness.
- 14-00:47:36
Bancroft: Well, one thing she said that was also echoed by a lot of people was that when she was hired, she was initially hired to do accounting.
- 14-00:47:45
Margolin: Oh, she couldn't add.
- 14-00:47:46
Bancroft: She said she was just so terrible at it.
- 14-00:47:48
Margolin: She was terrible.
- 14-00:47:51
Bancroft: But you found a place that she could fit, and it turned out to be more of the development stuff.
- 14-00:47:59
Margolin: She was so remarkably terrible. It was like epic. Like very elementary rules of addition and subtraction. Her carelessness was just spectacular.
- 14-00:48:13
Bancroft: Here you're hiring somebody to do a job, and she's doing a really bad job at it. You could have just fired her right then and there and said, "This isn't working out."
- 14-00:48:24
Margolin: How can you fire somebody like that? [laughter]
- 14-00:45:28
Bancroft: You saw something more in her.

14-00:48:31

Margolin:

Well, she was such great fun to be around. I'm not certain. Sometimes I think I may create things for people. It's not as if there's a need, and I see people that can move into the need. But sometimes I'll create things around people's skills. I may have gotten into all that Japanese American stuff because of her. I remember that California civil liberties education program began. I called Kevin Starr, who was head of the library then. It was under his jurisdiction. I said, "Kevin, you know what you need? You need an anthology. You need to start this thing out with a comprehensive anthology. But this is what you need and this is what we can do." So he says, "Send me a proposal." So I sent over a proposal, and I asked Patricia to put it together. But I think that that was all part of—here was a person that had all this skill, all this talent. She couldn't add. What the hell do you do with her? [laughter]

14-00:49:42

Bancroft:

Have her make books. [laughter] And she must have told you about her family's experiences in the camps.

14-00:49:58

Margolin:

Oh, you just assumed somebody of that age, their parents were in the camps.

14-00:50:40

Bancroft:

Well, I wanted to hear, too, about your trip to Japan with her, Patricia.

14-00:50:45

Margolin:

She was a complete pain in the ass. [laughter]

14-00:50:53

Bancroft:

Well, she said that she was really stressed out. So it sounded like what you're describing, what she describes as a need to control things or have everything be perfect. Here she's in Japan, trying to make it right for you.

[Interruption]

Bancroft:

What's that about?

14-00:51:43

Margolin:

Julia Parker, the basket weaver. Yosemite Association Board, there was a woman, Eli Nishiki, that left 25,000 bucks to do a book and gave it Yosemite Conservancy to do the book. And Deborah was the author. And they couldn't deal with Deborah and they couldn't deal with Julia, so they just gave me the money to do the book. And Deborah's mother and father were the founders of the Cheese Board, Sahag and Elizabeth. And she's an art professor. And she's doing this kind of art professor treatment of Julia Parker. You know what it is? There's a trick that I know. It's to embrace rather than to push away. To grow bigger than something. So if you're having trouble with Deborah's writing and having trouble with Julia's, then you create a project that's big enough to embrace the whole damn thing, rather than try to narrow it down. There was something that Peter Nabokov once—let's see, what was I doing

the other day that Peter Nabokov had the name for it? Was I talking to you about this?

14-00:53:00

Bancroft: Un-unh.

14-00:53:01

Margolin: I was talking to Gayle about it or maybe Marilee. Peter Nabokov defined it for me. It's a kind of aikido. When you conflict with somebody, you don't push against them. You use their own strength to get another end. So it's not my will against your will. It's how you end up accommodating that other person's will and use it. And there's something in there that I think that I'm pretty good at. And maybe it's an avoidance of conflict. But it's seeing what somebody like Deborah has to offer that nobody else could offer and expanding upon that, making certain that the other stuff is included. People have commented on my use of the word capacious, and I think that that's what it is. It's an enlarging. It's an embracing. It's not an either/or. It's being big enough to include all things. That's part of it.

14-00:54:21

Bancroft: Yeah, and I think that's come up, too, when people have said--even Patricia saying that you said you'd take the blame or I love Jeannine's story of dropping the keys down the elevator—

14-00:54:35

Margolin: Oh, that was so funny.

14-00:54:36

Bancroft: —and her horror. Or ordering too many copies of something that was sort of a filler and being horrified, and that your attitude was, “No, it's okay. It doesn't matter. We'll deal with it.” And I think that's another sense of the capaciousness. Just there's room enough for all of these mistakes and errors, and it's not that big a deal. And that instead of people feeling squeezed off and wrong and criticized, there's the opportunity to breathe and let go.

14-00:55:10

Margolin: Yeah, yeah. And I don't have much anger in me. Maybe that's part of it. So I think for other people they walk around with anger and it looks for a place to nest. I'm not too angry about anything.

14-00:55:25

Bancroft: That's so interesting. I don't mean to go back to the psychologizing but would you say your father was an angry person? Or not an angry person but did he express anger very much or very loudly?

14-00:55:57

Margolin: I think he probably was. Yeah. I think that there are three Buddhist sins, three Buddhist psychological defects. There's delusion, anger, and folly. And I think that for me it's been delusion. [laughter] The anger and the folly aren't quite as highly developed. I think my father had a balance. He had very little

folly, he had very little deception. There was a certain striving, there was a certain anger. And maybe he was. It wasn't anger like the vicious anger of truly angry people, but there was anger.

14-00:56:49

Bancroft:

I just think we're often affected by the role model of our parents, and we become them, or we try very hard not to become them. And we live in a society where anger is nurtured all the time: road rage, to problems with scarcity, and things that could have made you potentially an angry person. So it's just interesting to hear that you went in this other direction.

14-00:57:22

Margolin:

The last time I burst out into anger was yesterday. It was on the street in San Francisco, and this guy comes up to me and he wants a dollar. He wants some money. Here's money. And I reached into my pocket, and I pull out a dollar and he says, "Let me have two dollars." And I said, "Fuck you." And I was just totally angry at him, that instead of gratitude, there was just, "More." And that just crossed a line. And I'm not sure why that triggered off the anger but it certainly did. It triggered off the anger because—it just triggered off the anger. There was just something about that that was way off base. You just don't do that.

14-00:58:09

Bancroft:

So it's in there. It just comes out in—

14-00:58:12

Margolin:

It comes out on occasion. My kids were terrified of it. They would talk about how I never got angry, but every so often they would cross a line and they never knew where that line was and I'd get totally infuriated. And they were always walking around afraid that they would find it.

14-00:58:31

Bancroft:

Well, going back to—

14-00:58:32

Margolin:

Back to Patricia.

14-00:58:32

Bancroft:

Yeah, and Japan. And so what was your experience? Because that trip didn't come up yet in our stories.

14-00:58:45

Margolin:

Well, it was my great infatuation with Nanao. And Nanao is one of the greatest people.

14-00:58:51

Bancroft:

Well, tell me about him in your—

14-00:58:52

Margolin:

Haven't I told you about him?

14-00:58:53
Bancroft:

No.

14-00:58:53
Margolin:

Have I not talked about Nanao at all?

14-00:58:57
Bancroft:

No.

_:

I love working with that team. Sharon Bliss and Mark Johnson. We are just a happy team. Granted, it's a nightmare of --

[break in audio]

14-01:02:37
Bancroft:

Levitating? Did you try to levitate the Pentagon?

14-01:02:41
Margolin:

We tried to levitate the Pentagon. It didn't work but nobody really expected it to work. It's always so lovely to be there.

14-01:02:50
Bancroft:

But do you remember any of the more violent ones that were here in Berkeley or in Oakland, the draft resistance?

14-01:03:01
Margolin:

My memories of them are scattered. And what I particularly remember was this horrible sense of facing people that were my brother's age and were people of my kind, that they grew up watching the Howdy Doody show. And all I could think about was that they'd watched Cecil the Seasick Sea Serpent and those early TV, that they were young kids, and they were my kind of people, and they had guns and that they were going to shoot me. And there was just this sense that this was all wrong. I'm not very political, so there was a sense of coming later to the protest. People like Lee Swenson was protesting even before anybody else was protesting. He had an ideological base. I didn't have that ideological base. It wasn't until it just gradually dawned on me that something horrible was happening. But it was partly moving along with the tide. If everybody else wasn't there I probably wouldn't have been there. It was just kind of part of your culture. It was like going to a play, like seeing *Pi*, *Life of Pi*. Like everybody else was doing it, so you do it, too. It's just part of your world. So Nanao.

14-01:04:56
Bancroft:

Yes. Describe Nanao for me.

14-01:05:03
Margolin:

If I haven't talked about Nanao, there are all kinds of things we haven't talked about.

14-01:05:06

Bancroft: Yeah, there are a lot.

14-01:05:08

Margolin: So when I met Nanao he was probably in his sixties. Did I not tell you about bringing Nanao home?

14-01:05:17

Bancroft: You did not mention him. And part of it could be that we sort of got up through—

14-01:05:24

Margolin: No, no. Part of it, we were centering it on Heyday.

14-01:05:27

Bancroft: Yes. And also the chronology and focusing a lot on Native Californians and then there are just a lot of other experiences you've had that we haven't gotten to still.

14-01:05:39

Margolin: Nanao was a wondering poet. John Stokes would put him up in San Francisco, he'd come here, we'd put him up here, we'd give him readings, we'd buy his books and we'd send them on to Japan. From Japan he'd go to China; from China he'd go to India; from India he'd go to Europe. He traveled the world. And one day Sadie had a class assignment, and the class assignment was to interview somebody that remembered the Second World War, and Nanao was in town. I said, "Sadie, I got you an A. This is going to be an interview the likes of what you've never heard," and I brought Nanao over the house.

And it was the first time I heard Nanao tell the full story. And he talked about how when he was young and when he was growing up, everybody in Japan was so poor. Everybody was working so hard. It was just carrying heavy things all day long, working seven days a week. And this sense of exploitation, this sense that nobody appreciated the greatness of Japan, that Japan had always been dumped upon. Japan had always been viewed as inferior. Japan had never really gotten its moment in the sun. And when the war was declared, there was this exuberance, that now people would see the greatness of Japan. People would understand how great the Japanese culture was, how great the Japanese people were.

And Nanao talked about how, as he was growing up, his various friends would go into the army. And as various friends would go into the army, the parents would give a ritual goodbye party. And the ritual goodbye party would be that you'd end up having *sake* and toasts and a farewell to the son. And part of the ritual was the father would get up and give a speech, and the speech would be something like, "You are going to fight for our emperor. We know we are going to win, but by any chance we lose and you come back alive I will disown you. I will never speak to you again. I will pretend you are a ghost. So go off to the war and win this war for us." And when it came his

turn to go into the army, his father gave this party, gave the speech, and then later on they were in the garden and the father grabs him by the collar and brings him up close and says, “Don’t be a fool. Come home alive.” [laughter]

So Nanao went into the army, but he was in a radar corps and he was in charge of radar installations. And he talked about how sending the kamikaze pilots off, sending his friends off in kamikaze missions. And I don’t quite remember the details, but he talked about how it was psychologically set up for them to go out into the ocean with just enough gas to get them out there and not enough gas to come back, and the goodbyes, and the farewells, and saying goodbye to them and watching them take off and what it was to say goodbye to people.

And he talked about how during the war there was just no sense that Japan could lose. It was just unthinkable that the emperor could fail. And nevertheless, he was in a radar unit and as part of the radar unit he had lockers, places that could be locked away. And various people from around the village would bring him their Walt Whitman poems, their jazz albums, all the American things that they didn’t want in the house for safekeeping, and at night he’d listen to this jazz and he’d read Walt Whitman and he fell in love with American poetry and American culture.

And then as things deteriorated, as things began to collapse, there was still no sense how bad it was. And then one day he comes in and there was rumors that a huge bomb had fallen and nobody knew where it had fallen. And the people said that it had fallen on Tokyo. Maybe it had fallen on Kyoto. And finally it came through that the bomb had fallen on Hiroshima. And as a member of the radar unit, they got where the plane was coming from and the altitude and stuff like that. And a few days later he’s sitting at the radar and he sees the plane heading for Nagasaki and he calls it in, and there’s nobody to receive the call. Everything had collapsed. And he sees the radar screen just burst into chaos and he realizes that Nagasaki has been destroyed.

And then he talked about how after the war, everybody just went crazy. They just worked hard, they just gave up their Japanese culture. They became corporate, they became sterile. They just became different people. The whole culture changed.

14-01:10:01
Bancroft:

Did he say why?

14-01:10:03
Margolin:

It was just craziness. He just thought it was craziness. And then he decided to become a poet in the tradition of Basho. Ginsberg and Snyder had discovered him in Kyoto when they went to meditate, and he was just wandering around as a young poet. And he was a good friend of Snyder’s. And he was just the

most gracious person. One of my favorite poems—this is Nanao. I remember once going on a hike with Nanao.

14-01:11:00
Bancroft:

There or here?

14-01:11:00
Margolin:

Here. And he was about eighty years old, and we were hiking up this steep hill. We were hiking up this steep hill, and I look at him, I said, “Goddamn, Nanao, you’re strong for an old man.” He says, “Oh, strong knee. Very strong knee. Good leg, strong leg. Not so good teeth.” [laughter] And he was just so alive to be with. He was so lively to be with. He was so much fun to be with. We would go sailing on the Bay. We’d get boats on the Bay and go sailing. Whenever he came in it was a total delight. And we’d get together with Arthur Okamura and Fusako and various other people and just have such great parties.

[Reading Nanao’s poem] “In the morning, after taking cold shower, what a mistake. I look at the mirror, there a funny guy, gray hair, white beard, wrinkled skin. What a pity. Poor, dirty old man. He is not me, absolutely not. Land and life, fishing in the ocean, sleeping in the desert with stars. Building a shelter in mountains, farming the ancient way, singing with coyotes, singing against nuclear war. I’ll never be tired of this life. Now I’m seventeen years old, very charming young man. I sit down quietly in lotus position, meditating for nothing. Suddenly a voice comes to me to stay young, to save the world. Break the mirror.” [laughter]

Isn’t that great? Nanao was wonderful.

So we did some readings in Japan, and we traveled around. I’d never ate so much in my whole goddamn life. I never drank so much *sake* in my whole life, wherever we went. He’s the Allen Ginsberg of Japan. And we’d go into bars, and everything would stop and people would bring food and listen to him. And we’d go to houses and people would put us up. He was just wonderful.

14-01:13:19
Bancroft:

Oh, that’s wonderful. So Patricia said that when you went to one of the readings for *The Ohlone Way*, it was at the “hobbit *mura*” and she didn’t know what “hobbit *mura*” meant and that it turned out that it was like this little sort of facsimile of a hobbit land and that people—[break in audio]

14-01:14:17
Margolin:

The guy that was running it—I remember hitting it off with him. I just remember this sense of utter joy, finding somebody that had created such a spectacular highly evolved world into itself. And senseless and out of place, no purpose. It was just beautiful. It was just beautiful.

14-01:14:51
Bancroft:

Do you have any sense of why he had fixated on Japanese art?

14-01:14:56
Margolin:

I did at the time. I don't quite remember. I don't quite remember. This was many years ago. And nothing ever came of this, so there was nothing to reinforce it. I don't quite remember. It was interesting. All those people that Patricia was mentioning that worked for us, I hadn't thought about them for years. I couldn't recall their names. And I don't think it's senility. I think it's just—

14-01:15:22
Bancroft:

There have probably been a lot of people who've come through here.

14-01:15:29
Margolin:

There were several things that we did that were utterly wonderful. We'd hold various events. There were about six or seven major events that we held, and one of them was the history of poetry in Berkeley with Robert Hass and old Jim Schevill, who was born in the 1920s and remembered how poetry in the 1930s was being kept alive by professors wives having readings in their houses, before bookstores, before poetry was anything more than something that was indulged in. That older world of Berkeley poetry. And we had a two-day event on the history of poetry in Berkeley. And then we had a wonderful night at the Julia Morgan Theater on Berkeley stories. We had Maxine Hong Kingston and Vigia [Swenson] and I think David Hilliard from the Black Panther party. And Lee [Swenson] and Jeff Lustig. I forget who else told Berkeley stories. This was so funny. And then we did two events.

We did an event at the Oakland Museum on the 10,000 year history of the San Francisco Bay area. We ended up having Indians and soundscapes and archeologists and naturalists and talking about the 10,000-year history of the Bay Area. So I remember doing a number of events with her, which were just great.

And then I remember these trips to the Central Valley that we'd take because she grew up in Fresno. And we would just try to get different things going there. You stir stuff up and you see what has life to it. And sometimes you just stir and stir, and stuff rises to the top, and then you turn your back on it, and it sinks back down, and you can just let it go. There's more stuff out there. You wait for something that swims. You wait for something that sparkles. You wait for something that seizes you. You wait for something that's a dialogue with the world. The whole thing is just a dialogue with the world. The whole thing is not a matter of deciding what to do and doing it. The whole thing is a matter of putting up possibilities and seeing what kind of things come back at you and seeing what has played to it, seeing who has played. And if you try to do it yourself you're just up against it. You're forever up against it.

14-01:18:08
Bancroft: Okay. Is there anything else about your time with Patricia that you remember or you want to add?

14-01:18:21
Margolin: No.

14-01:18:23
Bancroft: Okay. Let's see. So I'm thinking about—we'll just do a couple more. About like Larry DiStasi.

14-01:18:33
Margolin: Oh, Larry. [laughter]

14-01:18:35
Bancroft: You told me the other day, but your version of the story. I told you that I really loved the story about him, with you helping him fix the VW and that it seemed so characteristic of you at that time to just say, "We can do it ourselves. We don't need to rely on anybody else."

14-01:18:54
Margolin: Ain't shit to it. That was his quote. Everything I'd say, "Ain't shit to it." There ain't shit to that. And I remember that's what he kept saying.

14-01:19:07
Bancroft: Oh, yes. Yes. That ain't shit. That ain't shit.

14-01:19:11
Margolin: Ain't shit to that. Yeah. [laughter] That was fun pulling his car apart.

14-01:19:22
Bancroft: Well, then, tell the story about what happened afterwards with his car.

14-01:19:26
Margolin: Well, his wife, I went to her memorial service after they split up, and they kept talking about this person named Margaret, and I finally realized this was his wife we knew as Bubbles. Larry, I don't think, was ever a very good provider. Larry, I don't think, was ever a very good husband. Larry, I think, was a wonderful writer and a kind of neurotic and kind of driven and worried about his own writing. He was very much a writer. He was very much a writer. And Bubbles was a family woman. Bubbles loved to cook. Bubbles cooked these wonderful meals. Bubbles cooked these elaborate meals. So much so that Larry became a total vegetarian, wouldn't eat any of them. [laughter] It was the most unusual relationship.

So when the car broke down I said, "Larry, we don't need a mechanic. We can handle this, Larry. We can handle this." So he towed the car over to my house. I was living on Berkeley Way then in this little place. Did I mention the place that I could have bought for 12,500?

14-01:20:53
Bancroft:

No.

14-01:20:55
Margolin:

Oh, God, that was another whole story. When Reuben was very little, we moved into this little house. It was this beautiful little house on Berkeley Way. It had a couple of bedrooms, it had a backyard with a fruit tree. It had a beehive in the backyard. It was this lovely little place. And the rent was ninety-five dollars a month. And we moved in, and it had been bought up by a schoolteacher in Lafayette, who had bought up four or five of these little houses together. And they were just building BART. And he knew that as soon as BART came in, this would be prime real estate, and he could tear it all down and build condominiums. So I moved in, and there was this woman named Susy who was a member of the White Panther party. It was kind of a rich white woman's equivalent to the Black Panthers. And then I got Susy, I knew what she was good for. So we went around and we just down zoned the neighborhood. So we went around and we got a petition. We down zoned the neighborhood so you couldn't build a damn birdhouse over there over two feet tall. And the guy was so infuriated that he could not build this condominium that he decided to sell all these places, and he offered me this house for 12,500. I remember the deep satisfaction with which I called him a fucking capitalistic pig. [laughter] And I would have loved to have had that house.

14-01:22:18
Bancroft:

Oh, I know. Oh, my God.

14-01:22:18
Margolin:

It was probably our one chance of having bought a house. So it was in that house that we ended up having a backyard. And Larry's motor was all over the place. We had parts strewn all over the backyard and we'd drink and smoke some dope. In my old VW bus we made trips to the garage to get parts, and we made trips and we were down to the bearings. We had the crank case split.

14-01:22:49
Bancroft:

Frightening.

14-01:22:51
Margolin:

And Larry said it was the valves, but I don't think it was the valves. I think it was the crank shaft.

14-01:22:58
Bancroft:

You probably remember better than he does because you were the one that knew how to fix the car.

14-01:23:02
Margolin:

Yeah. Well, I had a book by a guy named John Muir, which was *VW Repair for the Complete Idiot*. That's what I was going on. And I had never fixed anything before except my own car. But it was *VW Repair for the Complete Idiot*. It was a damned good book.

14-01:23:18
Bancroft:

Yeah. You once said that was your favorite book when I was asking you about your most significant books to you.

14-01:23:23
Margolin:

That was one of the most significant books of my life. So we ended up finally getting this thing together, and it pattered out of the garage, and Bubbles was furious. Bubbles was absolutely furious that this one car that they had, this thing that they were depending upon for transporting their kids, for their life, that Larry and his stupid buddy Malcolm were just getting stoned putting this thing together. But nevertheless Larry was determined that this was the right thing. And they get into the car, and they're going on a trip to Oregon, and they come up the freeway, they're on Route Five, 101, I guess. And they're on 101 and they're coming up through Oregon and all of a sudden, it's near midnight, and the thing begins to bom, bom, bom, bom, crash and shatter and make noises and explode and hobbles all over the place. And he pulls up to the side, and she is just absolutely beside herself with rage, and Larry's beside himself with regret, and he runs down the freeway and he sees in the distance there's an exit with a gas station. And he's walking towards the gas station, and suddenly the light goes out, and he realizes the guy is probably going to go home, so he now runs. And he runs up the freeway ramp and runs to the gas station. The guy's leaving. He says to him, he says, "Come on," he says, "I'm stuck on the freeway." And the guy says, "I'm going home." Larry says, "My family, we're stuck on the freeway." He says, "You got to help us out." And the guy said, "Okay, it's going to cost you double." So Larry says, "I'll pay anything." So he gives him some exorbitant sum of money. The guy gets into a tow truck. He comes down the freeway. He's looking up and he looks at Larry and he says, "Hey, do you realize you have a flat?"

14-01:25:00
Bancroft:

After all that worry you were absolved of responsibility.

14-01:25:07
Margolin:

And then I had forgotten that I had gotten Larry his introduction to Northpoint for that book of his, *Mal Occhio*. One of the revelations in reading through these is how much I meant to other people. I've forgotten all these things. I'd forgotten that I had gotten his book published. And it was a breakthrough for him. It was a wonderful breakthrough.

14-01:25:38
Bancroft:

That was a wonderful description of the writers group that you all had, that that was how he had met you. And you didn't mention that in particular. He said that you were working out of a little—what had become an office out of somebody's garage, in their house.

14-01:25:56
Margolin:

Dan Phillips' garage. Did I talk about Dan Phillips?

14-01:25:59
Bancroft:

No. So, yeah, I was interested in that whole constellation of friends, you were supporting each other in your writing, and what that meant to you.

14-01:26:11
Margolin:

It was Dan and Judy Phillips. And Dan and Judy Phillips had a house on Deacon Street near Ashby, near the corner of Ashby and Telegraph, and they had a garage in the backyard, and I think I answered an ad or I put in an ad for a studio, and I rented this studio for forty bucks a month. And this is when I was writing *Earth Manual*. And when I got that couple of thousand bucks from *Whole Earth Catalogue* money. And I would go there every day. And it was during the Watergate era. And I would write from early morning until about 10:00, and then I would go off to the Buttercup and have a cup of coffee and I would read about Watergate. And it was just stunning to me that this was going on. I just couldn't believe that this stuff was going on in the world. And then I'd go back, and I'd write some more. Judy, I think, was working. I'm not sure about that. But Dan considered himself a writer. And Dan, he had more of an identity as a writer than anybody I've ever met. He's never published anything as far as I know, but he wrote and wrote and wrote and wrote and thought about it and read and read and read. And to this day we still get submissions to Heyday Books for his writing, that everybody just kind of groans. But he had this identity as a writer and he talked a wonderful writing game.

14-01:27:31
Bancroft:

What kind of writing was he doing? Was it fiction?

14-01:27:37
Margolin:

No, it wasn't fiction. So he had gotten this writing group together. And I've forgotten these characters. There was Potter Wickware, who called himself Pete, but I called him Potty.

14-01:27:55
Bancroft:

You would.

14-01:27:56
Margolin:

[laughter] I've forgotten about Scott. And Scott's father was a screenwriter of some sort, and Scott had this drive—he became a screenwriter. I think he was successful. I think he may have done some movies. Roger Weed was part of it, and that was Patty Hearst's boyfriend. And he was a friend, I think, of Scott's. And I don't think he ever came to many of the meetings, but he was always in the background. It was Larry and me. And we'd get together at some bar and drink beer. And we didn't read each other passages or anything like that. It was just talking about our hopes as a writer, our career, what we were doing. It was, I guess, a support group is what it was. That was the seventies. Everybody had support groups. There were women's groups, there were men's groups, there were political groups, there were enlightenment groups, there were meditation groups. You always got together with people. And we'd sit around.

14-01:29:28
Bancroft: Was it somewhat organized? Like each person got a chance to go around and say, "Here's what we're doing, I'm doing."

14-01:29:34
Margolin: No. It was a weekly or biweekly, I forget what it was, just get-together for some beer and just to talk. Right now I know tons of writers, but back then I didn't know tons of writers. And just to know other people that were writing. Just a sense that you were part of some kind of a larger entity than just yourself. That you weren't alone in this. It was just such a relief. And it was Dan that introduced me to all these people because Dan was the drum majorette of this whole thing. Dan, he twirled the baton, he sang the song. He led us on. He believed in writing. [laughter] I just believed in beer. But it was Larry that I really became friends with, and it was a close friendship.

14-01:30:47
Bancroft: And what do you think drew you to Larry?

14-01:30:51
Margolin: For years my best friends were people that grew up back east—whether it was Bob Callahan, whether it was Larry DiStasi. They were back east ethnic types, second generation Jews or Italians or Irish or something like that. And he was very literate. He was very articulate. He was very honest. He was emotionally very honest, and he was great fun to be with. Did you enjoy Larry?

14-01:31:24
Bancroft: Yes. And it's interesting that he's out there living on the cliff, literally, overlooking in Bolinas and it seems somewhat of a kind of hermitage. He talked about not wanting to come over the hill anymore and enjoying his life out there. Just interesting model. And still writing. Still trying to get things out. And he was so positive about *Una Storia Segreta*. And I wanted to ask you, too. So after all of those years of being friends and working in different spheres, here was an opportunity to be able to publish his book. What was that like for you?

14-01:32:18
Margolin: I think what I put together was his need to be published and some money that was coming from the state, the public education program. And it was that same program that was sponsoring the internment stuff. And I figured what they needed was an Italian. [laughter] I don't quite remember, but the kind of thing that I would do is I would spot these kinds of overlaps.

14-01:33:01
Bancroft: He said it was a conversation with you and Patricia that he happened to be part of and suddenly the conversation was looking at these overlaps with Italian Americans—

14-01:33:13
Margolin: Is that what it was?

- 14-01:33:14
Bancroft: —as well as the Japanese Americans.
- 14-01:33:16
Margolin: Yeah, yeah. That seems right. We did as well as we could with it. I wish I'd done better. I wish I hadn't let him get away with that title, *Una Storia Segreta*. I think that nobody knows what the hell that was. It made it seem arcane. It had to be explained. And I just didn't have the savvy at that time. I think that there were mistakes. And he's happy with it. The book had a good turnout. The book sold well. It went to a couple of printings. It all worked out well. I thought it could have been better. I thought I could have done better by him. And I've never told him that.
- 14-01:34:14
Bancroft: When you think you could have done better in terms of getting more books sold or—
- 14-01:34:20
Margolin: More books sold, better design of that book. But in retrospect I would have done better. And I learned from it.
- 14-01:35:10
Bancroft: What did you learn?
- 14-01:35:13
Margolin: That sometimes you have to stand up to your friends for the sake of your friendship. It's realizing that to be liked you don't always have to say yes. There are higher duties that you have and there are better ways of going about it.
- 14-01:35:42
Bancroft: Have you seen other opportunities where you've put that lesson to work since then?
- 14-01:35:57
Margolin: Well, I think I just put it to work in general. Yeah, with you. [laughter]
- 14-01:36:07
Bancroft: With me?
- 14-01:36:08
Margolin: Yeah, when we do this book I'm not going to just let you do anything you want. [laughter]
- 14-01:36:11
Bancroft: No. I'm quite sure.
- 14-01:36:14
Margolin: Yeah. And if it assumes that when we get down to it, that if I have criticisms, that this criticism would strengthen our relationship rather than weaken it. And I'm not sure that I do, by the way. I did think the introduction was a tad

long, but I thought I'd wait until I saw what Kevin was doing and what Charles was doing before I commented. You'll see it.

14-01:36:43
Bancroft:

Since you're bringing in the work we're doing together, but your friends, other [break in audio] and I only have like thirty minutes left on it. So that's enough. I've made you talk quite—

14-01:37:30
Margolin:

No, I don't have any regrets at all. In fact, I kind of wondered what I would explore, I kind of wondered what I would do. I kind of wonder what I might have written. I suspect that I had the talent to become a first young American writer. But I love what I do. I'm proud of what I've done. I can't imagine having done any better. I can't imagine being any more content or more proud or more at home with what I've done. Or something that fits all the phases of my personality. I have no regrets.

14-01:38:03
Bancroft:

That's good. Was there ever a time, you know, after, that you felt the urge to bust out, and you wanted to write a book again, to be able to have the time to do it or something that was calling to you, even as you were content with what you were doing?

14-01:38:28
Margolin:

In the abstract it was something that I kind of wistfully would like to do but it wasn't very strong. It wasn't very immediate. It was kind of like wondering what it would be to be rich or wondering what it would be to be handsome or wondering what it would be to be something else. It's not a deep desire, it was just kind of a curiosity, what would have happened to me if I hadn't gotten to publish. I think I've been just tremendously creative in what I've done. I've been tremendously helpful in what I've done. I don't have any regrets. There's no way you're going to phrase this as a life of sacrifice. There's just no way. [laughter] There's just no way. I have not sacrificed a damn thing. It was interesting how my kids accepted the fact that we were always broke. Did you catch any resentment at all?

14-01:39:55
Bancroft:

No, though I would say that's often true for kids who grow up in these sorts of situations, especially with a certain amount of poverty. That you don't know any different until later, you meet other kids who have things that you don't have or get to go places or do things. But there's also this sense that they weren't deprived, maybe not of material things. I don't know, I can't say. But there was this excitement in talking to them about their lives, of what they were able to do and had experiences that other kids didn't have and how proud they were of their parents and what they did learn from you, from both of you.

14-01:40:43
Margolin:

Yeah, yeah.

- 14-01:40:47
Bancroft: I did sense Sadie's astonishment when she came to be an accountant here.
- 14-01:40:54
Margolin: She lifted the hood. None of the other kids ever lifted the hood. She realized what a small hood it was. [laughter]
- 14-01:41:03
Bancroft: So Patricia said she came in after Sadie had been the accountant here and that the system was just expenses written on index cards, and there was a box. Patricia wrote there was some kind of box that had a little—
- 14-01:41:21
Margolin: There was a note that Sadie had on the box, and it was entitled Big Scary Bills That I Can't Deal With. [laughter] When one came, she just put it in the box.
- 14-01:41:36
Bancroft: Yeah. So I guess perhaps Patricia's accounting skills didn't have to look quite so bad. Maybe Sadie was just stepping in to rescue but it's indicative. Here's these two accountants in a row, how they're coping with the bills. That was very brave. Well, let me see. I don't know if there's anything else about Larry or your friendship that you want to comment since we left there.
- 14-01:42:20
Margolin: No. I think one thing that is kind of odd and interesting is that most of my friends I met through work. Do I have any friends that I know—well, I don't know whether Lee is a friend from work. We ended up working together. Lee's an amazing character.
- 14-01:42:55
Margolin: Let's see, is there anybody else that I want to talk about? No, you can say stuff about all of these people. Robert Hass has been a good friend. Yeah, they're all good friends.
- 14-01:43:38
Bancroft: Because we don't have to do too much more today or any more today. I think my thought was to go through each of them, things that they had said, things that come up that you hadn't mentioned and get to spend a little bit more time with whatever stories arise in relation to them. But I don't want to do them all at once. So that was fun, for example, to get to hear about Nanao from you since you hadn't brought him up before. And as I go back through some of the interviews in the next month, then that will help me kind of sharpen some specific comments to get you talking about. So we could just leave it for now if you want to do that.

[End Audio File 14]

Interview 15: January 17, 2013

[Begin Audio File 15]

15-00:00:06

Margolin: This is really good. I'll change a couple of the selections that you did from *Earth Manual* and *East Bay Out*. Or I'll ask you to. But it really works.

15-00:00:24

Bancroft: Well, good.

15-00:00:24

Margolin: It really works. What are you going to do in the latter parts of it where there's more people and less me?

15-00:00:33

Bancroft: Figure something out. Okay, but wait. I have to say, with the *Earth Manual*, I really loved the one about you with the kids.

15-00:00:43

Margolin: I hate that one.

15-00:00:44

Bancroft: Why?

15-00:00:46

Margolin: I don't know. Let's try it on other people.

15-00:00:51

Bancroft: Okay. But will you tell me why you don't like it?

15-00:00:54

Margolin: I'm not sure. I just don't like it. "I do not like thee, Dr. Fell, the reason why I cannot tell. But this I know and know full well, I do not like thee, Dr. Fell."

15-00:01:04

Bancroft: Okay. Well, can I tell you why I like it and why I think it works? You can decide. But I think it shows your maniacal spirit. It shows your non-conformity, how you just took what was a bad situation and made it something really fun. How you got to the essence of what good teaching is. Especially for me, I have to say there was a time when I was supposed to teach *Othello*. And I had kids whose first language was Black English or Spanish, and so Shakespeare was definitely a third language. And I had gotten them to do Reader's Theater in the modern version but these kids, they were up and active and loving it and having a great time. And so I wanted them to get what was the essence of *Othello*, this drama of jealousy and all of that, right? So that's what I thought, what I related to that.

Also, it's interesting. At the end of that, you talked about being honest. And in interview number fourteen, which I just finished transcribing last night, that

theme comes up again, about the need to be honest. So yes, let's see how others do—but if you can say why you don't like it.

15-00:02:30

Margolin: I don't know why. I don't know why. But it's something that I've done before. I remember once when Amy Hunter was working here. She was a sales manager for a while, and she was just having a really rough time. And I said, "Come on, we're going to take care of it." We took a walk. We went off to a bowling alley. I took her bowling. [laughter] And she beat me and she was happy.

15-00:02:56

Bancroft: There we go, sometimes that works. Well, again, so we can—

15-00:03:05

Margolin: That's so minor. For me, the way this whole thing is done, it just works so damn well.

15-00:03:11

Bancroft: Oh, good. And, I mean, seriously, I think when it comes to the other chapters, yeah, it'll certainly be a lot less about you. This is the foundation of how Heyday came to be and who you are.

15-00:03:25

Margolin: Yeah. Well, this is where my memories are. We're going to get to other places, we have other people's memories.

15-00:03:29

Bancroft: Right. And so the next chapter is the one that you wanted to start with, which I was calling "Call to Native California," the focus on Native California.

15-00:03:39

Margolin: Hey, if it doesn't work, do whatever works.

15-00:03:44

Bancroft: Yes. Well, that's why I actually—

15-00:03:46

Margolin: If you want to start at the beginning—

15-00:03:46

Bancroft: Well, that's what I did. So I wanted—

15-00:03:47

Margolin: Why don't you just start at the beginning?

15-00:03:49

Bancroft: Yeah, so I did. So chapters two and three, I felt like I needed to review all of those stories anyhow.

15-00:03:55

Margolin: If you want to make them chapters one and two, that's fine.

- 15-00:03.56
Bancroft: No, because I thought you're going to do one, unless you want to call it something—
- 15-00:03:59
Margolin: Oh—
- 15-00:04.01
Bancroft: You're doing an introduction because—
- 15-00:04:04
Margolin: That's right.
- 15-00:04.05
Bancroft: Yes. And I'm going to hold you to that. Because I remembered the very beginning, right?
- 15-00:04:10
Margolin: So that's chapter one.
- 15-00:04.12
Bancroft: Yes, that's chapter one.
- 15-00:04:13
Margolin: Oh, I thought that was the introduction. Maybe you'll do the introduction.
- 15-00:04.17
Bancroft: Yeah, I'd like to do some kind of preface about us and all of that.
- 15-00:04:25
Margolin: Okay, that sounds good. I'm just surprised at the vitality of it. It's funny as hell.
- 15-00:04.34
Bancroft: Oh, good.
- 15-00:04:35
Margolin: It's just funny and it's loose and it's honest. I'm just amazed at this.
- 15-00:04.40
Bancroft: Oh, good. Now, you mentioned a couple of times you're sort of surprised at the man that you're seeing in this. Who, what are you seeing that is kind of new when you're seeing it in this form, looking back?
- 15-00:04:55
Margolin: There's the most refreshing irreverence and sense of fun and playfulness and just knocking things around and setting things up and knocking them down again. And there's a lightness to it. The whole damn world is a playground and there's a playfulness to it all. And I guess that's the way I am.

- 15-00:05.24
Bancroft: That is. And that actually comes out. Again, in one of the last interviews we did we were talking about kind of, how does Heyday work as a workplace, what makes it a good place to work at as a model enterprise. And you mentioned that having fun and hiring people who are playful, who are funny, and that you enjoyed being with. So that's certainly an extension of what you're seeing in yourself over these years, it seems like.
- 15-00:05:57
Margolin: Yeah, yeah.
- 15-00:06.01
Bancroft: Well, good.
- 15-00:06:13
Margolin: I like this guy. And it's truthful. This is who I am. We managed to catch it.
- 15-00:06.28
Bancroft: I remember back towards the beginning, you're saying, "Oh, let's just to use the stories from the interviews and see how, if we splice them together well enough, they'll work out." Do you feel okay about keeping the episode about your LSD experiments?
- 15-00:06:51
Margolin: Yeah. You dropped the one coming across cross-country and the marijuana.
- 15-00:06.56
Bancroft: Yes.
- 15-00:06:57
Margolin: How come you dropped that?
- 15-00:07.00
Bancroft: Do you want that in there? I'm happy to put it back in there.
- 15-00:07:05
Margolin: It seemed like kind of fun to me.
- 15-00:11:30
Margolin: Wonderful, Kim. You can actually get a book out of these interviews.
- 15-00:11.30
Bancroft: Yeah. Of course.
- 15-00:11:35
Margolin: It's going to be a good book.
- 15-00:11.36
Bancroft: It is. It is. I don't know if there's anything else you wanted to talk about the book now because I also have some other questions to ask you.

- 15-00:11:56
Margolin: Let's wait for Gayle to read some stuff, and then see what she has to say. And if she doesn't like it, we'll shoot her.
- 15-00:12.04
Bancroft: Okay. Do you want to give her this, too?
- 15-00:12:07
Margolin: Yeah.
- 15-00:12.08
Bancroft: Good. She said she was having fun reading the first one.
- 15-00:12:37
Margolin: Fun is good.
- 15-00:12.40
Bancroft: Fun is good. I know. Even hearing you sit here and laugh while you're reading, that's a very good sign. Okay. So I realized in putting together chapter three, where you talked about getting canned from the East Bay Regional Park District, and I never really got the story of that. All you said was they fired me because I refused to wear a uniform and I was wondering if you wanted to tell more about that story.
- 15-00:13:13
Margolin: Well, it was kind of complicated down there. And I was hired as a grounds man, which is the lowest level of employee. And the job description was picking up litter and cleaning toilets and doing trail maintenance and stuff like that. But I took over some conservation projects from this guy Dave Hupp, who was doing them also as a grounds man and ended up bringing kids on nature walks without knowing anything about nature and constructing things without knowing how to construct anything. And I was a temporary employee. And at one point I remember there was one person that came to me and said, "You know, you better get this instituted. That you're running this on the sly and you better get a job description for this put in and you better get it into a budget." And I refused to do that because I said that once it becomes visible, that it's going to become regulated. That as long as I could do it *sub rosa*, as long as I could do it on the sly, then there was freedom to do it. And I wanted to keep it free. I wanted to keep it open. And once there was a job description, there'd be a series of qualifications and the whole thing would just become stultified. The whole thing would just become dead. And there was something about the liveliness of it, the casualness of it, that people would just drop by, that there was no bureaucracy. There was a spontaneity to it. So I wanted to keep it loose. At the same time it wasn't instituted as a job description.
- When there came a time when there was some budgetary problems, they looked around and they realized that—my supervisor was a guy named Greg Phillips. My immediate supervisor was Gary Pickering and then came Greg

Phillips. Greg had a crew of eight people, and he had this guy who wasn't doing any work, was just leading people on nature walks. And the naturalists were a little bit peeved because I was doing naturalistic work on a grounds man salary, and there was a union problem in there because I was off my category. There was all this stuff going on, and I didn't give a damned about it all. But when they came back to Greg Phillips they said, "You've got a crew of eight people, and you've got one guy doing this. We're cutting you down to seven people." So Greg immediately, seven people showed up in the morning and he says, "Don't clean the toilets. Don't clean any litter. Just go out and hide." So we all went out and we hid, and several days later the complaints came in that the toilets weren't clean, that there was litter all over the place. And the front office called him up and said, "Hey, what's going on?" He says, "How the hell can you keep a park like this clean with only seven people?" [laughter] So they reinstated the position. But there was trouble all the way along. [laughter] There was trouble all the way along. I learned a lot from Greg Phillips in that role. That one registered.

15-00:16.54
Bancroft:

Wait. Well, let me just clarify. When they said to Greg, "You have eight people doing this. You only need seven," were they trying to get rid of you in particular or they were—

15-00:17:03
Margolin:

No, they weren't trying to get rid of me. They were just—

15-00:17.07
Bancroft:

Saying you don't need that many people.

15-00:17:10
Margolin:

They were looking around to cut.

15-00:17.11
Bancroft:

Cut. Oh, okay. That's great. That's great. Okay.

15-00:17:14
Margolin:

So they were looking around to cut. And what Greg's concern was—so little work was being done you didn't need three people. But it was his status among other park managers. That if the park manager of Tilden had ten and he had only seven, he would be of lower stature than they were. So this is what was important to these guys. And meanwhile, I was doing this work with kids, doing nature walks and stuff. But I was a temp. I was a temporary. I was not a regular. And during the time that I was there, the first year, Pickering hired me and he hired somebody from art school and a couple of other friends. It was 1971. And then came all this affirmative action.

15-00:18.14
Bancroft:

Yeah, you did say that they were saying, "Hey, you're only hiring your friends." And he said, "Well, who—

15-00:18:21
Margolin:

He says, “What do you want me to do? Hire my enemies?” What used to be done on the field, if somebody would hire somebody, now it got pulled up to the front office, and now it got pulled up with job descriptions and interview panels. So when I went back to get my job the next year, which was usually automatic, I was interviewed, and now they wanted us to wear uniforms, and now it was interview procedure. And I argued against wearing uniforms. I said that this is part of a militarization of the parks, and what we do not want is a militarization of the parks. What we want is something that grows out of the soil, that grows out of the trees, that can relate to people. We want an egalitarian world. What you’re trying to do is put in people with police authority and that’s why you want the uniforms. And I won’t wear a uniform. So I didn’t. I didn’t have a job.

And I was oddly delighted. I was oddly pleased. I was utterly pleased because there were other proj—I had a few behavioral problems over there that I won’t get into. I was utterly pleased to get out of there because I could see it as a trap. I could see that the work was easy, the pay was good. I could see becoming addicted to it. I could see being trapped by it. I could see a lifetime spent there. There was something about it that was too comfortable. There was something about it that was too—it was the limitations of predictability, of comfort. I still remember the regular paycheck. I still do. That was the last time in my life—except for the last couple of years, where I’ve taken a regular paycheck. And there was an underlying sense of fraudulence. There was an underlying sense of not doing any real work, of people—it was the damndest culture of complaint that I’ve ever seen. I just don’t understand how people could do so little and complain so much. There was something about it that stank.

15-00:21:27
Bancroft:

Your description was so funny of the very first morning—Well, first you put your card in here and then we’re going to drive over to there.

15-00:21:38
Margolin:

Yeah. Coffee break time. It was so boring. It was so boring.

15-00:21:45
Bancroft:

That part of it. So clearly you created a role for yourself that was going to be much more enlivening by doing this environmental program.

15-00:21:54
Margolin:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was created by Dave Hupp before me, but I walked into it and inherited it from Dave. But it was the beginnings of a bureaucracy that has now grown into a major bureaucracy.

15-00:22:21
Bancroft:

So what was the process then? When in ’71 was that? Was it early? Late? Do you remember?

- 15-00:22:25
Margolin: When I got fired?
- 15-00:22:26
Bancroft: Mm-hmm.
- 15-00:22:27
Margolin: I think when I worked there it was '70, '71. I think it was '72, and I was supposed to go back for '73.
- 15-00:22:35
Bancroft: Okay. So it was kind of at the end of '72?
- 15-00:22:38
Margolin: Yeah.
- 15-00:22:38
Bancroft: So what happened with the *Earth Manual*, the writing? That was another thing. You talked about having the office there with Dan Phillips. But in terms of your decision or the process to start writing? And I imagine another thing of working at the park was that you had been doing writing before, maybe you still were, and there was perhaps a pull towards it. What was going on with all of that?
- 15-00:23:18
Margolin: How was I supporting myself? Where was that money coming from?
- 15-00:23:26
Bancroft: Was that when you got the money from the—
- 15-00:23:29
Margolin: Ten thousand from Houghton Mifflin.
- 15-00:23:31
Bancroft: *The Whole Earth*?
- 15-00:23:32
Margolin: *The Whole Earth* money, yeah.
- 15-00:23:43
Bancroft: So you said, "I got the money from *The Whole Earth*." You had gone to Huey Johnson and Dick Raymond.
- 15-00:23:50
Margolin: I went to Huey Johnson, and they gave me \$2,000 to write, and that kept me alive for about five months. And then I wrote it, and then it took probably about a year before we were able to sell it to Houghton Mifflin. And I guess I must have been working for the park district during that year. I can't imagine what else I would be doing.
- 15-00:24:17
Bancroft: Well, that was the section about Wally.

- 15-00:24:23
Margolin: Yeah, that was Wally. Wally Thompson. Thomas. Thomas. Somehow in there I was supposed to come back for the summer. Yeah, this makes sense. This makes sense. I was supposed to come back for the summer of '73, and I had already written the *Earth Manual*, and I didn't come back for that summer of '73, but that was when Reuben got better and when I hiked around for a year and just did *The East Bay Out*. I wrote it during '73, and then it came out in '74.
- 15-00:25:20
Bancroft: Because you said you sold the book in '73 and got the \$10,000 advance.
- 15-00:25:28
Margolin: Yeah, that sounds right.
- 15-00:25:31
Bancroft: So it wasn't a whole year in there. It was that you were waiting to sell it.
- 15-00:25:34
Margolin: No.
- 15-00:25:36
Bancroft: Actually, it sounds pretty fast. Because if you wrote it in the first few months of '73 and you—
- 15-00:25:42
Margolin: No, *Earth Manual*, I must have written it in '72. I don't remember.
- 15-00:25:53
Bancroft: Okay. Well, that's all right. He gave you enough money.
- 15-00:25:57
Margolin: Somehow the advance worked out.
- 15-00:25:59
Bancroft: Yeah, it worked out. That's right. Okay. So that was it. That was all I wanted to know about that. Okay, now I have a few other questions. One, I realized that it was a gaping hole in the story, at least. It wasn't gaping until I was finally going through all of this, especially because in chapter two I ask you about certain rights of passage. That I never got to hear about your marriage. Did you ever get married? I presume you did., But a wedding? You didn't tell because we were not talking about Rina very much in very personal terms but I don't know even when you got married or who was there. What was that like?
- 15-00:26:48
Margolin: We were together in June of '64. I was about to leave Harvard and go away, and she came with me, and we moved in together and we went down to Puerto Rico. And we'd been down there for a while, and we wanted to travel and my parents were coming to visit us, and my mother was shocked to find me living with somebody that I wasn't married to, and we decided to get a marriage

license. And we ended up going down to a justice of the peace with my friend Juan Echevaría as a witness. And we got to a judge, and we got to a judge and the whole thing was just getting a piece of paper so we'd get a passport with the same name, and so my mother would have a marriage license. We came into the judge and to make a legal document in Puerto Rico you needed a fountain pen and nobody had a fountain pen. So I said, "Well, wait a minute." So I walked out on the street and there, providentially, was this old guy coming with a pocket full of fountain pens. I said, "Hey, we need you as a witness." We hauled him in, and the judge signed it, and the old guy cried. [laughter] So we had the marriage, we had the witness, we had the tears. It was a legal document. It was a legal document. If I could have redone it, I would have had a more formal wedding with family and friends and stuff like that. But there was a part of me that was private and hostile and didn't have anything to do with conventions and just needed a piece of paper. It was just a piece of paper. It was just a piece of paper.

15-00:29.16

Bancroft: So June of 2014 will also be another anniversary?

15-00:29:20

Margolin: It'll be fifty years of being together. Yeah.

15-00:29.31

Bancroft: That says a lot in this day and age, I have to say.

15-00:29:38

Margolin: It's clear that I'm guarded around this part of my life. This is not a public part of my life. It's just not a public part of my life. Let's just leave it at that. It's not a public part of my life.

15-00:30.02

Bancroft: That's fine. But I'm glad to acknowledge it personally, off the record.

15-00:30:10

Margolin: Over the Christmas vacation we rented a house in Big Sur and brought the three kids and their spouses and four grandkids and sat around and revisited Big Sur. It was amazing. I hadn't really been there since those old hippie days. And there are sea otters all along the coast now, there were whales, there were condors. The Esalens were an extinct people and now there are four different factions that hate each other. There was so much that had revived, and there was the family and the kids and their spouses and the grandkids. These little kids sitting around the floor endlessly working out the youthful tragedies of sharing and my turn/your turn. The terrible irreducible fact that if there are four kids and one toy there's going to be one have and three have not and no amount of wailing and screaming is going to correct this. This is something that you just have to deal with. And there was definitely a family there. There was a longstanding relationship. There was a longstanding commitment.

- 15-00:31:34
Bancroft: It must have been so amazing, too, to think about—you tell that story of you and Rina being there fifty years ago. Or not fifty but—
- 15-00:31:44
Margolin: Forty, forty-five.
- 15-00:31:45
Bancroft: Forty-five or so. And that who you were then, these two young people just kind of—
- 15-00:31:52
Margolin: It was amazing.
- 15-00:31:52
Bancroft: —driving around the country and now look at what you've created in terms of this family.
- 15-00:32:11
Margolin: Yeah. It's a funny combination of letting things slip through your finger and at the same time herding them through life and being there for people. I didn't feel a possessiveness toward it. I didn't feel that it was my family. I don't feel the house is my house. I don't feel Heyday is my company. We're in the middle of dealing with the future and succession and people are taking over more and more control and more and more authority and I have absolutely no problems letting them do this. I'm missing that gene.
- 15-00:33:07
Bancroft: Yes, I was going to say that sounds characteristic of you.
- 15-00:33:10
Margolin: I'm missing that gene. I just don't have it. I don't care about it. And I take great pride in what's here but not because it's mine. Am I conning myself? Let's see, what do I feel? We had a group of people up last Monday discussing heroes. We got some people together to discuss heroes for a new California, with the idea that the old heroes—that I grew up in a world of heroes and there was uncles and people in the neighborhood and soldiers and Christopher Columbus and various people that were heroic and they've all been knocked off their pedestals and who do we put back on? And I realized that I live in this world of heroes, this world in which people's—I could have approached that Indian world and somebody could have approached this and seen the same things I have seen and got into the alcoholism and abuse and diabetes and dysfunction, and I didn't. I got into the revival of language, the maintenance of customs, the bravery of people. I'm amazed at the people that have written these books, that have designed these books, that have kept this thing going. I'm pleased to be the mortar that holds it together. And I guess the inspiration for it. I don't think about it too much and I don't get much pleasure out of it. It's not as if I'm unpleased. It's not as if I walk around and nothing is any good. Things are wonderful. There must be a metaphor on this one. This family, the house is Rina's house, the cat is Rina's kids, the kids are

Rina's kids. I'm just kind of there. And I guess they're mine, but that's not what I feel.

15-00:36.36

Bancroft: I know you were going to take the binders with all of the interviews with you. Did you—

15-00:36:40

Margolin: No, I didn't.

15-00:36.41

Bancroft: You didn't?

15-00:36:42

Margolin: No, I didn't, mainly because there wasn't room in the car. We had Jake and Nick and me and Rina, and Rina insisted on packing too much food, and it was cold and there was too much clothes. Every nook and cranny was stuffed. Let's move on. This is—

15-00:30.07

Bancroft: Okay. I have some other questions. Now, one is a story that I heard from Frances Phillips that I hadn't heard from you about the supermodels. Do you remember that? Hershey's?

15-00:37:26

Margolin: Well, what I remember was that I had to call her. That it was the EEA, the ABA, the American Booksellers Association meetings and they were held in Miami and they were held on South Beach. And I was staying in a hotel on South Beach. All these supermodels were around. It was funny that Frances would remember this. I think that she must live in a world in which people don't say things that are on their mind. But I was talking to her, and I was just suddenly aware that I was in the middle of a room with the most gorgeous people that the world could have ever imagined. So I started talking about it. I said, "Hey, Frances, this is just amazing." [laughter] But I remember that. I remember being there, and I remember just being astounded by the beauty of these people. They were just glorious. That life was just glorious.

15-00:38.40

Bancroft: Do you remember talking to any of them? Did you strike up a conversation?

15-00:38:44

Margolin: Of course.

15-00:38.45

Bancroft: Oh, yeah. Of course you did. Yes.

15-00:38:46

Margolin: Of course.

15-00:38.46

Bancroft: Do you remember any of those conversations?

- 15-00:38:47
Margolin: No. No, I don't. It was just—
- 15-00:38:54
Bancroft: Chatter.
- 15-00:38:55
Margolin: I remember the feeling of just having arrived in heaven. [laughter]
- 15-00:39:00
Bancroft: That's great.
- 15-00:39:06
Margolin: Frances once said something so interesting to me, that I knew her before she was program officer at Haas and she was running Intersection for the Arts, which was a little semi-bankrupt organization. They were doing some financial receiving of our money, and I knew her back then and then she became the program manager for Haas. And I met her once, and several years had passed, and she finally looked at me and she says, "Why are you the one person that never came to me for a grant?" And it was because I thought of her as a friend. And when I talk to her on the phone, there's the sense that it's not a program officer, it's Frances Phillips that I know as a friend. And if you're hanging around beautiful women, you're just—and I think other people don't do this. I think other people are more guarded or more formal. Probably more formal. I remember it but it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't a big deal.
- 15-00:40:27
Bancroft: I think it speaks to some extent, that whenever you tell a story, you have such a lively vibrant way of telling it, and you're having so much fun with telling some of these stories, that that fun strikes somebody else.
- 15-00:40:43
Margolin: Yeah, that may be it.
- 15-00:40:44
Bancroft: It's like, for example, you told me the story about *darshan* and being in the temple with Lee, and there were all of these details, that I could feel how hot and sweaty and obnoxious it was being pushed forward and the food, and he told the story and I didn't say that I'd already heard the story. But, of course, his version was nice. But you give it this extra elaboration that I think is part of why—
- 15-00:41:11
Margolin: Yeah, telling stories.
- 15-00:41:13
Bancroft: —a book of your stories is going to be very valuable.
- 15-00:41:15
Margolin: Yeah, it's good stories.

15-00:41.18
Bancroft:

Okay. And, again, just going back over some of the people whose interviews I did or didn't do, actually, stories that I wanted to hear more from your perspective. I'm going to begin with some people who are no longer with us, including Bob Callahan, because he came up in several stories. And, in fact, I looked him up online and saw a memorial, I think, that his wife had written to him. I don't really know that much about him. But he was clearly an important part of your life at one point, so I wanted to hear, if you want to talk about him, say something about who he was and how you knew him.

15-00:42:03
Margolin:

Oh, I just adored Bob. He came from back East. He was an Irishman. He grew up in Connecticut. And it was that generation removed from the old world. It was that same sense of amusement and adventurism that we both have toward this country, a sense of exploration, a sense of living on your wits. He was overweight. He was slovenly. He had the finest mind that anybody could have ever had. He was a storyteller that was utterly magnificent. He was an Irishman. He was a core Irishman. That we'd hang out together, we'd go to bars together, we'd do Saint Patrick's Day together, we'd go to underground comics conventions together. We'd hang out with Warren Hinckle and Hunter Thompson and people like that in the city. We'd talk and drink. Let me think of some Callahan stories. There were several wonderful Callahan stories that I used to remember. He had a vigorous mind. When he came to California, and he hooked into people like Carl Sauer and Jamie De Angulo. And he lived in Jamie De Angulo's house. He published all Jamie De Angulo's Indian stories. He was into a kind of new voice for California. And yet his books were very formal. They were well typeset. They were beautifully designed. He brought a whole lot of Zora Neale Hurston out. He brought a whole lot of Ed Sanders stuff out. He brought Bob Creeley's material. He had a keen literary mind and he loved to talk. If I can have a moment of boasting, to reverse boast, I think he was one of the few people I'd met that could outtalk me, that could tell a better story. And you could just listen to him ramble on for days and days and days. There was just a stream of stories that would come out of him, of volubility that would come out of him, a disorder that would come out of him.

I remember that at one time I used to give an annual lecture to Friends of the River. And Friends of the River would give me some rafts with some guides to take my friends down the river. So I ended up getting all my friends together for several years and one year I got Callahan on. And everybody is there and they're paddling away and they're trim in their bathing suits and then Callahan is dressed in a jacket, in a white shirt and shoes and pants, and he's sitting at the end and he's just talking. He's talking the whole way there. And he's telling stories. And one of the things I remember is his saying, he says, "This is fun, but those rocks are hard. Those rocks. You can really get in trouble when you hit those rocks." And he's just talking away. He was just talking away. He loved to drink. I got him on my first board because of his

publishing background, because of his friendship. People in the office hated him.

15-00:46.45

Bancroft: Why?

15-00:46.46

Margolin: Oh, he was so disorderly. He was so rude. He was so disgusting. He hit on everybody. He was just a volcano of disorder.

15-00:47.03

Bancroft: What was the name of his publishing company?

15-00:47.05

Margolin: Turtle Island Press.

15-00:47.06

Bancroft: Oh, he's at Turtle Island. Okay.

15-00:47.08

Margolin: He and his wife named it Turtle Island. We'd go out with various people. We went out with Flynn, who was mayor of Boston and talked with him for a while. And we'd just go out and just find the most amazing people. And then we'd always shoot pool. We shot pool a whole lot.

15-00:47.30

Bancroft: Where'd you shoot pool?

15-00:47.32

Margolin: There was a pool hall on University Ave, right down the street from where we are now, for years. It's a story that I can't tell. But I remember once being up there shooting pool with him and it was me and him and Barry Gifford the writer was there. And we were waiting for Arthur Okamura to come and Arthur Okamura was this wonderful artist. He lived out in Bolinas. And we look up and Callahan is over there and his belly is hanging over the pool table and his jowls are hanging down. He's making a shot. I look and here comes Arthur Okamura and Arthur's carrying his own stick and Arthur's beautifully dressed. Arthur's got a vest and a suit and an overcoat. And I look up and I say, "Shit, Callahan, look. We're in trouble." He says, "What do you mean? What do you mean?" I said, "Look at Okamura. He's got his own stick. Look how he's dressed. He's going to wipe us out." He looks up, he says, "Nah. He's just using psychology on us." He says, "When he comes over I'm going to use psychology on him." So I said, "Okay." So Arthur comes over and he takes off his coat, hangs his coat up, takes off his vest and folds it up, unbuttons his tie, puts his tie over there, unzips the bag where he has his cue stick. He pulls it out. He chalks it up and he comes over to the table. As he comes over to the table Callahan goes up and he grabs him by the collar and he pulls him and he says, "So what about Pearl Harbor?" [laughter]

15-00:49.20
Bancroft:

Did it work?

15-00:49:22
Margolin:

That was one of the few Callahan stories that I can actually tell. He was just so alive and irreverent and funny and he was just nonstop funny. He was just nonstop funny.

15-00:49.34
Bancroft:

Did it work on Arthur?

15-00:49:35
Margolin:

Yes. [laughter] Yeah. Well, it worked on Arthur but you can get away with that when underlying it is a kind of—

15-00:49.53
Bancroft:

It's like the court jester.

15-00:49:56
Margolin:

It's the court jester but there's an affection that Callahan had. There was a genuine love of people that he had and a deep enjoyment of life. I can't talk about him too much because his life was so disorderly. The amount of roadkill in his life was extraordinary. And there was a heartiness to him. When you were around him, you felt alive. When you were around him, you felt your brain come alive. He was so well-read, he was so thoughtful about things. Wires would cross. His finances were a wreck, his health was a wreck. He died young.

15-00:51.03
Bancroft:

What did he die from?

15-00:51:19
Margolin:

He had breathing problems. He had emphysema from smoking. I don't think he had lung cancer, but he was in the hospital several times, and finally I think it was a stroke that got him in the end. At one point he started *Callahan's Irish Quarterly*. And *Callahan's Irish Quarterly* had several issues, and then he needed money, so he gave *Callahan's Irish Quarterly* annual award to the Irishman of the year, and then he named some banker Irishman of the year [laughter], and the banker would buy tables for all of his friends, and they'd have a big dinner. We'd all toast some goofball. The whole world was an immigrant scam. The whole world. And yet there was a love of beauty that he had. He did beautiful books. Those Turtle Island books were beautiful books. There but for the grace of God.

15-00:52.33
Bancroft:

Well, that's a good memorial for him. I think his wife wrote something up that was also pretty sweet, so I guess, despite the road kill in his life, he had left on good terms with— with laughter. I don't know.

- 15-00:52:49
Margolin: He moved back in. She worshipped him. She took care of him during these later years. And at the end of it we had a conversation and her comment was, “Where does it all go? All that humor, all that breath, all that sweetness, all that smartness, all that language, all those stories. Where does it all go? It couldn’t have just disappeared.”
- 15-00:53:21
Bancroft: [Interruption in recording] That’s all right. That fills in the picture, just even getting your character description of him. Shall I ask you about a couple others?
- 15-00:53:34
Margolin: Yeah.
- 15-00:53:35
Bancroft: So how about Fred Cody?
- 15-00:53:39
Margolin: Did I not talk about Fred?
- 15-00:53:41
Bancroft: You only mentioned him in terms of the first day that you went in to sell your books, *East Bay Out*, when it first came out. But in terms of the friendship. And this theme kind of came up.
- [Interruption]
- 15-00:55:01
Margolin: It was Cody’s Bookstore, and Cody’s Bookstore was the most amazing center of things that there was. There were sections in there that were so highly developed, there were people that would hang around. There were readings. And it was much more a cultural center than it was a bookstore. And Fred was this big shadowy figure that was in Cody’s. He was bigger than life. And he named it Cody’s and he was Cody. As opposed to Heyday and Malcolm, this was his baby, even though his wife was maybe the brains behind a whole lot of the stuff. Did I talk about coming in on days when the place was chaotic?
- 15-00:55:49
Bancroft: No.
- 15-00:55:51
Margolin: I think what I must have told you was bringing the books, the *East Bay Out* to Cody, to Fred Cody’s.
- 15-00:55:55
Bancroft: Right, that’s the only time.
- 15-00:55:57
Margolin: As I got to know him, I would come in. We’d come in once a week. I’d come in once a week and we’d have coffee. And you’d come in there, and the place

would be just mobbed with people, just crowded with students. It would be noontime, and everybody had taken off for lunch except one poor person at the cash register and one person at the information counter, and it was just chaos of students and people moving around. You'd walk through the swarms of people, and there'd be a room, a door in the back, and there'd be a low room in the back, a low ceiling room, and there you'd come, and there was Fred standing at a table unpacking boxes of books, avoiding the whole thing. And you'd come in and he'd say, "Malcolm," he says, "look what just came in. Look what Knopf just published. Look at this book. Let me read you a passage from it." And all life would stop, and you'd read this passage from this book. And then we'd just dwell on the beauty of this passage. And then we'd go out for coffee. And for months and months we'd go out for coffee, and we'd make plans. We'd make plans about this, we'd make plans about publishing together. We'd make plans about starting organizations. We made plans about conferences. And then it was just such fun making plans. And one day I mentioned to him, I said, "Fred," I said, "we just keep getting together and making plans, and we don't do anything." And he looks at me with total content and he says, "Malcolm," he says, "can you imagine anybody with so little imagination that they do everything they plan?" [laughter]

15-00:57.23
Bancroft:

That's a great line.

15-00:57:26
Margolin:

But out of those plans came the Inkslingers.

15-00:57.29
Bancroft:

Yes. So I wanted to hear about that because I got to hear about it from Don Cushman.

15-00:57:36
Margolin:

Yeah. Don Cushman. We dragged Don Cushman into it. We dragged a whole bunch of people into it. Did I talk about Lou Loeb?

15-00:57.45
Bancroft:

No.

15-00:57:46
Margolin:

Oh, my God. So we had Don Cushman, and Lou Loeb was a bookseller, and it was Ernest Landauer, who was a poet, and Ann Flanagan, who was a typesetter.

15-00:58.05
Bancroft:

What was the idea of the Inkslingers and the inception of it?

15-00:58:10
Margolin:

The idea of the Inkslingers was that there was something that was happening in publishing that was so vibrant and was so fresh and was so new. It was the beginning of the small press movement. And that we would get people together and just have a big party and just have a big marvelous event at

which we would display all of these things. And Fred and I created this organization. It was the first thing that I really created, the first time I really co-created an organization. And we got all these people together. We got the best people together. We'd have the most marvelous meetings. And we got a small amount of grant money, and we got some space at what was then the adult school on Carleton and Martin Luther King.

And we had this fair in which we had people that were making paper and people that were making foundry type, and we had calligraphers and we had poets and we had printing presses and we had binders, and people would make up poems and people would put them on calligraphy and people were making paper, and we were printing them. And there were 120 demonstrators there. And it was this amazing fair. And for years I'd meet people whose lives had been turned around by it, by just the vibrancy of doing these books. And there was this sense of creativity, that you didn't need a big industrial process to do a book, you didn't need a major publisher. You just could go in there and you could do stuff and you could have great fun. And the whole thing was just so lively.

And Fred was so wonderful in getting people together. And Fred was totally mercurial. He had big ideas and stuff like that. And I remember it was a week before the fair, and we got into an argument about something, and finally he stops, he says, "Maybe we ought to call the whole thing off." [laughter] I just stood in amazement, in utter amazement that somebody could be that limber, that somebody could just have such presence of mind that they could shut the whole damn thing off. We had so many commitments, we had lined the whole thing. He was ready to call it off.

But he was such fun to be with. There was a bigness to him. There was a big booming voice. He was totally frank, he was funny as hell, he could be totally outrageous. We'd go out to lunch with various people. I remember going out to lunch with Studs Terkel and various other people that would come and visit him. And everybody loved Fred. I'd go to these book conventions, these library conventions with Fred, and it was like walking into a church with the pope. Everybody would gather around him, and he would come over the house.

When we had Heyday over at the house he'd come over, I'd make lunch for him. He and Callahan were two of the regulars that would come over for lunch. And he'd sit around, and we'd make more plans and we'd think about more things. And I just really wanted the kids to be around him. I remember once I got a canoe, and Fred and I took Reuben out on a canoe. We went to Hog Island in Tomales Bay. We spent the night over there, just to hear Fred tell stories. And not that he's ever going to remember any of these stories. Just to know how a great person conducts themselves, just to know that bigness of mind, that ease of concept. He was just so grand to be around. And he was so

intolerant of smallness, of small ideas. He had absolutely no use for anybody with small ideas.

And he had cancer at the end. I was one of two people that he would ever see. Myself and Pat Holt was the other one. At that time she was a writer. She wrote for *Publisher's Week*. She wrote for *Chronicle* for a long time. And Fred's wife Pat was keeping him on some kind of a diet that involved constant enemas and just fruit juices and stuff like that and he was withering away. And Pat had this sense that you were never supposed to talk about death. That everything was going to be okay, that this was going to be cured, there was positive—and she was not a New Age person. But she had this feeling that attitude is everything and everything was lined up, that he was going to be cured, he was going to beat this thing.

15-01:42.51
Bancroft:

Do you know what kind of cancer it was?

15-01:02:55
Margolin:

Lung. He smoked. He was a smoker. And I remember one day I was sitting there with Fred, visiting him in the hospital bed. And we'd get into these wonderful arguments. And it was playful arguments. We'd both roar but it was just for the sake of the joy of arguing. It had nothing to do with disagree—so we were arguing about something and finally he stops and he says, "Goddamn it," he says, "here you are. Here I am on my deathbed croaking, and you're contradicting me." [laughter] And the forbidden had just been said, and the two of us just sat and laughed and laughed and laughed. And he was just so great, Fred. He furthered others. There were acts that he would do toward writers that were so damn charitable and so magnificent.

15-01:03.48
Bancroft:

I remember Cody's, just surrounded by all of the people, the photos of people who had come and read there.

15-01:03:55
Margolin:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And reading there was always a thrill. And then the people he collected were amazing people. A lot of them that worked there have gone on to be major industrialists, professors, or just major cultural figures who started at Cody's. He was lousy at money. Pat was better at money. But Fred was lousy at money. Fred in many ways was a role model. In many ways I considered Fred as close to a role model—maybe him and Louis Sagansky were the two role models that I ever had. My father, I guess, too. But those are the people that I remember. And Fred knew everybody. People would come from all over the world to see Fred. Things began at Cody's. People met each other at Cody's. It was where I met Chick Callenbach. It was where I met so many people. There was the sense of how to run a business. It was a personal business. It never got beyond who you knew. And for all my statements about not feeling that this belongs to me, I don't, but nevertheless, the way I run my own life is not as an institution or anything like that but on

who I know. And that's how Fred ran his life. That was his power. His power was a personal magnetism.

And Fred was one of these people that you wanted to be good. You wanted to be at your best when you were afraid of Fred. The stakes were high. And the stakes were high because of his intense enjoyment of good quality material, of great thoughts. You'd throw things on the table as a gambit for conversation, and maybe you'd bat it around a little bit, and then it wouldn't work, and then you'd throw something else on the table, you'd bat that around a little bit and that wouldn't work. Finally you'd throw something on the table, and you'd jump and you'd go, and the two of us would be in there scrambling away and raising the stakes until the conversation got bigger and better. But there was a wonderful gamesmanship that he had.

15-01:06.56
Bancroft:

Did he ever write?

15-01:06:59
Margolin:

The stuff that he wrote was much less than the person he was. He did write. He did write and he published a few silly books. But it was who he was that was so great.

15-01:07.15
Bancroft:

That's good. Okay, how about another?

15-01:07:20
Margolin:

One more.

15-01:07.27
Bancroft:

Okay. I have Jeff Lustig.

15-01:07:29
Margolin:

Okay, you're getting to the good ones. Did I not talk about Jeff?

15-01:07.33
Bancroft:

If I'm mentioning any of them, it's because I haven't gotten the stories. You mentioned playing chess with him, and there was a beautiful memorial that you wrote for him. But I wanted to hear more about your friendship. I presume you met at the conference on California Studies or—

15-01:07:54
Margolin:

He ran the California Studies conference and it was the place where I met half the people I know. And California Studies was a new concept. It wasn't an obvious concept. There were people into government, there were people into literature, there were people into history, there were people into art, there were people into music, there were people into various things. But this whole idea of getting them together as a California conference, a Center for California Studies as a multidisciplinary thing was a new idea. And Jeff had that amplitude. He had that wide interest. He was part of the Free Speech

Movement. He was politically leftist. He was mentally acute and active, and he was the funniest guy in the world.

Among my favorite statements of his always was “We’ll burn that bridge when we come to it.” And he went through life burning bridges. He was just the greatest bridge burner that you’d ever met. And he was forever forming things and then just leaving them and destroying them behind him and forming something else. He created the Free University of Berkeley back in those old days. He had the California Studies Association at Sacramento State, and they hired him to do that, and then he argued with them. He had the Center for California Studies, so then he created the California Studies Association to take the conference away from the center that he had created and get bands of people around him. But what he lived on was the creativity of the moment. So he would have these conferences, and you’d end up having—Gerry Haslam characterized it so wonderfully. That you’d look up at the panel, and there’d be a poet and a politician and a professor and an artist and a drunk and sometimes it was all the same person, and a truck driver, and stuff, and he just got people from all over the place. And he had this wonderful mixture. Wallace Stegner was there and Gary Snyder was there and all of the great heroes of California would be there, along with people that you would find on the street, gardeners. And he just had this knack for people telling stories and who would fit together and it was done with such panache and such courage and such brilliance, and everything that he did had a swash to it. He had a wonderful sense of style to it all. And he just was the funniest guy in the world. He introduced me to Larry Margolis, who was Jess Unruh’s right-hand man. And Larry was just this volcano of humor, and we’d sit around and just tell jokes. The last of the type of person that would tell jokes. And when I gave the memorial, I talked about growing up in the same Jewish world. Did I mention that?

15-01:11:05
Bancroft:

Un-unh.

15-01:11:06
Margolin:

Yeah, we grew up in that same Jewish world of Yiddish at the table, this valuing of humor, this valuing of smarts, this valuing of wiliness, of getting your way, of a kind of muffled aggression to the world, of *harhas* is the Yiddish word for it. It’s street smarts. And Jeff had all of that, and along with it was a humanitarian impulse, a sense of justice, a sense of mercy. And just a delight in the human mind. And the kinds of jokes that he would tell. One of his favorite jokes was always the rabbi. So the rabbi comes in, the rabbi comes and falls down to the floor and is banging the fists on the floor, saying, “I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing.” And the cantor comes in and sees the rabbi on the floor banging his fists, and the cantor is so moved, the cantor falls down next to him and is banging on the floor saying, “I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing.” The *shamas*, who was the custodian, comes in and sees the rabbi and the cantor, and he’s so moved he

falls down and he's banging on the floor saying, "I am nothing, I am nothing, I am nothing." And the rabbi looks up at the cantor and says, "Who does he think he is, being nothing?" [laughter]

15-01:12.38

Bancroft: That's very good. Yes. [laughter]

15-01:12:40

Margolin: And that was a perfect Jeff joke. Jeff was an adventurer. He was an intellectual adventurer. And we hung out a lot. He was on my board. We did a book of his that was a difficult—he was difficult to work with. Everybody here found him so damn difficult to work with. There was insecurity around his writing. And I remember once being with him, and he was the funniest, most hearty person in the world, and he had to write something, and he sat down at a computer, and his whole body language changed. And I realized where that stiffness was coming from. And there was a stiffness to the writing. But on the other hand, in his social life, dynamic friendships. There was this world of dynamic male friendships that he had that was just spectacular and spectacular people.

15-01:13.40

Bancroft: Well, do you think some of that stiffness in his writing came from his role as an academic?

15-01:13:46

Margolin: Yes, yes. I think he never learned to write in the same natural voice that he spoke. And so consequently it was as if he had to take on another persona. He couldn't write as Jeff, he had to write as Professor Lustig. And it had something to do with that self-criticism. He was funny. He was just so damn funny.

15-01:14.21

Bancroft: You mentioned getting together once a week usually and playing chess together?

15-01:14:28

Margolin: Yeah, we played chess together.

15-01:14.27

Bancroft: What did you notice about him as a chess player or your chess game together?

15-01:14:34

Margolin: He was utterly wonderful when he was cornered. [laughter] When things were going easy he was a pushover. When he'd get cornered, he was just so damn wily. It would bring out the best in him, and I think maybe he created difficult situations in his life just for the joy of getting out of them. Why don't we—

15-01:15.09

Bancroft: That's a good place to stop. So all right. So we had a date for the next time. I'm going to be in town in February. And maybe I can just keep asking you—

- 15-01:15:23
Margolin: Yeah, let's see what Gayle {Wattawa} thinks about this {writing}.
- 15-01:15:24
Bancroft: Oh, yeah, let's do that. [break in audio]
- 15-01:15:58
Gayle: --parts in chapter three that, like, kind of incorporate different material. So I've just been reading the narrative parts. But yeah, oh, my God, it's awesome. I've been laughing out loud. I've been having great fun with this. I think it's great. It moves chronologically, and there's just wonderful texturing and stories. And I love the moments when you step back, and you try to examine how certain things kind of formed you or what it says about your personality. I just think it's a wonderful mixture. It's casual but it's—
- 15-01:16:33
Margolin: Will it be interesting for somebody that doesn't know me?
- 15-01:16:34
Gayle: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, yeah. I was thinking about that, too. I love this because I know you and I can hear your voice saying some of this stuff, and I've heard you talk about this stuff. But I think definitely. Yeah.
- 15-01:16:49
Margolin: What did you think about that transition where it goes from my entire voice to an interview?
- 15-01:16:55
Gayle: That I thought was problematic.
- 15-01:16:57
Margolin: Yeah, I thought that was problematic, too.
- 15-01:17:00
Bancroft: I could see so, too. So, again, some of this stuff, I'm just kind of trying to try out. So I will resend it without, because I can do the same thing. I just cut myself out. And what we just actually talked about too was—I can write a preface to the whole book that can talk a little bit about the interview process and some of that, maybe capture some of that there, but not necessarily have it suddenly thrown in to this chapter; this is your voice.
- 15-01:17:37
Gayle: One of the things I love about it is that—I assume most people who would be reading this book would be interested in you and interested in Heyday, and so it's not going to be so much of an issue for what if somebody doesn't know anything. Okay. What I want to say is that this is not your writing. Like I'm very familiar with your writing.
- 15-01:18:03
Margolin: No, that is not my writing. That is not my writing.

- 15-01:18.04
Gayle: _: This is not your writing. But what's so wonderful is that it's still you and it's cool. [laughter] I'm having trouble articulating why. It's your voice, but it's not your writing. And it's kind of cool to get this in your voice and not your writing. Not that your writing's bad. Your writing's fantastic. But I know if you were writing this, it would be different.
- 15-01:18.28
Margolin: You're damn right it would be different.
- 15-01:18.29
Gayle: It would be very different, you know.
- 15-01:18.30
Margolin: I was going to go back and rewrite some of it.
- 15-01:18.34
Gayle: Well, I think there are parts that you could.
- 15-01:18.38
Margolin: And it's not rewriting it. It's just that I think that something could have been said a bit sharper or something could have been—
- 15-01:18.44
Gayle: Yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. I wouldn't say that you shouldn't do that at all.
- 15-01:18.48
Bancroft: And some of that I've been doing a little bit, like cutting out—
- 15-01:18.51
Margolin: Yeah, you have been.
- 15-01:18.51
Bancroft: —little passages and I've recognized that more could be done but I just wanted to get a sense of here's the voice of a person telling the story. I said it's like Studs Terkel. Have you ever read *Working*?
- 15-01:19.04
Gayle: No, I haven't.
- 15-01:19.04
Bancroft: Oh, that's a kind of classic of him doing interviews with people. And, again, obviously they're interviews, but he's cut himself out, so it's just them telling their story. And there's this sense that it's somebody talking. It's not written. But it's valuable in that sense, too, especially since Malcolm's a good talker.
- 15-01:19.27
Gayle: I think for the most part actually you could—I guess it would be interesting to—but I think for the most part you can also take out the parentheticals, like about laughing and stuff like that. Yeah.

- 15-01:19.37
Bancroft: Yeah, that's what I thought. I thought take those out, too. Because once it's—
- 15-01:19:39
Gayle: The humor is obvious. Yeah.
- 15-01:19.42
Bancroft: Yeah. And also because now that it's no longer an interview format then those don't really belong in there. You said the first chapter is—I just sent it single spaced.
- 15-01:20:00
Gayle: Actually, I never felt like I was weighed down, though. I thought it was wonderful.
- 15-01:20.03
Bancroft: Oh, really? Okay, good.
- 15-01:20:05
Margolin: Even I was amused by it.
- 15-01:20.06
Gayle: Yeah. It's fantastic. I'm so happy. I'm sitting there at my desk, and I'm, like, work shouldn't be this much fun. [laughter] I'm laughing out loud. This is really funny, Malcolm, you know. Yeah.
- 15-01:20:20
Margolin: I was looking at it, it struck me as funny.
- 15-01:20.21
Gayle _
Yeah. It's funny but it's really soul searching but in a very accessible way, you know. Yeah. I think everybody can read this and think about stories from their own childhood and their own experiences that would be likewise formative. Yeah.
- 15-01:20:42
Bancroft: I think that is a question, though, one that just came up earlier about—this is a book, obviously people who love you, know you, know Heyday are going to enjoy hearing about you, reading your stories and reading about Heyday, and then there's always the question, is this going to attract an audience beyond the people who are already in the know. And so that sense of if there's a character in this book, like picking up a biography of anybody, I mean, like David [Brower] or somebody that we didn't necessarily know but we want to hear the story about the person. Is this going to be a story that's going to pull them in, and we want to have them keep reading, and that's what I would hope.
- 15-01:21:27
Gayle: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I was very cognizant of *Wildness Within* when I was reading this. I don't really know anything about David Brower. I have a feeling I probably wouldn't actually care for a lot of his own writing. Well,

maybe. I don't know, maybe. But I really enjoyed the exploration of personality because that was definitely a forceful personality or a very inspirational personality. I'm so pleased by this. I think it's so cool. Yeah. Yeah. You must be pleased by this.

15-01:22:04

Margolin: I'm very pleased by it.

15-01:22:05

Gayle: Yeah, yeah. I just think it's so fricking cool that this stuff's on paper, too. This is just awesome. [laughter] Little snippets of this I'd heard but I didn't know—I don't know why it's ringing a bell in my shaky memory but I know that I've had to at some point study Walter Pitts and so that was—

15-01:22:25

Margolin: It was in school.

15-01:22:25

Gayle: He came up in something. Well, one of my concentrations in math was logic, and so I know that he came up, and so that was fun.

15-01:22:32

Margolin: He was present in that world.

15-01:22:35

Gayle: Yeah, yeah. So that was fun reading about your—[laughter] him just going off without you on the glaciers. Well, absent.

15-01:22:45

Margolin: Okay, great.

15-01:22:47

Bancroft: Okay, before we part I have to get one more documentation, a picture of the two of you, because we didn't get it the last time I was here. If you don't mind.

15-01:22:57

Gayle: [laughter] Sure, sure. Only if I get to sit in the important chair. The judge's chair.

15-01:23:07

Margolin: And show off your chilblains.

15-01:23:08

Gayle: Yeah, right. And show off my chilblains. Getting better.

15-01:23:10

Bancroft: Oh, my gosh, yes. Very nice. Thank you.

15-01:23:19

Gayle: Sure. All right. You guys are doing good work. This is awesome.

15-01:23:27

Bancroft: Good. Good to know.

15-01:23:28

Gayle: This is a lot of fun. Yeah. I enjoyed this thoroughly, and I'm going to go read the rest of it.

15-01:23:37

Margolin: You know when you're going to hate it?

15-01:23:37

Gayle: When am I going to hate it?

15-01:23:39

Margolin: When Gayle enters.

15-01:23:40

Gayle: Oh, goodness. [laughter]

15-01:23:43

Bancroft: She's got some great stories, that Gayle does. So okay. January was for chapters two and three. Then I'll resend you chapter two with the reediting in the interview. That'll actually cut it down, a lot of part four, that was of me. I'll cut myself out, I like that. And then I'll resend you chapter three with the VW story amended. And if you think of anything else in the next—I'll send it—there's another week. I'll resend it later in the week just so that you have it. So that's great.

15-01:20:03

Bancroft: Oh, really. Okay, good.

15-01:20:05

Margolin: Even I was amused by it.

[End of Audio File 15]

Interview 16: February 22, 2013

[Begin Audio File 16]

16-00:00:00

Margolin:

[Malcolm begins by reading a piece from *News* that he had written about the re-initiation of tattooing among California Natives. It was from 1990, volume 4, number 4. The piece was about a visit to Charles Eldridge's tattoo parlor.]
 “—brother, sisters. Julian Lang, a family friend who was in Berkeley at the time, Lee Davis of the California Indian Project and me. The walls of the tattoo parlor were as one might expect, decorated with customary design samples; dragons, skulls and crossbones, roses, battleships, Christ's crown of thorns, motorcycle trademarks, hearts, et cetera. Untypically there was also a fascinating collection of photos and prints showing the worldwide history of tattooing. Charles Eldridge, proprietor of the tattoo archive, is not only a tattoo artist of some renown but also a tattoo historian. I had expected that the occasion would be a solemn, almost religious experience. Instead, when I entered the tattoo archive, I found a scene so funny and wonderful it seemed for a while that I must have stepped into some kind of zany TV comedy special. Bertha was lying down on a low narrow table, something like a massage table. Charles Eldridge, his own arms so covered with tattoos that they reminded me of the branch of a tree covered with vines, was bent over her head. His drill was whining away, and the scene reminded me more of a dentist's office than anything else. This was the first time in his long career that Eldridge had ever tattooed anyone on the chin, and he was struggling to work out a new set of problems. The tattoos had to go over the lip towards the inside of the mouth, and there was considerable bleeding in a tender area. To stop the bleeding he had to stuff tissue behind the lips. “You look like a Ubange,” commented one of the sisters, and everyone laughed. Another problem had to do with putting a line on the reclining chin in such a way that when Bertha stood up and the chin sagged slightly the line would be straight. “You look beautiful,” said one of the sisters as the tattoo slowly took shape. “It matches your hair and your eyes.”

Bertha got up to look in the mirror. “It looks more like I fell in the dirt,” she replied, and then she walked over to me. “When are you going to get tattooed?” she asked. “With a beard like this, no one would ever know whether I did or I didn't,” I replied. “No, no,” she said, patting me on the bald head, “I mean up here.” Charles Eldridge went back to work. “You're not changing your mind, are you, Bert?” someone asked when the tattoos were nearly finished. “I think he's running out of ink.” The jokes continued. Only the burning of angelica root in the corner and an occasional song that Julian sang made one feel that beneath the raucous joking there was something serious happening. Peter next put another piece of angelica root in a dish to burn. “Don't start a forest fire,” someone said. Yet more laughter. And it occurred to me that this was surely one of the funniest scenes I had ever witnessed in my entire life. Yet beneath the laughter, almost sheltered by the

non-stop joking, as we watched out of the corners of our eyes, a transformation took place. Three strong bars were outlined and filled in, growing gradually to three columns under the lip, giving strength and weight to the chin, giving the face completion, fullness, dignity and power. When at last Bertha stood up, the effect was stunning. I had seen pictures of the 111s but these were old women, generally of photos taken long ago, so that the tattoos looked worn and faded. These tattoos, fresh and new, were remarkably bold. Everyone stopped for a moment and stared, awestruck and silenced. But the silence lasted no more than a few minutes. “Okay,” said {Tweep?} to his sister, “it’s time to get them back to the mental institution before it closes.” [laughter] It was so funny. It was so funny.

16-00:03.32
Bancroft:

One hundred and eleventh. Okay, this is from 1990, volume four, number four. There’s Darryl. So what is the 111th? What does that refer to?

16-00:03.56
Margolin:

It’s the three lines, one, one, one.

16-00:03.58
Bancroft:

Oh, 111th, I see. Yes, of course. You were saying—how were you encouraging?

16-00:04.05
Margolin:

They had mentioned wanting to do it, and they didn’t know how to get it done because there was nobody that was—the old traditional ways of doing it. I said that there’s somebody I know in Berkeley who’s a tattoo historian who would love to get involved in it. So I got Charles involved in it, and I got them to come down.

16-00:04.20
Bancroft:

And were they the first to do this?

16-00:04.23
Margolin:

They were the first of that new generation to do it. The very first. Peter {Nix?}, he’s in jail now. He writes regularly.

16-00:04.36
Bancroft:

Gosh. Wow, so that’s so interesting. Wow. Well, good for you for making the connections. I wouldn’t say they’re common, but it’s—

16-00:04.47
Margolin:

No, there are lots of people that have them. Yeah. Something would have happened if I hadn’t. I think it was in the works. I think it was in the works. But I think that I—

16-00:04.54
Bancroft:

That’s great. Okay. Well, listen, so I have you until, what, like 10:00, 10:15?

- 16-00:05:02
Margolin: Something like that, yeah.
- 16-00:05:04
Bancroft: So I know that the chapter three was way too long for you to get through but I wanted to see if you have some thoughts on it.
- 16-00:05:17
Margolin: I couldn't get through it. I was gone the last couple of days.
- 16-00:05:23
Bancroft: Yeah. Also, I have a big question. A couple of friends of mine who don't know you at all, and don't really know Heyday, are fascinated by what I'm talking about and would love to read some of the chapters. And I wanted to see—oh, I have to take a picture of this. I've got like five things to talk to you about at once. I just had breakfast with Fred Setterberg yesterday.
- 16-00:05:52
Margolin: Oh, wow, really?
- 16-00:05:52
Bancroft: And he saw this picture. He thought they were your brothers. So I had to tell him the whole story. And actually this picture should also go in the book.
- 16-00:06:01
Margolin: Oh, you know who just sent me a picture? Dan Stolpe sent some pictures of me with William Everson, the poet.
- 16-00:06:13
Bancroft: Oh, wow. Oh, my gosh.
- 16-00:06:12
Margolin: Brother Antoninus.
- 16-00:06:14
Bancroft: Oh, my gosh. That's so cool, especially after Ariel's {Parkinson} telling me about him. So how do you feel about me giving the book very confidentially, or chapters, to a couple of trusted friends to see what they think?
- 16-00:06:32
Margolin: Run them by me first, just to make certain that there was something that I said that I just want to expunge from the record.
- 16-00:06:40
Bancroft: Okay. Well, it's chapters one and two. So you've read those.
- 16-00:06:44
Margolin: They're okay. That's fine. That's fine.
- 16-00:06:46
Bancroft: Okay, okay. One is actually a friend you met, Mary Bird, who's a former student of mine from San Leandro.

16-00:06:53
Margolin: Yeah. Hey, listen, how do I get this in some way that I can read it?

16-00:06:56
Bancroft: Okay. You know what you do? When you go—no, no, no. That was—

16-00:07:00
Margolin: This was so challenging.

16-00:07:02
Bancroft: No. Okay, can you open it? I'll show you.

16-00:07:05
Margolin: Yeah.

16-00:07:08
Bancroft: That's all just junk. I'm sorry. When I finish doing the chapter, I'm reading it in final, and so you have to go into track changes. Actually, you know what I could do? Let me send it to you in the final version right now, and then you won't even—because you've got a Mac, so I'm not even sure how that will work. Hi, Diane.

16-00:07:40
Diane _: Hi.

16-00:07:43
Margolin: Hey, Diane.

16-00:07:49
Bancroft: Guess what?

16-00:07:54
Diane _: Oh, yeah.

16-00:07:56
Margolin: Hey, let me show you something.

16-00:07:57
Bancroft: This. Hello.

16-00:07:59
Diane _: How are you? What's this? Oh.

16-00:08:02
Bancroft: Through the scrapbooks and I just found the marvelous—

16-00:08:05
Diane _: You found them? How did you find these?

16-00:08:07
Bancroft: They were in the row of scrapbooks over there.

16-00:08:11
Diane _: Oh, they were. Good. [laughter]

16-00:08:14
Bancroft: And Malcolm is having a great time looking at them.

16-00:08:16
Diane _: Really? Eighteen hundred from—oh, that’s sweet. Oh, froRina. Oh, that’s great. I’m so happy

16-00:11:35
Margolin: Hey, where did all this stuff come from?

16-00:11:37
Diane _: Let’s see. Rebecca {LeGates} had started a couple—

16-00:11:41
Margolin: So Rebecca—

16-00:11:42
Bancroft: —scrapbooks ages ago and then when I took over her job, I had an intern go and find all this stuff that we’d been keeping and she put it in the binders. Never came back. And then over the years we’ve just been putting things into that.

16-00:11:54
Margolin: This is so amazing to me.

16-00:11:56
Diane _: Oh, good.

16-00:11:56
Margolin: These family photos are just so stunning.

16-00:12:02
Diane _: Thank you. Kind of still look the same. I think you were born out of the womb looking like that. [laughter]

16-00:12:08
Bancroft: There’s actually some in there—

16-00:12:09
Margolin: They were so surprised when I came out with a beard and a bald head.

16-00:12:12
Bancroft: There’s some in there, though, that actually do have Malcolm without his beard.

16-00:12:18
Diane _: Really?

16-00:12:19
Bancroft: Okay, Malcolm, I did just send it to you totally—

16-00:12:22
Margolin: Okay, great.

16-00:12:23
Bancroft: —so you can print it out normally.

16-00:12:27
Diane _: Nobody does this anymore. Slides. Wow, that's crazy. Yeah, this was Rebecca.

16-00:12:36
Bancroft: Oh, I thought that was the archives.

16-00:12:38
Diane _: That's just one of them.

16-00:12:42
Diane _: Okay. I'm going to get back to work now.

16-00:12:45
Bancroft: All right.

16-00:13:15
Bancroft: So that just printed out. And who's that?

16-00:16:04
Margolin: Dan Stolpe.

16-00:16:07
Bancroft: Dan Stolcke [sic]?

16-00:16:09
Margolin: Stolpe. S-T-O-L-P-E.

16-00:16:08
Bancroft: Oh, Stolpe. Actually, there's that. Okay. Nice. So yeah. There's a way, when you've got track changes, to—

16-00:16:45
Margolin: I could ask somebody. There are people who know—

16-00:16:43
Bancroft: Yes. But basically, when it's all tracked—because Mac is different. You just go into track changes and you say accept final or review final. But I just did that for you. So yeah. That would be ridiculous to try to read that.

16-00:17:04
Margolin: Yeah, it was such a com—and the last several days have been so amazing.

16-00:17:09
Bancroft: What have you been doing?

16-00:17:09

Margolin: So amazing. On Wednesday morning I had Marshall McKay come, Mabel McKay's son, and he's head of the Autry Museum and on the board of the National Museum of the American Indian, and he runs the Brooks Casino, the Cache Creek Casino, and they came with their foundation manager and communication manager. We just had the most wonderful time. Large sums of money possible. They wanted me to speak at their conventions. It was so warm. And I knew Marshall back when he was a young guy. And he's grown up to be this major cultural figure and he was so beautiful and he was such a dear friend.

16-00:18.08
Bancroft:

And somehow or other, just seeing that range of people. You kind of wonder who in that generation today is going to become major leaders tomorrow. What happens to people? And then I was about to go off to a meeting, and Karen Rossman came, she was Michael Rossman's wife. And Michael had died a while ago, and she wanted to give me a poster that an artist had done, a splashboard of Michael. He was collecting posters from there. And she had come on this particular day because it was the fiftieth anniversary of her having met Michael. She met him up on campus, and she talked about how she was going up to campus to the place where she had met him for their fiftieth anniversary. And when she had met him, they were students and she said, "What do you major in?" and he says, "In mathematics." And she says, "I'm in English. I hate mathematics." And she said he looked at me with total puzzlement, and he said, "But mathematics is so beautiful." And when he said this, she just melted and fell into his arms [laughter] and never left.

16-00:19.37
Bancroft:

Oh, that's so neat.

16-00:19:38
Margolin:

And then when Michael died, Michael was so curious about the world. He had this unquenchable curiosity. And as he was dying he was aware of the different organs shutting down, of the sequence and the beauty of this death process, of the organs shutting down. When he died, the hospice care worker said that she'd been waiting all of her life for somebody that would understand the beauty of it. So that was then.

And then I went off. There was that organization I helped create, Alliance for California Traditional Artists, and we had our meeting in the Yerba Buena Center. And then I got together with Dan Sheehy from Smithsonian Folkways and Soo Jin Kim, who's now working for Smithsonian Folkways. I knew her from the Japanese American National Museum. And Anthea Hartig, who's head of the California Historical Society. We brought in Donna Graves and Russell Rodriguez from Watsonville. And we sat around for several hours discussing how to bring the Smithsonian Folklife Festival to California. How to, in 2015, have this folk life festival in Washington but have a California component that then sets up a California Folk Life Festival. And then I came

back and it was Ron Kauk, the mountain climber. Do you know who Ron Kauk is?

16-00:21.16

Bancroft: No. I've heard his name.

16-00:21:18

Margolin: Yeah. He pioneered this free flowing ropeless climbing of El Capitan and stuff like that. And he was in to celebrate his book.

16-00:21.32

Bancroft: Oh, great.

16-00:21:32

Margolin: It was just so thoroughly rich, and I just couldn't get to read about me.

16-00:21.35

Bancroft: Actually, I have some questions for you, kind of clarifications. Okay. So let me just ask a few questions first because I want to make sure I get these. What I did was I reread all of our interviews, and I found a few things that maybe I should reinsert, or I wanted to ask you questions about, and then I reread the interviews that are relating to the Native American chapter, and my goal is to reread all of the interviews, and then I'm going to start working on chapter four. And so some of this stuff I don't even know if you're going to remember. But I cut out, there was a little piece, where you mentioned all of the kids' fathers when you were growing up, and I kind of left out what they did. I don't know even know if that—

16-00:22:39

Margolin: Oh, my friends' fathers.

16-00:22.40

Bancroft: Yes, you mentioned—

16-00:22:40

Margolin: Yeah, yeah.

16-00:22.42

Bancroft: And I had left that out. I don't know if you remember that, and you want that back in.

16-00:22:45

Margolin: Well, I don't know. What's important to me isn't necessarily important to you or to the world.

16-00:22.53

Bancroft: Yeah. So some stuff that I thought--it was kind of cute and fun. You may still want to say, "No, I'd like to have that in."

- 16-00:23:45
Margolin: Some of them I may insert, reinsert. Not that I remember having said them but—
- 16-00:23:50
Bancroft: Or as you're rereading it. If you take notes about, "I think I said something more," or "I want to say something more now."
- 16-00:23:55
Margolin: Or I want to say something more.
- 16-00:23:56
Bancroft: Or "I don't want to say this." Okay. In chapter two there's this thing that you said about "Wally, poor Wally."
- 16-00:24:07
Margolin: Oh, poor Wally, yeah.
- 16-00:24:09
Bancroft: And that the way he had been treated was bad. There was something in there that—the way you had stated—I think you thought you said more about it. I'm going to pull up the chapter now. About how he had been treated by these friends of his. Okay. What you said was, the way it was written here, "They were so damned hip it hurt. Poor Wally. I remember that his wife was distraught. Here they lived in this big house in Hillside and he had joined this cult. Wally was not earning any money and he was forever talking about how if you follow your bliss money will come. Then Word Wheel Books published Michael Phillips book. So that was all part of kind of the getting the funding." But you didn't say anything about him in the interview being poorly treated by people. I didn't know if you wanted that in there or it's just as well to leave it out.
- 16-00:25:11
Margolin: No, what had happened was that one of the seven laws of money was it's good to fail young. This is going on dim memory. I'd have to check my memory on this. But one of Michael Phillips' *Seven Laws of Money* was it's good to fail young. And that failure was okay. And Wally was already old, and he was established. He left a good paying job to join this thing. That's when the thing collapsed, and Wally's wife was distraught and Wally found himself without a job, these fuckers decided that it was good to fail, and they left him. There was something in there where they led him along on this wonderful path of glowing rhetoric about follow your bliss and failure is good and everything like that, and then in the end they just left him hanging. They just left him to hang.
- 16-00:26:12
Bancroft: What happened to him? Did his wife—
- 16-00:26:15
Margolin: I don't know. I don't know.

- 16-00:26.16
Bancroft: I think some of that will be—
- 16-00:26:18
Margolin: We may leave that out.
- 16-00:26.18
Bancroft: Yeah. Some of that's too complicated. It was like also when you went up—
- 16-00:26:23
Margolin: It was complicated. For me it was important. There was an insight as to how untrustworthy these people were.
- 16-00:26.32
Bancroft: Yeah. And you make the point, like poor Wally. And there's this sense that he was kind of hurt in the process. But the way it is, you hadn't explained that process yet.
- 16-00:26:44
Margolin: If it's in there, we'll massage it around a little bit.
- 16-00:26.47
Bancroft: Okay. So that's the kind of thing I think that when we get back to you, going through all of the chapters once they're kind of in a good enough condition that you can go in and say, "I want to say more," or "I want to cut this out," and all of that.
- 16-00:27:02
Margolin: It was the sanctimoniousness, it was the piety of those people. It was their self-absorption. Wavy Gravy is an interesting guy. Wavy Gravy has now come to call himself a Temple of Accumulated Error. This I can understand.
[laughter]
- 16-00:27.21
Bancroft: [laughter] Humility.
- 16-00:27:25
Margolin: This I can relate to. A Temple of Accumulated Error. Isn't that wonderful?
- 16-00:27.30
Bancroft: Yes. Okay. Well, that clarified that. And another example of something that I had taken out. You mentioned Happy, who was the mechanic who was an alcoholic at your father's company. And so I didn't put that in about him being an alcoholic but that was kind of a funny story. I could put that back in.
- 16-00:27:56
Margolin: Oh, sure. He was a total drunk.
- 16-00:27.58
Bancroft: Okay. And then speaking of that, when you talked about the folks who worked at the East Bay Parks, you said a lot of them were old—I think you

called them alkies and I think I just changed it to alcoholics or something like that. But when I'm thinking about people who are still alive and connected.

There was a story, for example, that I loved about—I think it came in later, after I had interviewed Larry Di Stasi and then I asked you, “Oh, well, what did you think about the interview and what was your version of it?” So that interview, that was interview number fourteen, about your version of taking apart the car and then his car kind of breaking down. But that incident actually happens in chapter one, which I had already shown you. So I can go back and kind of put that in—

16-00:29:07
Margolin:

Oh, I don't care.

16-00:29:09
Bancroft:

—if I redo chapter one. I didn't know how much you wanted that back in. I just said I'll just kind of massage some of that and get it back in there. Part of it is things that we're talking about later, after I've already written a chapter, just so you know. It'll still all be flexible.

16-00:29:28
Margolin:

Yeah. Yeah, I look at it. It looks great. It's not exactly the balance that I might have had, but what's important to me is not necessarily important to the world. It's whether people are very interesting. There are a couple of things that I'll have to do. I'll have to give my brother more prominence.

16-00:29:55
Bancroft:

Well, I want your brother's letter and I've been asking you for months. What do I need to do? Remember the speech?

16-00:30:05
Margolin:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

16-00:30:13
Bancroft:

What do I have to do? Don't make me get down on my knees and beg. But I will.

16-00:30:17
Margolin:

Hey, listen, let me give you his email.

16-00:30:20
Bancroft:

His email. Yes, okay.

16-00:30:22
Margolin:

And you can say that you're writing a biography of me and that you heard he had this wonderful reminiscence.

16-00:30:27
Bancroft:

Yeah, definitely. Yeah, okay, good. I will email you and ask you to send that to me. One other thing that came out in a later interview was about the house that you almost bought.

16-00:30:26
Margolin:

Oh, yeah.

16-00:30:38
Bancroft:

And so I want to put that in if you want. That was a kind of wonderful—

16-00:30:42
Margolin:

Oh, sure. Oh, sure.

16-00:30:44
Bancroft:

Okay. Let's see. Bill's letter was on my list to ask you, or his speech. Okay, now a couple of other things. Speaking of, of the California Indian conference, that came up [with?] Peter {Nabokov}. So in chapter three, about Native California, I will go over that with you a little bit. So Peter mentioned the California Indian conference and he said he thought you had something to do with that, and he was ashamed that he had never gone. But you haven't mentioned it. I don't know to what extent—you're not organizing it, but I presume you went every year to sell books. But what can you say about it?

16-00:31:30
Margolin:

That I went every year. I was kind of around as it was being organized. I won't take credit for organizing it. The credit for it goes back a couple of years before the California Indian Conference was founded, and I forget when it was founded now. Somewhere around '87 or somewhere in there. I can find out. But a couple of years before there was somebody working at the Hearst Museum named Lee Davis. And Lee Davis was a very good friend, and Lee Davis was running the California Indian Project for what was then the Lowie Museum. And she got together a conference on existing traditions. And it was utterly revelatory. She got in people that were still practicing shamanism, still building roundhouses. From all over the state she got people together and it was absolutely eye-opening. And nobody had quite realized how alive all of this stuff was. The state was so scattered. And she's never gotten ample credit for that but that was a moment that opened other people's eyes.

At Cal at that time there was a guy named William Simmons, who was in their anthropology department. And Bill Simmons was a New Englander. He grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, from an old New England family. And this old New England family had fallen on hard times and he grew up in the center of Providence, Rhode Island, surrounded by immigrant groups, where they were the dominant, and this old WASP family was kind of the lower class among these newcomers. And he became an anthropologist of American Indians. He did some work in New England. Then he came out to the anthropology department here. And he wanted to set up something that would imitate the Algonquin roundtable. And the Algonquin roundtable was the

Algonquin studies, and it got together anthropologists and archeologists and ethnomusicologists and linguists and various people studying Algonquin studies. We'd never get together with one another. The linguists go to their own conferences, the archeologists go to their own conferences. The anthropologists go to their own conferences. But the Algonquin roundtable was all of these people getting together. So he wanted to do that, and it was going to be called the California Indian Conference. And the first meeting of it was over at Cal. They summoned all these academics, and linguists came and gave their papers on attributives in the glottal stop, and archeologists got their papers on carbon dating of bifacial obsidian flakes from the Sierra. And everybody came and they gave their papers and they were okay. It was good to get a bunch of people together. It was fun.

But I remember somewhere around the second or third conference, Indians began to come. And I remember sitting behind—

16-00:34:56
Bancroft:

Which is so ironic.

16-00:34:57
Margolin:

—Peter Nix and Ralph Megolina and each one of them weighed about 350 pounds and there was these big shoulders that were out there. And suddenly you see these people get up with their little academic papers, and they're looking at this crowd of brown faces that are starting to assemble. And they ran for cover. They stopped coming, and the conference was taken over by Indians and it's run by Indians today. The whites still come to it, they give some papers. The archeologists dropped out completely. The linguists dropped out completely. There's an openness to it. It's so fun. The last one we went to, I went down with Lindsie to the last one, and it was just this sea of old friends. We set up a table. It's a little bit like Chaucer except they're academics. They just sit around all day, and we tell stories and go out to eat. We give each other awards. I emceed there. It must have been their thirtieth anniversary a couple of years ago, and we got Bill Simmons to come back. He'd gone back to Providence. He was teaching at Brown. We got him to come back and thanked him for what he had done. Lee Davis wouldn't come because somebody else was coming that wanted to kill her. [laughter] The next one is going to be up in Sacramento and Ned Reeds, who is a Towola, is running it at Sacramento State. And we're probably going to have a large role in that.

I gave a lecture last week on California Indian property rights, and it was at Hastings Law School. You end up having these marvelous statements about how no one can own Mother Earth and everything. Ownership was so damned elaborate, and I quoted all of the stuff about how nobody could own Mother Earth, and then I gave an accounting of how a particular spot on the Klamath River was owned by ten different people. One of them had morning fishing rights, the other one had afternoon fishing rights. One of them had two-day

fishing rights. One of them had one-day fishing rights. One of them had fishing rights when the water was low. One of them had fishing rights when the water was high. One of them had eel fishing rights. One of them had salmon fishing rights. They had the rights to regulate fishing of downstream salmon, which would affect their—there were arbitrators. There was this amazing legal system that was in there. So I'm going to take the next one and have a bunch of people come up and talk about Indian property and law. And it's so fascinating because capitalism has given property a bad name. That you end up having ownership but ownership is the necessity to care for something. And there's responsibility that comes with ownership. And when you own something you have reciprocal rights with other people. You have to share it in certain ways. It's mediated by other laws and other social aspects. But it becomes the most ingenious way of regulating property of the dams that we go across the Klamath River. *Loch* was the dam official. And the *Loch* had two assistants, the *lochnie* and the *nomur*. And they would have different parts to the dam where they could catch fish. And there were nine offices that had the rights to catch fish for their family but they could only do it during the morning. They had to break down the damn so the fish would go upstream for the upstream people to get their fish in the afternoon and they could only keep the dam up for two weeks. And the whole Klamath River was regulated by detailed laws. It was just such a spectacular world. I'm rambling now, but this is going to be the next week.

I want to do that for the next California Indian Conference, get into some of that property stuff because there's this misfocus. There's this sense that they were utopian idealists. Nobody had any property, everybody shared. That was not how it worked. It was better than that. We have much more to learn from them than this silly little story.

16-00:39.47
Bancroft:

It's like a conscious capitalism for you.

16-00:39:51
Margolin:

Yes.

16-00:39.50
Bancroft:

There's the collaboration. That's why when you were running for governor, one of your platforms was collaboration.

16-00:40:00
Margolin:

Yeah, yeah. I'm not sure that I made that up.

16-00:40.07
Bancroft:

Somebody was right about you, though.

16-00:40:07
Margolin:

That must have been somebody else.

- 16-00:40.10
Bancroft: No. But it's true, that that's a really important key principle in your worldview, that's clearly in the Native view that you've taken it from, as well.
- 16-00:40.19
Margolin: This is true. This is true. Well, maybe I took it from them, or maybe I had it and it allowed me to recognize it in others. It allowed me to recognize this in others.
- 16-00:40.28
Bancroft: It's a collaborative capitalism. When you are making those talks, making all these talks, are you writing them down and bringing--
- 16-00:40.40
Margolin: No.
- 16-00:40.42
Bancroft: Yeah.
- 16-00:40.45
Margolin: The person that I talked to was totally pissed off at me, that I hadn't recorded it, that I hadn't written it down. But I don't. I don't. Yeah.
- 16-00:40.57
Bancroft: Well, so going back to the Indian Conference. So that's good because actually Peter said that he was a little chagrined that he had never gone to any of the Indian conferences, the California Indian conferences, and that sort of explains why, because he's much more in the academic world. And he said that what he'd heard was that they were wonderful conferences and that there was a very strong presence of Indians. So I'm curious about what happened, that Indians began to take it over and felt like, "Hey, this is our conference. There's the American Anthropological Association. You guys can go be academics over there. This is for us." And do you have any sense of what kind of made that shift?
- 16-00:41.43
Margolin: I think it partly had to do with the academics withdrawing. And they withdrew in part because, a lot of these academics, they go to conferences as part of their getting advancement. It's part of their getting tenure—
- 16-00:42.13
Bancroft: Status.
- 16-00:42.13
Margolin: —getting advancement. The conference itself, because it wasn't sanctioned by a particular department, because it wasn't an archeology conference, and because they let people like me come in and speak, that it was not juried strictly. It did not have that kind of career—
- 16-00:42.32
Bancroft: Cred.

16-00:42:34
Margolin:

—cred that they wanted. So they weren't going to put a lot into it. I'm giving the keynote speech at the Society for California Archeology meetings on May 8th and 9th. I think it's May 8th is the award ceremony.

16-00:42:55
Bancroft:

Are you getting an award?

16-00:42:58
Margolin:

No, I'm doing a panel on David and Vera Mae Fredrickson, in memory of them, and we're doing a full day devoted to them. They've asked me on behalf of the Society for California Archeology to give an award to somebody, to present an award to Linda Yamane. And then I'll be giving the keynote speech. And part of it has to do with the use of an esoteric language that they've developed which cuts everybody off from understanding what they're talking about. It cuts them off from everybody else. And they've got such marvelous information. They've got such wonderful things that are emerging about the peopling of California, about the evolution of society, about social complexities and changes in climate. They've got all this marvelous stuff that people would love to know about. But it's encoded in a language that's so arcane and so petty that nobody can get at it, and it's cutting them off. And it's hiding. They're hiding behind that language. They're hiding their vacuity, they're hiding what they don't know behind a language that no—they're hiding from themselves what they don't understand.

16-00:44:18
Bancroft:

And what you said about David Fredrickson was so beautiful, that's in this chapter, about how he was the first to really bring Indians along into archeological gigs and excavations and saw them as partners, rather than people to struggle with over rights. I think that's important.

16-00:44:38
Margolin:

Yeah, yeah. But it has to do with the California Indian Conference, with these linguists and these archeologists, and these people all have their separate languages. And the commitment to speaking to the general public isn't there. They don't get rewarded by doing this. When Leanne Hinton began to do her language work among California Indians, she was really worried about her academic career. She was really worried that she wouldn't get advancement because it wasn't research.

16-00:45:11
Bancroft:

Yeah, it was applied linguistics, not—

16-00:45:13
Margolin:

It was applied. It was "lesser Indian." That if she had done something on the transformative glottal stop in proto-Aztecan languages, she would have gotten advancement. If she ended up teaching people—

- 16-00:45.29
Bancroft: How to revise their language.
- 16-00:45:30
Margolin: How to revise their language.
- 16-00:45.31
Bancroft: That was not—
- 16-00:45:33
Margolin: That wouldn't work.
- 16-00:45.34
Bancroft: Yeah. Okay, well, let me ask you also about ACTA because that came up. I had in chapter three, the last section has to do with some extensions of your work and Heyday's work. So there's a section on the basket weavers, and there's a section on language revitalization. And I wanted to add one about ACTA. And I never heard back from—
- 16-00:45:56
Margolin: She mentioned that—
- 16-00:45.59
Bancroft: There was the person, I'm forgetting her name—
- 16-00:46:02
Margolin: Amy Kitchener
- 16-00:46.04
Bancroft: —Amy, to interview and I can still—
- 16-00:46:05
Margolin: She said she hadn't heard from you, but she's disorganized.
- 16-00:46.08
Bancroft: Oh, okay. I wrote to her—
- 16-00:46:10
Margolin: No, I know.
- 16-00:46.13
Bancroft: Okay. I could still talk to her, it'll be a phone interview, and it'll be short. But I wanted to hear from you a little bit more. And actually Frank LaPena mentioned it, as well. But we hadn't talked about it that much. So what can you tell me about—and I'm being conscious of time. It's ten to 10:00. But just a few minutes about that.
- 16-00:46:34
Margolin: So there used to be, in the days of yore, when people were wonderful and life was easy and there was infinite amounts of time, where you didn't have to leave at ten o'clock [laughter], where people would just sit around--which I still do a lot--and the California Arts Council had money. And the California

Arts Council had these programs of granting money, a couple of thousand—the grants were a couple of thousand bucks—to various arts organizations around the state. And then every two years they'd have a conference at Asilomar, and they'd get all of the arts organizations from all over the state to come to this conference at Asilomar, and the purpose of it was to lecture to them about their programs. And then there was a panel on filling out your application form. And there was a panel on insurance for nonprofits. But they were a bunch of artists. There were the Cambodian dancers, there were Taiko drummers, there were saddle makers, there were basket weavers. And we'd all get together. And nobody ever went to these sessions, and we'd all just hang out, and we'd all just talk, and people would walk on the beach. And there were Cambodian dancers that would just break your heart. It was just so much fun. So every two years I'd go to this thing, and it was the best party in the world. Every so often they'd ask me to speak at something, so I'd speak at something. But that was the only time I ever went to any of those damn sessions. And I'd just hang around, and it was just heaven. It was just such heaven.

The night before last, I was coming back from the ACTA meetings, and I took a long walk down Mission Ave and passed a barroom, and there was a fandango going on. These characters from Veracruz had come up, and somebody I knew in there hauled me in, and I just ended up in the middle of this Veracruz fandango, the people from Mexico City coming, drinking beer and coming around. It was such a joy. It was just so creative.

I was talking to a Cambodian dancer a couple of days ago at this ACTA meeting. There was a picture of a dancer. She was alive. She was just this slender woman and she had her leg lifted up so that in back of her, her foot was parallel to the ground and her elbow was on her foot and there was this lovely shape of her body. And I said, "What in the world is that?" He says, "It's what we *khong*." I said, "What's *khong*?" He said, "*Khong* is when you are so focused and every cell in your body is alive and vibrant and focused and it happens at particular moments in the dance, when you're taken over and seized by it." And I just thought that was so damned beautiful.

So I'd hang around all these folk artists. And one day Amy Kitchener, who was working for the Fresno Arts Council, and she got a bunch of people together. It was a room at Asilomar. And she said, "Let's get together and talk about creating a folk arts group." So I sat in that room with Charlie Seemann, who runs the Western Folklife Center, in Elko, Nevada, he does the Cowboy Poetry Festival, and Dan Sheehy from Smithsonian Folkways, Beth Lomax Hawes from the Lomax family, Al Lomax's sister. And we had Marty Kano, who's a mariachi. He's the mariachi master. You talk to people in mariachi world, you mention Nati Cano, Natividad Cano, Nati Cano, and they just fall down with tenderness because he was so tender. And Joe Hasinpo, who was a Filipino, he'd begun the Filipino Cultural Center in Long Beach. And there was Jo Farb Hernandez, who was into ethnic arts. And David Roach was

there. And we sat around and we talked about forming an organization that would be devoted to the folk arts. Amy started it from a funding perspective because all of the money was going to SOBs: symphony, opera, and ballet. And here they were, all of these kinds of endangered traditions and people, vernacular things, and no money was going to it. So she wanted an organization that would funnel the money into them. So we started Alliance for California Traditional Artists, ACTA, which in my Latin school training I was able to point out means deeds. It's the plural of *acton*. Deeds. It's acts. And I've been going through, and I got Frank LaPena to come onto the board.

And, Kim, I'm not sure what my role is in these things. I talk a lot, I give advice. People listen to me. They seem to like me. I'm invited to their meetings. I don't seem to take much of a role in the management of the place. It's the only organization that I know that I've ever been part of that has money in the bank. We talk about different things. I'm part of their strategy sessions. Amy founded it. And it's built around her personality. It's her Heyday in a way. She's married to Hugo Morales. And Hugo Morales runs Radio Bilingue. Come here for a second. That's their two kids.

16-00:53.57

Bancroft:

Oh, wow. Oh, that's sweet.

16-00:54:00

Margolin:

Little Hugos. What can I say about it? It's a very successful, a very powerful funding organization. It funds master/apprentice programs, it funds folk arts groups. It does support courses and conferences. It's got money in the bank. Did I mention that?

16-00:54.39

Bancroft:

Yes. Well, okay. So I will make sure to call Amy now and get her story on it. And that's a good introduction from you.

16-00:54:49

Margolin:

Yeah. I think that also would have been founded and probably very successful without me. I was part of it. I was part of the inspiration of it, I was part of the foundation of it; I don't want to take credit for it.

16-00:55.04

Bancroft:

Well, I'm going to see what Amy has to say about that. (laughter)

16-00:55:11

Margolin:

Teacher Kim has just come in. My God.

16-00:55.13

Bancroft:

You're refusing credit, but I'm going to verify the facts.

16-00:55:16

Margolin:

Send me down to the principal's office.

- 16-00:55.17
Bancroft: (laughter) I'm going to verify the facts. No, I appreciate you saying that. From my interviews thus far, and I've done quite a few of them, I have other people who have different things to say in terms of giving you credit for things that you don't want to take credit for.
- 16-00:55:34
Margolin: This is a constant in my life. Ron Kauk said that I got him into doing this book that he just published. I don't remember that.
- 16-00:55.41
Bancroft: Right. Well, I mean, it's like Leanne said: It was your work helping her, getting her involved with *News*, right?
- 16-00:55:49
Margolin: This is true. That language stuff was mine.
- 16-00:55.41
Bancroft: What was that other one, about the book? Oh, Larry. Right? Your friend got Larry his first book published. So, see, that's why I'm a little suspect when you say you had little to do with it. Okay. So listen, I got through my questions.
- 16-00:56:15
Margolin: Let me give you my brother Bill's—
- 16-00:56.17
Bancroft: Okay. And I'd like to try to set a date for the next time. I also just got Ken Brower's book about his father, so that's been really fun to read and start looking at the same sort of idea of using interviews as a way to get at somebody. Yours is more interactive.
- 16-00:56:47
Margolin: [They step into Malcolm's office] I'm going to be having lunch with Phil {inaudible}. He's a civil rights judge. He's federal. Full {inaudible} judge.
- 16-00:57.46
Bancroft: Okay.
- 16-00:57:49
Margolin: It's Bill Margolin. CC me, all right. He's seventy-five.
- 16-00:57.54
Bancroft: Seventy-five. Seventy-five. Okay, so what about March as a time to meet? I was thinking that that could—
- 16-00:58:08
Margolin: What are we going to do with all these pictures? What am I going to do with all this stuff?

16-00:58.126
Bancroft: Why don't you take these home to Rina? I'm going to write to Rina, actually, and say you're bringing them home and give my own little explanation of finding them and I'll send a note to both of you.

16-00:58:28
Margolin: Yeah, what happened to your fingernails?

16-00:58.31
Bancroft: My car was crashed into. The trunk was wrecked. I tried to close it, and I smashed my fingernails.

16-00:58:38
Margolin: How painful.

16-00:58.38
_: Oh, last night?

16-00:58:39
Bancroft: No, no, this is a while ago. It's all okay.

16-00:58:44
Margolin: Have you seen these?

16-00:58.45
Bancroft: No, nobody's seen them.

16-00:58:46
_: Okay, no, probably not.

16-00:58.46
Bancroft: Only Lillian was there when I—

16-00:58:48
Margolin: That's {inaudible}.

16-00:58:51
_: Oh, wow, yeah.

16-00:58:52
Margolin: But look—

16-00:58.53
Bancroft: These are from 1979 of Malcolm and family.

16-00:58:57
Margolin: Look what we found.

16-00:58.59
Bancroft: Well, they were in the scrapbook section in Mariko's office.

16-00:59:03
_: Oh, wow. These are great. So there's negatives, too?

16-00:59:09
Bancroft: Yeah, they're negatives, yeah.

16-00:59:12
Margolin: Wow.

16-00:59.12
Bancroft: There's a ton of them. So I think what we should do is at some point you enjoy looking at them, and then we can pick out some ones when it comes time for the book to put some of them in the book.

16-00:59:24
Margolin: This is so amazing to me. I never knew these were here. I just never knew.

16-00:59.30
_: Oh, look at this. Somebody was really organized. This was the Diane of two decades ago.

16-00:59:35
Bancroft: Yeah.

16-00:59.38
Bancroft: Well, I think Patricia started—who knows where she found all of these. This is the only one. There's about seven scrap binders in there, and this is the only one that has old pictures.

16-00:59:47
_: Look at that.

16-00:59.49
Bancroft: I know.

16-00:59:50
_: Oh, my gosh.

16-00:59.51
Bancroft: There's evidence that Malcolm—

16-00:59:53
_: Pre-beard.

16-00:59.53
Bancroft: —wasn't born with a beard. And little baby Reuben and the office.

16-01:00:03
Margolin: There's Reuben when he was just so weak.

16-01:00.07
Bancroft: Okay, so, Malcolm, I wanted to find a time for our next meeting before you have to take off.

16-01:00:15
_: Where are you going, Malcolm?

16-01:00.16
Margolin: I'm self-absorbed.

16-01:00:18
Bancroft: I know. He's like wandering down Memory Lane.

16-01:00:23
Margolin: I've got a dentist appointment at 11:00, but I'm free now.

16-01:00.24
Bancroft: I think this one is just—oh, yeah, that one.

16-01:00:05
— Look how dog-eared that is. Wow.

16-01:00:42
Margolin: So this was Reuben when he was just so little.

16-01:00.44
—: Just little. So do you have prints of these photos at home?

16-01:00:52
Margolin: No.

16-01:00.53
Bancroft: He hasn't even seen these in years.

16-01:00:54
Margolin: I never even had these.

16-01:00.55
—: Oh, wow.

16-01:00:56
Bancroft: Oh, since I have the two of you right here, can I get a picture of the two of you?

16-01:01:00
Margolin: Yes.

16-01:01.01
—: Yes.

16-01:01:03
Bancroft: Been getting random pictures of Malcolm and people on my phone today. Aw, that's great. Thank you. I shall send it.

16-01:01:15
—: Oh, good. How was yesterday? How was the Sacred Rock?

16-01:01.19
Margolin: It was just amazingly wonderful. It was amazingly wonderful.

16-01:01.24

_:

I bet.

16-01:01:25

Margolin:

There was all these mountain climbers from Yosemite, all these craggy characters getting old and climbing up. And I introduced Ron and I talked about how in 1974 I created Heyday Books, I created this thing that has brought me great joy and fulfillment. In 1974 Ron, at the age of seventeen, decided not to go to college, decided to just spend his life in Yosemite. So he created the life around himself that just gave him all this joy and fulfillment. And I talked about how when he came here he wanted to do a book and all kinds of people come and they want to do books, and you just kind of pat them on the head, and they eventually go away, and the book never gets done, and it's all to the better. But with Ron there was something about him. And it had to do with the fact that he'd never been to college, that words meant something to him that they didn't mean to people for whom words had been graded and domesticated and put in line. That for him ideas didn't relate to other ideas. They related to his life. And they came from a passionate area that education hadn't killed. And there was something about that auto-didactic unregulated—they're not weighed against other ideas. There was something raw and alive about his ideas and something raw and alive about him. And he gave the most amazing talk.

I was telling Kim when I was at the ACTA meetings, I was with this Cambodian dancer and we were looking at a picture of a Cambodian dancer who was in a statuesque posture. I said, "What's that all about?" And the dancer that I was talking to said, "That's what we call *khong*" I said, "What's *khong*?" She said, "*Khong* is when you are totally focused, when every cell in your body is vibrating and alive and it's all lined up for one purpose. And it happens to you once in a while." And I said, "I'm not sure what that's all about but I want to introduce you to Ron Kauk because he knows what it's all about." [laughter] And he came in with that physicality of his, that focus of his. It was just really great. How are you?

[Asides deleted]

16-01:04.54

Bancroft:

Okay. Now, in the meantime, if you give me any feedback about—I'm going to just keep reading and kind of start on chapter four. And I'll try to send you anything farther in advance. But there was a lot of material in chapter three and when I add another section about ACTA we may end up saying, okay, chapter three should really be two chapters. There were ten pages which—and, again, that's all single-spaced. So once I double-space it, it'll be even more. The deep hanging out, which is just all of your wonderful stories takes up a lot of the space in itself. Yeah. So part one is *Ohlone Way*, part two is *The Way We Lived*, which actually is kind of short. Part three is *Deep Hanging Out*, all of your stories. Part four is *News from Native California* and part five is these other organizations.

- 16-01:06:02
Margolin: Such a sweet memory of Jennifer Bates. Jennifer Bates, did I tell you about her description, her email to me?
- 16-01:06:16
Bancroft: No.
- 16-01:06:17
Margolin: Oh, it was the funniest thing.
- 16-01:06:24
Bancroft: Well, and then, some of these pictures, these old pictures, like that picture of you and Jennifer and Kimberly, she mentions her sister. That would be perfect for one of those with her baskets. I included a nice segment from her. I liked it about her describing the baskets and wanting to do baskets, so then it really becomes, for the reader, it's obviously not just about you, but it's about stepping into this world of basket making. And the same thing with Leanne, where she talked about—she kind of teaches us a little bit about language revitalization. Well, yes. There's the {inaudible} about {inaudible} where she talks about finding similarities between Jewish culture and Native culture, and you said the same thing. So I spliced those pieces together. Okay. I am going to pack up here.
- 16-01:07:51
Margolin: I'll have my bialy later on. {inaudible}. I've got a dentist appointment at 11:00.
- 16-01:07:59
Bancroft: Oh, so after the dentist.
- 16-01:08:01
Margolin: So I think I'll save it for after my dentist appointment.
- 16-01:08:02
Bancroft: Okay, very good. Yeah, I got it from the Cheese Board. I remembered you talking about the woman who was from—the parents started the Cheese Board. It's all connected.

[End Audio File 16]

Interview 17: March 22, 2013

[Begin Audio File 17]

17-00:00.00

Margolin: It's basically an outlaw institution. It's basically a rogue institution and it's gotten so damn big that it has to run on clear principles and yet at the basis of it is not responsibility but something else. And people who are scrupulously obedient and follow rules don't create things like Heyday. And yet when it gets bigger it has to follow rules. It's just the most interesting thing to watch it evolve. Stop for a second and—I haven't done much for you but—

17-00:00.49

Bancroft: Well, okay. But if you've done something on chapter three, that's crucial.

17-00:00.54

Margolin: I started looking at this.

17-00:00.56

Bancroft: Good.

17-00:00.57

Margolin: And take a look at what you've written. And it's true that I said these things. And this is the stuff that pours forth from interviews. And here's how I might have written those first few paragraphs.

17-00:01.51

Bancroft: Yeah.

17-00:01.52

Margolin: So there's something about the interview process that's kind of casual and off-handed and it's not deep. I'm not sure how we're going to work on this, but there's something about the thing. There's something slight about it. And it's not you.

17-00:02.20

Bancroft: Yeah. No, I know.

17-00:02.21

Margolin: It's the interviews.

17-00:02.22

Bancroft: It's interesting.

17-00:02.23

Margolin: It's what I say.

17-00:02.25

Bancroft: Because I've been reading this book and thinking about how people come across in Brower's book. And there's even more. In some ways it's less edited than what I'm doing because you get things like people saying, "I mean," "you know," and stuff that kind of doesn't necessarily even make sense,

whereas I'm trying to cut and paste. And where you say something, I might add a few words to expand. Are you feeling different now when it comes to this most important part of your life than you did in chapters one and two?

17-00:03:07

Margolin:

Yeah, I felt in chapters one and two it was okay. That when we're approaching this Indian stuff, that there's something about the off-handedness of it. There's something about the irreverence of it. There's something about it that—I should—

17-00:03:34

Bancroft:

I understand your point.

17-00:03:35

Margolin:

I should go over it again. I should go over it again.

17-00:03:37

Bancroft:

Okay. Okay, well, there's a couple of things here. Well, what would you like to do about that? Or what would you like me to do about it?

17-00:03:49

Margolin:

Well, it's maybe what we do together on this. And no, I'm not sure I can. There's such a luxury in having to do it and not control it. There's a real luxury in that. And maybe—

17-00:04:14

Bancroft:

Have you looked through all of this?

17-00:04:16

Margolin:

When I first read it, I looked at it. I looked through all of them. And I did. And I just picked it up this morning to review it. I was going to read the whole thing, but I stopped on the first couple of paragraphs.

17-00:04:26

Bancroft:

Yeah. All right. Well, let me make sure I've heard you out or we'll just keep on going through this as we are doing. It would be interesting again to get Gayle to look at it and give some feedback.

17-00:04:43

Margolin:

Yeah, that would be good.

17-00:04:44

Bancroft:

I hear what you're saying. There are places where, for example, where it seemed like—[reading] “I thought it would be an easy topic because they were simple people that lived in there.” And there's a sort of glibness about it because you're talking about it. But at the same time you are talking about the issues. Like here. Like we can take out Carlos Castaneda was a fascist and a fraud. There are things—

17-00:05:12

Margolin:

Oh, no, I put that in.

17-00:05.13

Bancroft:

Oh, you kept that in? Oh, okay, okay. He was. Okay, okay.

17-00:05:16

Margolin:

No, that was good. No, he was a fascist fraud.

17-00:05.16

Bancroft:

While I see that this is more scripted and careful, I don't see that the information is that much different. And if we know that this is an interview—that's the same thing. Like I'm listening to somebody talk. We're listening to you talk. We're not reading you, right? That there's a certain respect for how you present that information as a speaker differently than a writer. And I think a lot of the information is still there. What I do think is that—like here where you said every hippie household had a sepia Curtis print or a poster of Geronimo. I think you can still add that in.

Margolin:

That's what I would say.

17-00:06.04

Bancroft:

Right. And I think where it comes to this chapter, say the first couple of chapters—I'm expecting you to edit this and finesse it in the way you want to.

17-00:06:16

Margolin:

That's what I would probably do.

17-00:06.17

Bancroft:

But rather than see it as a complete and total rewrite—

17-00:06:20

Margolin:

No, I wouldn't see it as a total rewrite.

17-00:06.22

Bancroft:

Okay, good. Then what I think is you just go back in when I'm sending you this stuff and pull it up and take some time for all of these chapters to add in a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, if there's something else that you've remembered, that re-reading this reminds you of somebody else. Especially when it comes to this chapter, that it's such a crucial part of your life. But while holding on to the voice of a speaker because this is not a written essay. And there are things about this. You're still supposed to write the introduction but that's about—I don't know how you want to do the introduction, but that is clearly going to be a written piece. Okay. Go ahead.

17-00:07:16

Margolin:

Well, people are going to read it. So it's an interview, and I think that what works in short interviews of twenty pages. But you're talking about a long book. That tone of voice, I'm not sure that it works for a whole book. That you have specific interviews with different people, you have different tones and different voices. And I think it works in a small area. When I take a look at something like this—and I follow the script. What I've done is filled it out. And I filled it out admittedly in a different tone of voice.

17-00:07.54
Bancroft:

Yeah. See, that's kind of an issue because then if you're—like, say, “in truth, the decision to write a book”—even to say “in truth,” that's a writerly thing to say. Quickly and without much thought I decided to do a book. Some of this, it's going to sound like you wrote it, not that it was spoken. And so that could create a problem if you're not going to rewrite the whole chapter. And this is a really long chapter obviously because it's a really—

17-00:08:33
Margolin:

Because it's going to take a long time.

17-00:08.32
Bancroft:

I disagree that, one, we're thinking about this as a whole book sustaining interviews with you because, yes, they're huge chunks that are in your voice. But, Malcolm, you are a storyteller. People enjoy hearing your stories. And this book is a collection of your oral history. It's not a book written by you, right?

17-00:09:10
Margolin:

This is true, but when I see something like “This whole business of doing things myself was just so wonderful,” it seems that it needs some explanation, some depth. And why? What was so wonderful about it?

17-00:09.28
Bancroft:

Well, partly I think that comes from chapter two because you talked about doing *The East Bay Out*, right? So people have just read chapter two, theoretically, and there was a lot in there about getting to do that yourself and self-reliance.

17-00:09:45
Margolin:

Okay. That's probably okay. And maybe what I added in here was something that was in a previous chapter.

17-00:09.57
Bancroft:

Yeah. Right. See, this, you said, “If I centered the page number at the bottom,” that's all in chapter two.

17-00:10:08
Margolin:

So that is in chapter two. Okay. So that's there.

17-00:10.19
Bancroft:

And like the word “whereas.” I can't remember you saying “whereas” in our speaking. So this is interesting for me because it is about how do we differentiate spoken storytelling, the folklore. I just talked to Amy Kitchener. We are preserving your spoken lore here versus how we write it on the page. Like “I'd no sooner share.” You'd never say that, but you say it in writing. So I'd just beware of that, of the writerly ways we phrase things compared to—maybe the bigger question here is you being okay with this being a book of your spoken stories.

17-00:11:12
Margolin:

Maybe what we ought to do then is, instead of writing it out.

17-00:11:54
Bancroft:

And I definitely agree that there are places where you should add in, cross out. But I would encourage you to put the timer on and not try to rework the whole thing and create it into a written piece. Because I gave this to you as double spaced. So print it out double spaced and literally write in, so you're not tempted to do a whole rewrite. And I can add that stuff in. I'm expecting that from you. I would like that at some point with all of this, whether you do it yourself or you give me a draft of what you want in, what you want out, and come to live with the fact that you're a great storyteller. People are going to enjoy it. As you continue on—

17-00:12:45
Margolin:

I think it has something to do with storytelling. It has something to do with an active interest in Indians still thrives. If I were to tell that story, I would talk about it, I would talk about the pictures on the wall, I would talk about the books on the shelf. Maybe what I ought to do is talk about—

17-00:13:15
Bancroft:

Yeah, you can talk about it. And also, don't forget that we continue on here. I spliced together from three or four different interviews all of these stories that come from—let me show you. There's *The Ohlone Way*. And then going back to this. You go into a lot of this stuff. This was reception of *The Ohlone Way*. But you talking about how other people saw it and the stories relating to that. Then there's excerpts here from Darryl and Peter. And again, these are all spoken. So this is the consistent thing. This book is all, for the most part, interviews except for the excerpts. You talking a little bit about *The Way We Lived* and then Peter responding that this is kind of the heart of this chapter, *Deep Hanging Out*. And we've got a lot of your stories. So it's one interruption now from Jennifer. But you telling these stories of people that you knew and loved. And these are the stories, when people say to me, "Malcolm's such a great storyteller. Well, he'll tell this story better than I can." This is just your telling stories and getting very deeply into a lot of that stuff. And then it's *News from Native California*. So your writing is in here. We're going to see how your writerly voice is from everything from the *Earth Manual* to these other pieces. And then Jeannine, L. Frank. So then this is still all about *News*. Frank. Leanne. And then these other organizations. So you about the basket weavers. This was now again becoming much more of other people's voices. So Jennifer not only talking about starting CIBA [California Indigenous Basketweavers Association] but kind of what basket weaving means to her, so that we as a reader learn about this organization that you had something to do with. So there's a lot here from Jennifer. And you on the language revitalization and there's quite a bit. And, again, these beautiful stories. Georgiana Trull. There's quite a bit here from you. And then a bunch from Leanne. And, again, we've learned from Leanne and from you. But we get to learn from her perspective, too, what this language revitalization was

about. The Berkeley Roundhouse, Lindsie Bear, and then the last thing is ACTA, which goes in there actually before the Roundhouse. But I hadn't gotten that. I didn't have an interview with Amy yet.

So it's a lot. There's really a lot in here and I think they're good stories. And I don't think that you should feel that you're skimming over anything because there's a lot that you're saying, and it's clear as we move through all of this the depth of your knowledge and connection. It's not irreverent. Maybe it feels that way in the beginning because you're sort of laughing at how you got into this stuff, but clearly you got in very deep.

17-00:16:37

Margolin:

Okay. People have recorded my speeches a whole lot, and they've transcribed them, and I've always looked at the transcriptions and I've always been astounded at how what I knew was compelling when I was talking, and the transcription is full of gaps. And you've closed some of those; you've edited those down, so it makes more sense. I'll hold up on this. I'll hold up on this, and I'll go along with it happily.

17-00:17:10

Bancroft:

Good. Okay. I like to keep focused on timing of everything because it's now March, and I'm aware there's really a lot. I have a lot of material. I will have had sixty interviews in total. It's 800 or maybe 900 pages of material just from the interview transcripts. And then lots of the books that I am kind of looking at and trying to include. I just got from Diane a whole stack of mostly your memos.

17-00:17:57

Margolin:

Oh, no. [laughter]

17-00:18:00

Bancroft:

There's some wonderful little tidbits, so I was going through that last night. You were speaking about all of the changes in Heyday over time, and it's interesting to trace some of those in your memos. I just got the speech from Bill, your brother.

17-00:18:15

Margolin:

Oh, you did?

17-00:18:18

Bancroft:

I'm going to interview him by phone at some point. And we have our interview today. So there's really still a lot of material. So that's the other thing, is in some ways I don't want to encourage you to start off on another track over here and rewriting it. But I do want you to do—

17-00:18:38

Margolin:

I will go over it. I will go over it. I will go over it.

17-00:18.41
Bancroft:

Okay. Let's then talk about how that will happen. Let me tell you a little bit about my process as I'm doing this because I kind of had this plan, okay? I'm going to do a chapter a month, and then I realized, as I'm going through all of these other interviews, like I interviewed Jeannine, I mean, people that I interviewed six months ago. I'm now going through their interviews. Some of the pieces show up here, but a lot of the interviews, I think they would make good longer pieces, like longer sidebars that would go on for a couple of pages. And, again, then we start moving out of your voice. This is really about people's experiences with Heyday, with you, with the staff, with the writing, their own writing processes. So I'm trying to now go through all of the interviews. I cut myself out of them and then do the same thing I'm doing with you and weaving the pieces together. And then they could be pretty much like the interviews in here, where it's just four or five pages of one person talking. So I'm thinking that I'm going to—it's almost the end of March—finish that process, the remaining transcripts. And then I do have half of a chapter, of chapter four, which is really about after the process--t begins with Jake arrives and Heyday transforms. This chapter's all about Native California and then your move. Chapter four goes into then your move into University Avenue place, when you move out of the house. The interview with Francine Hartman; I know you said it was kind of sad, but there's a lot of really great stuff in there.

17-00:20:41
Margolin:

Yeah, there's some good stuff.

17-00:20:42
Bancroft:

And so that was when I started with that. There can be four or five pages of just her. And, again, cutting me out, editing it down, typing it up. So there's the interview with Francine. This is, again, chapter four. The story of Humphrey the Whale. Then there's Patricia. The Koerber Building? That's how you pronounced it?

17-00:21:03
Margolin:

Yeah.

17-00:21:03
Bancroft:

That's a character in itself. The descriptions that you have—

17-00:21:06
Margolin:

Yes, that was.

17-00:21:06
Bancroft:

—she had, there was something in the archives there, that I found a note that you wrote, one of your memos about the ninja guy. Just stuff like that.

17-00:21:16
Margolin:

I forgot about the ninja guy.

- 17-00:21.17
Bancroft: Jeannine about working in the Koerber Building and she told the—
- 17-00:21:21
Margolin: Dropping the keys.
- 17-00:21.22
Bancroft: Dropping the keys. So there's some just great stories. Okay. So then there's a kind of coming back into your interview, and you traveling and still going to Big Times and taking Sadie and Jake. Then I put in interviews, a section from Reuben, Sadie and Jake all go in chapter four. Then it continues back to developments at Heyday, how you were sort of watching it grow from being what had been your books and printing other people's books, and then the last section is supposed to be Heyday becomes a nonprofit. So I have all the rest of that written, and I can send it to you and you can look at it. I sent you an email, and I didn't want to overwhelm you if this was kind of enough. So I'm imagining I'll definitely, by the time I finish sorting through all of the information, I can still have chapter four done pretty fast, and then since I'm kind of cutting and pasting all of this stuff into the files for chapter five, six, and seven, I think it'll go pretty fast. So I think at some point, since one, two, and three—there might be things I add back into them. I'm actually still trying to get a first draft done by July 1st, if not sooner. You gave me an August 15th deadline for getting the book kind of done. What do you see your process in terms of going back through all of these chapters and penciling in what you want and what you don't want?
- 17-00:23:11
Margolin: Let me do them as you do them. I think if I save it all to the end, we'll be screwed.
- 17-00:23.19
Bancroft: Okay, all right. One and two, I think there might be some more stuff from Bill, and I wanted to ask you about Bill to add into chapter one. But maybe if I get that together by April 1st, how about let's say April 1st, or around then, you—
- 17-00:23:40
Margolin: How about creating a schedule and let me know when you need stuff by.
- 17-00:23.45
Bancroft: Okay, I will do that. Okay, so I will do that.
- 17-00:23:49
Margolin: And send me something and say—
- 17-00:23.50
Bancroft: Like with each of the chapters and say—
- 17-00:23:53
Margolin: —“Can you get this back to me by such and such a date?”

- 17-00:23.54
Bancroft: Good. There's a memo in here from you saying, "I'm sorry it's come to this, but we really need to be stricter about scheduling."
- 17-00:24:05
Margolin: I say this?
- 17-00:24:06
Bancroft: Yes, you do. I have the evidence.
- 17-00:24:08
Margolin: I was just trying it on. [laughter]
- 17-00:24.11
Bancroft: [laughter] Well, it's funny because in the memo you said, "Yeah. I'm not sure I like this. This doesn't feel comfortable. But I think we really need to do it." This is the fun of all of this for me. I'm having a great time, I just have to say, just watching the development and seeing it go from this little hippie operation, as you say. "In the sixties, we were small. There were only four or five of us and we kind of knew where everybody was. But now there's so many of us and there's so many demands. I hate to do this but we really have to get more institutionalized." "Not that word!" So it's fun to watch that. And so those are—
- 17-00:24:52
Margolin: If I knew my language was going to be held against me, I would have been more careful.
- 17-00:24.53
Bancroft: Yeah. Well, it will be there. And so that's part of it, is like thinking about some of these little notes that will just be kind of pull quotes and stuff that I think will be really fun. So I think it's great. I think that it's good to see this as a book of your stories, about your telling the story of Heyday and other people. It's coming along. It's going to be great. And also lots of images. That's the other thing. Yeah, for example, I saw the book again of the images that I found. So maybe I'll include that in there, like going back through those images and the images other people—I got a really nice note from Rina that she enjoyed seeing them.
- 17-00:25:41
Margolin: That was so revelatory. I'm wondering what the hell else is around.
- 17-00:25.45
Bancroft: Yeah. So I don't know, too, if there's somebody on staff that would help with the actual picking out of images, if you want to do that, but that's something else to think about. Or if that comes usually later. Actually, some of this stuff, while I'm in chapter four and other pieces, some of the interviews, people will say, "Oh, I have a great picture of that." So I put in brackets like, "let's get that picture" or I'm thinking of a picture I saw there or in the archives. Let's make sure we have a picture in there.

- 17-00:26:17
Margolin: Hey, listen, you grab the reins. Just take them. And set the schedules to when you need things and how you need them. There are so many competing demands on my time and on my mind that if something doesn't have an urgency or a particular structure to it it just kind of gets put aside.
- 17-00:26:46
Bancroft: Would Lorraine be the one working on design of this or imaging?
- 17-00:26:52
Margolin: She would work on the design, but she wouldn't work on the design until the very end.
- 17-00:27:00
Bancroft: Okay. So would Gayle be the one to talk to about images, just if I have questions about—
- 17-00:27:06
Margolin: Gayle would be the one to help us figure out who in here has the time and the capacity to look at the images.
- 17-00:27:14
Bancroft: Okay, so I'll work with her on this. Okay, cool.
- 17-00:27:18
Margolin: Let me take a brief break for a second.
- 17-00:27:19
Bancroft: Yes.
- Look what I found. Okay. So for today what I would like to do—I added several questions in that email I sent you, so I just want to be sure I go over them and some of them we almost just answered. And then I have some other questions for you, too, to just add. So first was I said I'd like to see a sidebar on Alcatraz, which I put there. And I couldn't find anything when I went through *News*, but then I realized that you had this. So I don't know if you have any idea. Because, again, I agree with you; there's a whole lot of background and Peter Nabokov also mentioned Alcatraz and providing some context and also showcasing Heyday books.
- 17-00:30:22
Margolin: I don't think there's anything that I can remember that talks about Alcatraz in a larger form, as to what it meant. There are particular articles about going to Alcatraz and particular people that have gone to Alcatraz.
- 17-00:30:38
Bancroft: Well, what do you think about an excerpt from this?
- 17-00:30:40
Margolin: We don't have the rights to that anymore. So the rights reverted to the author, and University of Nebraska has it published. If there's something in there, it

was somewhat egocentric, that Adam Fortunate Eagle presented—it was a wonderful book and he was a great storyteller. And he presented an Alcatraz that centered around Adam Fortunate Eagle. I'm not sure it would be worthwhile doing Alca—I think the troubles of getting a good written statement about it, I think you'd have to go outside the Heyday archives to get a good written statement of Alcatraz.

17-00:31:47
Bancroft:

Okay. You mention it, and I've read enough. I know. But I'm thinking about readers who are learning about all of this maybe for the first time or don't really know. So would you like to give us a sidebar? And why don't you tell me? What was Alcatraz about? You were there, later you learned about it. Well, what happened and what was the significance of it?

17-00:32:18
Margolin:

We can treat Alcatraz with some photos of Alcatraz and a few paragraphs. And the paragraphs would say something to the effect that—next week we've got a film that's coming up called "The Dakota 38," and we're sponsoring a couple of events around it. And it's the most crushing film that I've ever seen in my whole life. It is the suppression, the defeat, the emasculation, the complete annihilation of human beings in this country. It was just tremendous. And it happened especially in the plains among the Sioux, among these warrior cults. The warfare against aggressive males, the warfare against people that stood up for their rights. This was a complete act of conquest and a complete act of—the cultural history of this place has been a complete act of genocide. And I gave a speech to the Society of California Archeology. I gave the keynote address. And among the things that I talked about was what gives archeologists their rights? Where does the dominant society get its rights? I'll try to get back to Alcatraz.

Archeology as a discipline began at the turn of the century and it began with Kroeber in California. Kroeber coming, Max Uhle excavating the Berkeley and the Emeryville Shellmounds in the early 1900s. Nineteen oh-six was the American Antiquities Act, which forbid pot hunting on federal lands and de facto gave over to this professional class of archeologists the license to dig, and it took it away from everybody else and it gave it to them. And from this developed over the course of years the rights of archeologists to become in effect the—there's a phrase for it: protectors of the past. It's not quite the phrase. Custodians of the past? Something like that. It gave them ownership of the past. And it came in 1906. Only forty years before, slavery had been legal in the United States, when you could actually kidnap somebody from Africa, an African village, drag them across the sea and own them. It came at a time when the South was segregated. It came at a time when Europe was divided up. When Africa and Asia were divided up among European countries as colonies. They had walked in and taken it over. It came at a time when eugenics was on the rise. It came at a time when the seeds of Nazism were being sown throughout the world. It came at a time when the Dawes Act was

into disrupting reservations. In 1903 the Sherman Institute was created to bring Indians in and wash the language out of them. That the roots of this power that was given to archeologists come at a time which was of colonialism and racism, and that's where your goddamn powers lie. And every time you remove power from the Indian world, this is what you're drawing upon, is this history of racism and fascism and colonialism. And people talk about freedom of the intellect, freedom of research. There's no such thing. There are copyright laws, there are property laws. You can't come into my house and take my stuff. You can't come into my body and take my stuff. There are limits as to what you can do. And when you're talking about intellectual freedom, what you're really talking about is money and career and reputation and power and you may as well call it the real goddamn thing. And I just laid it out there. And it was coming in contact with that sense of outrage as to what had been done here.

And with Alcatraz you had people that had been marginalized, that had been eviscerated, that had been removed from any source of power and self-worth and stuff. And out of it came, from the sixties, came this remarkable thing of Alcatraz, that people stood up, and they stood up. It was Wounded Knee, it was Alcatraz, it was a few other places where people stood up to demand rights. And they stood up not just to beg but to demand and to say, "This is our property. We're going to take it over." And there was that statement that generated support. It was on KPFA. It was being broadcast. They had people broadcasting from Alcatraz. It came as part of the Vietnam protest. It came as part of a general cultural questioning in the United States of our values. We suddenly saw ourselves as colonialists, a racist nation at that particular point. And with it came pride, with it came images of Indians standing up and being strong, and there was something in there that just shifted the whole perception. And Indians, up until that time, had muffled their Indian identities. Came out now to be proud to be Indians. And even though there was in the end, it created an image. It created an undercurrent. It created a possibility. And out of it came AIM [the American Indian Movement], along with the Black Panthers and along with the other radical organizations, and there came something in there that shifted the ground. And it shifted the ground from a passive kind of defeated begging for survival, a kind of slavery—it was the warrior strength that came back. It came through like a fresh breeze.

17-00:39.30

Bancroft:

Wow. And so now then how did that connect back to Alcatraz in particular as an action?

17-00:39.39

Margolin:

Well, I'm talking about Alcatraz. I'm talking about that.

17-00:39.43

Bancroft:

Okay. Well, can you talk about some of the specifics, then, about like that takeover that either you remember then happening or since—

17-00:39:52
Margolin:

No, I wasn't around for Alcatraz. I was onto it later on. It had to do in part with the statement of the Indians, in part with the support with the community around, in part that there were people sending food out. That beautiful young women came out there to give themselves over to the Indians. This was important. And that suddenly there were people like Richard Oakes, who were so spectacularly handsome, and it was a new image of Indians. It was an image of Indians that wasn't just in the old mold, but these were heroes in movie star kind of ways. Named lawyers got involved in it. People that had yachts in the bay were bringing food. They were on the radio, they were on television. It was this Indian protest, which had previously been absent or subterranean or passive, suddenly was on the main screen. And it had to do with the realization that there was cultural support for Indian rights. Before that, there was no understanding that there was broad support for Indian rights. And that if you went out as an Indian you could get some kind of cultural affirmation for your Indianness. I think it had to do with the event itself. But the media amplification of the event.

17-00:41.34
Bancroft:

That's good. That's a connection. Because when you mention it and Peter and others say, well, Alcatraz happened so all of us have some meaning attached to that, even if you weren't here physically in '68, '69, '70, but there was this attention that it garnered.

17-00:41:52
Margolin:

The principle of Alcatraz had to do with federal property coming up for resale or reuse. And there was some kind of law that said that when federal property comes up, first grab goes to other states and counties and cities and Indian tribes somewhere along the way in there. And it was the principle that was used for the creation of DQ University. It was the principle that was used for the takeover of Ya-Ka-Ama in Sonoma. It was up in river country. There was a takeover over there. There was the sense that you could get land back. It wasn't just rights. It was land. You could actually get land back. That this land had been taken and this land could be gotten back. And there was cultural support and legal power behind it.

17-00:42.56
Bancroft:

This is a little bit off-topic but you reminded me in the talks that I had with both Darryl and Frank, this issue of Native groups wanting to get land and get federal recognition. And Frank talked about his struggle to get the papers together and get forty acres for the Wintu tribe to be able to have their own place again, whereas when I talked to Darryl about it, his attitude was like, no. He was aligned with the elders who said, "No, we are not going to engage with the enemy at any cost. We refuse to go through this process. If we allow the federal government to recognize us, then we become slaves to the government." And I'd love to hear your take on that because they were very—and even with Darryl I said, "Well, I understand that perspective but at the same time, then you end up with nothing as opposed to having something,

some piece of land for the people to gather around or utilize.” And he was just adamant. “No, we are not giving in.” So what’s your perspective on that?

17-00:44:08
Margolin:

There was a council of Indians that wanted to build a roundhouse in a national park. And they started building the roundhouse and they got permission to build the roundhouse, and it was halfway erected when the park superintendent came in and said, “It has to be up to code.” And an engineer came in and looked at it and said, “This is going to fall down and kill 500 people and you as the superintendent are going to be personally liable and criminally liable and you’re going to lose your job and your family.” And so he closed it down. So they were sitting there and they’re just outraged at this affront to Indians sovereignty, to Indian rights, to religious freedom.

And they asked if I would come down. I came down with Lindsie. And if I would come down and meet with them and talk to them. And I know the park superintendent. So I came down and talked to them. What I was aware of was in that group of seven or eight people sitting around there were several different factions. There were people that wanted to compromise, there were people that “you have absolutely no goddamn right to tell us what to do with our religion, how to build a roundhouse. Who are you to tell us how to build a roundhouse?” There are other people that said something like, “Well, we’re building it on their land, with their money and their liability, and we’ve got to do something.” And yet it was dominated by this fierce guy that just is fierce and dominates and is intelligent and manipulative. And then there are other people sitting around not knowing quite what to do.

So then I went and I saw the superintendent and it turned out to be even more complicated because there’s another group that claims to have sovereignty over this, and they didn’t want him to speak to this group and stuff. And the complications of factions, the complications of different points of view that is so lovely, it is so robust, it is so fertile. It so prevents anything from getting done. It’s just so marvelous. And there are basic divisions. If you had to point to a basic division, it would be divisions between cultural people and political people. And you have within these groups political people who are used to dealing with power, getting things done in the real world, and religious people who are more fundamentalist. It’s like fundamentalism and political expediencies in our culture. And Darryl is not a political person. Darryl does not have political power. Darryl is not a member of a tribe, so he does not negotiate. He’s a religious figure.

17-00:47:21
Bancroft:

Spiritual.

17-00:47:22
Margolin:

He’s spiritual, and he’s speaking for the spirit and he’s speaking for no compromise and for life of the spirit. Other people are in there trying to figure out how the hell you get something done, and they’re more willing to

compromise. Some people are willing to sell out entirely. Some people are willing to take what they can and join. They can hardly wait to join the dominant culture. And those of us of immigrant backgrounds who have joined the dominant culture have absolutely no right to criticize them. This is where they're going and good luck to them. I don't have any right to stand anywhere on this stuff.

17-00:48.08
Bancroft:

I just wondered your perspective on it.

17-00:48:09
Margolin:

I think both sides are right within their definition of it all. That infighting is so amazingly interesting. I may have told this story but I remember the early basket weavers' conference. I was looking around. That there were all these people there, and they were sharing their secrets and they were sharing where they were getting material from and who they were selling their baskets to. And I went off to Lowell Bean and I said, "Lowell," he's an old anthropologist, I said, "Lowell," I said, "it's the most amazing thing I've ever seen. That they were all sitting around, they were talking about where they gather material, where they were selling their baskets, what their designs were, what their tricks were. They were sharing this." I said, "It's just astonishing." When Mabel McKay was alive, they'd be afraid she was going to poison them. And when Laura was alive, she was afraid she'd steal their secrets. When Elsie was alive, they were afraid she'd sell them out. And these old fierce women that had their magic and their enmity and their power. But that generation is gone, and they were sitting around, they were sharing it. Lowell said, "Don't you miss the old days?" [laughter]

17-00:49.31
Bancroft:

Well, that's what Jennifer says, that her experience with the basket weavers, with the association, was how wonderful it was to learn who everybody was, what they were doing, what their problems were that they were facing, whether it was with CalTrans, with parks. And so there's a different sense of—

17-00:49:48
Margolin:

There was that brief flowering in those early days of love and cooperation and stuff. Jennifer got kicked out of the basket weavers.

17-00:50.00
Bancroft:

Yeah. And L. Frank alluded—both of them alluded—well, actually, Jennifer didn't allude to the problems. L. Frank did. And I didn't ask, and it doesn't need to be in the book, but it did sound horrendous.

17-00:50:17
Margolin:

If you want infighting and dysfunction, look at the anthropology department at Cal. It's practically in receivership. [laughter] They can't get along.

17-00:50.31

Bancroft:

Okay. Well, I think that's good. I think that actually gives me a lot to work with for that Alcatraz section.

17-00:50:39

Margolin:

I think that a lot of the pictures in that book are by Ilka Hartmann. I saw her last night. And we could probably get some good photos from Ilka.

17-00:50.46

Bancroft:

Oh, that would be great. That would be great.

17-00:50:48

Margolin:

If we don't have any around here.

17-00:50.50

Bancroft:

So I'll put that in as a note. Okay. Let's see. My second question was just about things being stricken from the record, but I'll have you do that when you edit chapters.

17-00:51:06

Margolin:

I'll stricken them.

17-00:51.07

Bancroft:

You strick. Okay. My question number three was, speaking of David, in this chapter when you talk about him, you mention that he had given you a medicine bundle from a shaman, but I never followed up on that story and I was kind of curious. Was there some significance to that medicine bundle? And why did he give it to you, and whatever happened? I said either let's go deeper and provide context or just cut it because it's an odd little thing in there.

17-00:51:42

Margolin:

Let me tell it to you, and we'll figure out how to handle it. David was carrying on various love affairs. David was into drugs. David's life was falling apart, and he had Tom Smith's medicine bundle. And Tom Smith was the shaman from Bodega Bay who caused the earthquakes, according to people. He was in a shaman's contest, and he wanted to show his power, and he caused the 1906 earthquake. And Greg Sarris writes about Tom Smith. Everybody writes about Tom Smith. He was an amazingly, well-known, powerful, central person in the world and in Indian imagination, right to the present. He had a brother. There was Tom Smith and Steven Smith, I think. And the Steven Smith line has come down. I'm not sure the Tom Smith line has continued, but that family is still in there. And I guess that David was related to Tom Smith. I'm not sure now. But he had this medicine bundle which was a bunch of crystals and stones and amulets. He originally gave it to me because we were thinking of doing an article on shaman kits, on shamans' paraphernalia. And when his life fell apart, he asked me to keep it. And I put it away. I'm not religious. I'm not superstitious. I don't believe in any of this stuff. It seemed so totally inappropriate for me to have this. It just wasn't right that this Jewish guy from Boston had Tom Smith's medicine bundle. And eventually David died, and I

kept it. And I never told anybody that I had it. I kept it hidden. And one day Gladys Gonzalez's son, I'm blocking on his name, but he was in his forties or fifties, and he was edging into shaman stuff and he came to me and he says, "We understand you have Tom Smith's medicine bundle."

17-00:54.36
Bancroft:

Who is Gladys Gonzalez?

17-00:54.40
Margolin:

Gladys Gonzalez was one of the wonderful old women at the Kashaya Reservation. God, I was up at Fort Ross with the Kashaya the other week, and that was the most amazing thing. That was so touching. And Gladys Gonzalez was a person of just wonderful power and knowledge and soundness of being and firmness. She knew the songs, she knew the dances, she had moved up to Washington and would come down for the different ceremonies. But he came to me and he said that he wanted it. And I said, "Hey, listen," I said, "let me think about this." I said, "I just don't know what to do with it, and I just can't give it to anybody that comes along and it doesn't belong to me." So finally I decided to give it to David's sister. I figured that it would be a family thing, and I gave it to the sister, and I have no idea what's happened to it since.

17-00:55.46
Bancroft:

So just to clarify. So David was a descendent of the Steven Smith line?

17-00:55.51
Margolin:

No, I think he was a descendent of Tom Smith's. I think he was a direct descendent of Tom Smith, but I'm not 100% sure of that.

17-00:55.58
Bancroft:

Oh, okay. That's very interesting.

17-00:56.01
Margolin:

That Tom Smith had lived in his grandmother's house when he was growing up, I think, and his mother was the last speaker of the Coast Miwok language.

17-00:56.15
Bancroft:

David's mother was?

17-00:56.16
Margolin:

David's grandmother was. And I think her name—

17-00:56.19
Bancroft:

What was her name?

17-00:56.19
Margolin:

—was Annie Ballard. Annie Ballard. And there was that wonderful story that David told me about Annie Ballard and the linguist, Catherine Callaghan, who came—did I tell you the story—

17-00:56.30
Bancroft:

Asking her about—that she had a word?

17-00:56:34
Margolin:

Yeah, yeah.

17-00:56:35
Bancroft:

Yes, I loved it. That's in there, too. That's just wonderful, yeah.

17-00:56:37
Margolin:

That was David's story. It edges into this cheap shaman shit that goes on in the culture, that there's magic Indian stuff and the New Age stuff. I'm uneasy around it. I'm uneasy contradicting it. I'm uneasy furthering it. I'm just uneasy around it. And it seems, as a non-believer and as a guest in somebody else's culture, I just better keep my mouth shut and be quiet.

The trip to Kashaya was—I went up with Lindsie to Kashaya to Fort Ross. Matini was the Indian village at Fort Ross. When the Russians arrived, they confronted the Matini. They built their fort. They employed them. Some of the women were either kidnapped or married and went away with them. I think Fort Ross was founded in 1812 and I think it was dismantled in the 1830s, 1836 if I remember correctly. And it's amazing that there are memories of this, that there are still stories of this.

And what happened to the Kashaya—tell me if this is going to stray too much. But what happened to the Kashaya there was that when the Gold Rush came and everybody was being killed and their lands were being taken, an Indian woman married some guy named Charlie Haupt, H-A-U-P-T, up at Haupt Ranch, and the Indians all moved onto Haupt Ranch and they stayed. And Charlie Haupt gave them some land, and they farmed and they were living up in Haupt Ranch. In the 1870s the Ghost Dance came to California, and it was this Messianic revivalist thing, and it said that if you danced in a roundhouse for a couple of weeks, the white people would disappear, the ghosts of the ancestors would come back, and the world would be restored. So all of the Indians from Haupt Ranch went down the Russian River, they went up to Cloverdale where there was a roundhouse, and they danced for a couple of weeks. And they came out, and there was nothing but mocking whites making fun of them. So they came down to the Russian River. They went back to Haupt's Ranch. The crops had withered, and there was a winter of starvation.

Out of that there was a woman that rose up. I'll have to find her name. I used to know it. But she rose up and she said, "We can't trust the whites. We can't trust the other Indians. We're just going to shut down." So they closed down. They lived among themselves. They intermarried among a small circle of people. And when this woman died, Annie Jarvis kept this isolationist tendency for years. And when she died, Essie Parrish came in, and Essie Parrish didn't die until 1976. So you had this isolated community with a language that was kept alive, the dances were kept alive. Bun Lucas was from that community. David Smith was from that community. Clarence Carrillo, Alice Poe, the Marrufo family, Lauren Smith, a healer. Various people that were soaked in the language and soaked in the culture. When the seventies

came, and there was a cultural revival in California, it was Kashaya that remembered the songs and remembered the dances. And what you see in a lot of California these days is a Kashaya-ization of culture. A lot of these practices that people call indigenous were not indigenous to that place. They came out of Kashaya and they came out of that ghost dance tradition in some ways.

So in this isolated world, these people remembered the Russians. It was their history. And the Russians had taken these women and they had also taken some implements. They'd taken some dance regalia, some condor capes, some other stuff, and they brought it back to Saint Petersburg. This delegation had gone there to Saint Petersburg. Lester Pinola had heard all of his life about a couple of great-great aunts who were kidnapped and taken away. And no one had ever sung for them. So he had to go to back to Russia to find out what happened to them so he could sing for them. And then there was the sense that the implements were missing, the implements needed. So they came back to visit the implements. So we ended up spending a couple of days up there, listening to people and taking their stories and seeing if we can raise some money for him to go back. Where did that come from? Because I was talking about Tom Smith, I was talking about medicine bundle.

17-01:02:23
Bancroft:

Well, just about your going up there this weekend and how meaningful that had been.

17-01:02:32
Margolin:

I think it's partly the Indian sense of elder, that I've grown old enough so that I'm considered an elder. It's been the most fragile and lovely thing, is to have people's trust and people's affection, and to go around and to be treated well. It's just been wonderful. Just been wonderful.

17-01:03:01
Bancroft:

Yeah. You mentioned that, that at a meeting here there were several young people, and people were deferring to you as an honorary elder because you've heard so many stories and been with so many of the elders, from thirty years and forty years ago, that you've become one of the holders of the stories and memories.

17-01:03:21
Margolin:

Yeah, I do. I do. I'll turn the dial down on it when you write it up, but it's true.

17-01:03:30
Bancroft:

I don't think you need to turn the dial down. I think it's humble enough and true. And the proof is that you've got these stories and now we will all have them a little bit more. Well, and certainly the work that Heyday does. As I'm continuing to talk to people, *News*, you're looking even at the last *News*, was Tony Platt writing about the Yoayo and there I am up in Willits, and that was

really wonderful and shattering. Okay, well, that's good. I'm hoping to hear more about that. Okay. I'm going to keep going here.

The part that was here about *The Way We Lived*. We didn't really talk that much about it and in part you present it as an opportunity to collect stories. That's all that I got from you about it. That you were basically taking what was on the cutting room floor—

17-01:04:33
Margolin:

Yeah, that's the way I presented it.

17-01:04:35
Bancroft:

And I don't know if there's anything more you'd like—you don't have to. I think you're basically pulling together the pieces from other voices, and you wanted them to speak for themselves after *The Ohlone Way*, but I don't know if you want to add anything more about it.

17-01:05:21
Margolin:

One thing you might add is that I revised it in later years to add a lot of new stuff. I began writing about *The Ohlone Way*, and I was interested in the past, and the present was something that was less interesting to me. And *The Way We Lived* started out with stuff on the cutting room floor that was about the past. And I still am interested in it. I was talking to some people about how I would love to do this grand encyclopedia of Indian life in California as it was at the point of contact. I would love to commission people to do paintings. I would love to recreate it. The way we did *State of Change*. I would love to do something of that magnitude. But in the second edition, the present becomes much more powerful. The balance begins to tip. I think also, to the extent that I'm critical of it, there's that wonderful distinction that Tim Buckley made between understanding and explaining. And I think in retrospect I would have done a little bit more understanding, a little bit less explaining. That I think when I started it, there was the need to know, the need to be the guy that explains. "What does this mean? What does that mean?" I think I've evolved to the point where I'm just telling stories about it. Where the meaning is less clear to me, that the meaning is not as narrow as it once was. It's not as articulated.

You start out as a baby and you start out building your personality and you build up your capacities, your skills, your personality, your attitude. And to protect it, you build a wall around yourself. In the latter part of your life, your whole goddamn quest is to get rid of that wall, to just become more open to the world, to let things flow in, to let things flow out, to not be as guarded, to be porous and open and responsive and feel and listen. Feel other people's pain and their joy and share in it. And this whole emotionality that I have where I can't get through twenty minutes without crying is just this sense of—I'm losing the boundary is what's happening. I'm just losing the boundary between myself and other things. And it's wonderful. It's just utterly wonderful.

And there was something in that book where there was an attempt to stand—there was the Indian interviews or Indian voice, and then there was my interpretation around it. And I felt that what I had to do was interpret it for people. I had to tell them what it meant. And it was probably a good service, but it's nothing that I would do right now.

17-01:09.17
Bancroft:

How was that book received?

17-01:09.21
Margolin:

Really well. It was received well.

17-01:09.24
Bancroft:

For example—

17-01:09.25
Margolin:

It was received well. I'm infinitely more critical of myself than anybody is of me.

17-01:09.29
Bancroft:

We tend to be.

17-01:09.31
Margolin:

Yeah. It was received well. And I thought my best book was the *Life in a California Mission*. The introduction to that was the best piece that I've written on California Indians, except for the stuff that I've written for *News* recently, in the last few years. I thought I was beginning to understand it.

17-01:10.07
Bancroft:

What did you like about it in particular as you critique or evaluate your own writing in that piece?

17-01:10.29
Margolin:

I think that it was inclusive. I think that I included the stories of missionaries, of Indians. I saw it as a bigger tragedy. I didn't see it as a single narrow thing. I think that I could kind of get above it and see it from a distance. I could see it through La Pérouse's eyes. It was so interesting to see it through his eyes. And I haven't read it for a while. It was just sharp and clear. It was the journals of La Pérouse. And I did some thorough annotation of it, and I wrote a long introduction to it. And it was partly this business of serving this journal. That I have this thing that I could wrap myself around, interpret, play with, and it became a communal work between me and the journal that seemed to suit me really well. I haven't read it in a while. I remember the text as being pretty good.

17-01:12.00
Bancroft:

Do you think that would be—okay, this leads to my next question. *The Way We Lived*, I thought about having an excerpt from there and I could add in what you're saying about that piece and add in an excerpt from that piece, as well. And I think there's something valuable about getting to see your writing,

since you are also a writer and a very good one. So one is, yes, it's just, shall I try to include something from that other piece? And two, do you want me to try to find these excerpts like I did for the other books, and then you can say yea or nay, or do you want to just find them yourself? When I assign you, I say, "Okay, here comes chapter three," and specifically you need to do X, Y, and Z, and use an excerpt."

17-01:12:53
Margolin:

I could find one in fifteen minutes. It would take you all day.

17-01:12:56
Bancroft:

Okay. And that's the same thing, also, my other question, too, I had about *News* because there's several pieces in here. When we get into *News*, the people who are writers for *News*. So part four is the founding of *News*. Again, this is a long chapter. This is single-spaced thirty-two. So, deciding it should be two chapters. Oh, so sidebar page for Logan Slagle. All of these. We have your notes about David Peri and something that he had written here. But do we want something about and from Logan? You had mentioned that. And then images from L. Frank. Maybe an excerpt from Darryl's *News*, something from Frank from *News*, something from Leanne from *News*. Do you want to try to find those or shall I?

17-01:13:59
Margolin:

Excerpts of my writing?

17-01:14:01
Bancroft:

No, excerpts when it comes to—well, both your writing—

17-01:14:03
Margolin:

Oh, from—

17-01:14:04
Bancroft:

—yes, and from them.

17-01:14:11
Margolin:

Why don't you let me do it? And I'm stuck for time, but on the other hand I know this material, like we just go to stuff.

17-01:14:18
Bancroft:

Yeah, yeah. And maybe that would be something Lindsie or an intern could help find. And I'm happy to do it, too. But I'm just saying if you want to take a stab at it. So what I'll do is when it comes time, when I send you chapter three and say, "Okay, it's time for you to, one, go through and edit, and, two, find the following pieces that we refer to in here as excerpts." Okay. So that'll be good. Yeah, that was question number five.

17-01:14:48
Margolin:

And there are also so many other things that I wrote for *News*, which are just—they're pretty good.

17-01:14.56
Bancroft:

Yeah. And also, I mean, I'm looking at the introductions to the catalogues. There were pieces that you wrote that were very nice. So I will add that to my list, my checklist. Please find your own pieces from *News* that you would like to include. So I'm thinking that this chapter, the more we talk about it and the more I'm interviewing you and getting more for it, I think I'd like to subdivide it. There'll be two chapters about Native California, and one could be focused on the books and things that you wrote initially, *The Ohlone Way*, *The Way We Lived*, and your experiences, *Deep Hanging Out*. And then what will now be chapter four—I'm just brainstorming here—would get into some of the offshoots. So that would be *News*, CIBA, the roundhouses.

17-01:15:49
Margolin:

That sounds right. That sounds right.

17-01:15.51
Bancroft:

Okay. Because then otherwise it's less—

17-01:15:51
Margolin:

And then we can do another chapter. We can do the Pomo Swimsuit issue.

17-01:15.56
Bancroft:

The what?

17-01:15:57
Margolin:

The Pomo Swimsuit issue of *News*.

17-01:15.59
Bancroft:

[laughter] I thought you said that. What is that?

17-01:16:05
Margolin:

[laughter] I've been planning the last issue of *News*. When I have my tickets to Brazil and I'm going to burn all my bridges. I call it the Pomo Swimsuit issue.

17-01:16.15
Bancroft:

Okay. Very good, very good. Okay. Yes. There'll be room for that. Okay. All right, good. We'll move forward. Okay, last couple of things about this chapter. One was the [Heyday Berkeley] Roundhouse. So at the very end, I wanted to end it, apart from the Pomo swimsuit debacle, is I have an interview here with Lindsie about the Roundhouse. And before this will go ACTA, because I didn't have that information yet. But I didn't get anything from you really about the Roundhouse, and so I would love to get your take on your thoughts, the evolution of Heyday and *News* and the Indian publishing and how it became the Roundhouse, and what you are hoping for the Roundhouse and why the Roundhouse as a name for it? I can imagine but—

17-01:17:23
Margolin:

Well, it's a metaphor, of course. I guess this whole writing and publishing stuff is just an excuse to be engaged in the world. It's what I can do to get

invited to places, to be active, to meet people, to be useful, to have fun, to explore places. And we can do it through books, we can do it through a magazine, we can do it through events, we can do it through film stuff. But at the basis of it all is just wanting to be engaged and wanting to move around and wanting to have people in my life and wanting to have a scene and wanting to have a clubhouse and wanting to have surprises and affection and correct injustice and do the various things that I do. And there's something about the specificity of a magazine or a book or the physicality of it that is good but it doesn't quite reflect for me the grand opera that I seem to be part of. The people, the places, the experiences.

Etta Charles just died. She was 103. She died a couple of weeks ago. She was born in 1909, and she was the last person I know that was raised by people that remembered California before the coming of whites. It was the last link. I'm so privileged to have known people like this. I'm just so privileged to have met people like this, that I was alive at this particular time in history. And it's not just the writing of them, it's not just the production of books, it's not just the events. It's the milieu, it's the spirit of it, it's the social aspects of it. It takes different shapes, it takes different forms. It takes the forms of text, it takes the forms of talks, it takes the forms of films. But there's something else in there. There's a way of being, there's a way of thinking. There's something else in there.

And the Roundhouse was a communal enterprise. To build the Roundhouse was a major public works project. You had to gather people around when you sat in the roundhouse. The people from different areas would come and dig out the part of the Roundhouse that was in their area and then they would sit down. There were ritual ways of sitting in a roundhouse. And the ways you were sitting in the roundhouse corresponded to your relationships with the moieties and the clans that were around. So if your family and my family had mutual undertaking arrangements, I'd bury your dead, you'd bury my dead, we would sit in particular places in the roundhouse that symbolized or reflected these relationships. And there was something about the way it holds the community together, there's something for—that has a range of activities. So I kind of use it as a metaphor.

I'm aware of just this tremendous amount of wealth that's in here, this tremendous amount of connection that we have. The photos, the journals, the writings, the various things that we have. It's just so deep and there's nobody that has anything like it. It's creating a place for it. I want to create a place. I want, when you walk into this place, that you understand—there's the tone changes. There's something in the visual aspect of it. The paintings on the wall. Lindsie, as she's editing *News* and stuff, has created a sepia-free zone, and it's to ensure that we don't have that same sickly sentimentality of the Curtis photos, there's something else in there. There's another tone in there. We want to have courses, we want to have an artist-in-residence. We want to

have a library. We want to have writings coming out of it. We want to have meetings that happen. We want to have—

17-01:23.40
Bancroft:

What about the film series?

17-01:23.42
Margolin:

We want to have a California Indian film series, and we just jumped into it with the need to do the Lakota film. There have been grant applications that have gone out where we pretend it's carefully defined and there are deliverables and schedules. When I gave this talk last night for the Art Commission book, I started out by saying that we do about twenty or twenty-five books a year. That when you're doing that many books you have to have systems and schedules and budgets. And we have systems, schedules, and budgets. We spend a lot of time on our systems, schedules, and budgets. And if what we were doing were telephone books or plumbing directories, this would be sufficient. But we're not. We're doing something else. And while you need these things, you need something else, and you need passion and ferocity. And the place, it's a creative enterprise. It lives on risk. It lives on not quite knowing what you're doing. It's not paint-by-number. If it becomes paint-by-number, the whole place just dies of rigor mortis. And it's troublesome right now with my finance committee, with the board, and staff-- is to make certain that we retain that risk, that spontaneity, that capacity to make quick decisions. So the Roundhouse is unstructured—it's me, it's Lindsie, it's Frank LaPena, it's L. Frank, it's Jennifer, it's a circle of friends.

17-01:25.55
Bancroft:

That sounds like a structure. That's a circle. I'm just thinking of the metaphor of the roundhouse as a structure. And there is a structure, but even the story that you said, that it has to be built to fall down every twenty years so that a new generation will learn how to build it and revive the old traditions. So it sounds like in that same sense it's flexible enough to incorporate what's new, get beyond the sepia. And I remember Lindsie talking about hip clothing designs online by young Native Americans today, things that are really different and new. But there are these structures that you as a pillar and Frank and L. Frank, that the new elders saying, "Hey, come in and create something." *News* is a pillar.

17-01:26.52
Margolin:

Yeah, it is. It is.

17-01:26.54
Bancroft:

And all of these books. I was going through the catalogues even from 1992 and '94 and watching the catalogue grow from what had been a total of twenty-five books listed and six of them were Ivan Illich and then to fifty-four by 1999. So even in those years there was so much that was growing. Let me ask you actually about this little roundhouse here.

- 17-01:27:21
Margolin: Bun Lucas made that.
- 17-01:27:22
Bancroft: Oh, I'm going to take a picture of it. That's just amazing.
- 17-01:27:28
Margolin: It's the Kashaya roundhouse. It's the second Kashaya roundhouse.
- 17-01:27:35
Bancroft: Okay, that's very good. Yeah. So, okay, is there anything else you want to say about that?
- 17-01:28:01
Margolin: It'll change. The common theme when I introduce Lindsie as the person that's taking over California Indian Publishing, people will say to Lindsie, "You've got big shoes to fill." And my statement to her is, "If you try to fill my shoes, they're not going to fit. Fill your own shoes." [laughter]
- 17-01:28:27
Bancroft: Lindsie also says that one of her favorite lines from you is that you'd like to be known as Lindsie Bear's predecessor.
- 17-01:28:36
Margolin: Yes, that's how I'd like to be known. I adore her. She's just really great.
- 17-01:28:39
Bancroft: Yeah, she is great. Okay. Well, that's good. I have a whole bunch of other questions so I don't know if you want to take a little—
- 17-01:28:48
Margolin: Yeah, let's take a—
- 17-01:28:48
Bancroft: —break and I'm going to download this. It's 10:30 now. And I could see talking to you for at least forty-five minutes, but if you have only thirty, I'll take whatever I can get.
- 17-01:29:04
Margolin: There's somebody coming up I think at 11:30.
- 17-01:29:06
Bancroft: At 11:30, okay. So let's just take a quick five minute break and then—[break in audio] Okay, so some of them can be short. I remember I heard Fred mention the chair and the Earl Warren chair. I'm going to take a picture of it. What's the story of that chair?
- 17-01:29:56
Margolin: It was given to me by a lawyer. When Earl Warren would come up to the office, this was the chair he'd sit in in their old office, and when they

redecorated the office the lawyer took it home, and his wife didn't like the chair, so he gave it to me.

17-01:30:10

Bancroft: Who was the lawyer? That's okay, it doesn't matter.

17-01:30:24

Margolin: If this gets in, I'll find his name. I've been dealing with lawyers a lot. Nothing legal. I gave the most wonderful talk at—

17-01:30:37

Bancroft: Well, the legal system of the—

17-01:30:41

Margolin: The legal system at John Briscoe's place was just so wonderful. It was so much fun.

17-01:30:50

Bancroft: Okay. Well, now, also you had a bunch of stories you wanted to tell me. But I wanted—

17-01:30:55

Margolin: Well, I'm not sure what I've told you and what I haven't told you. And I noticed as I was going through a lot of the stuff that I wanted to tell you, I've already told you. So to answer, I'm not sure. There are stories that I tell. And they don't fit in. I was telling Donna Graves two days ago--we were driving home together--and I told her the wonderful stories of Michael Rosman, the guy that had the posters. And his wife Karen came up. Did I tell—

17-01:31:50

Bancroft: Well, you told me about Karen coming. And so that was in our last interview. But I realized that I know of Michael Rosman from the film *Berkeley in the Sixties* and the protest but that was one point in his life. But you just mentioned, for example, the posters. But can you explain a little bit more about him? And you told me your interaction with her after he's already long gone.

17-01:32:22

Margolin: We're coming up on their fiftieth anniversary. Did I tell you?

17-01:32:25

Bancroft: Yeah, that was wonderful.

17-01:32:26

Margolin: And his dying?

17-01:32:31

Bancroft: Yeah. But tell me about him. Were you friends with him? You knew him and—

17-01:32:38
Margolin:

Yeah, I was good friends with him. There was a group of writers that would get together, that was myself and Michael Rosman and Fred Cody and Dorothy Bryant and Ernest Callenbach and Theodore Roszak. And there were a few others that would get together. And we'd get together once a month and just eat and talk about what we were doing. And Michael was part of that. And Michael was a teacher. He was a science teacher. Sadie hated his guts. Thought he was the most disgusting person she'd ever met. And Michael had no sense of smell. He had no sense of smell. And he was constantly eating dead animals and dissecting things and had smelly dogs and always smelled of marijuana and was completely horrifying. And there was something about his mind that would move like a flow of molasses. There was a slowness to it all. And kind of get puddled in places and he'd stop and then would move on. He wrote about education. He wrote about a whole lot of things. There was a unique genius to him. There was a unique genius. They don't make people like this anymore. They never made anybody quite like this. And I think that there was some family money in there, so I don't think he had to support himself. His brother, I think, grew dope. I saw Ed Rosenthal last night. I hung out with Ed. Ed Rosenthal of *High Times*, Ask Uncle Ed. And it was such fun to see him. And Michael was always stoned. Michael was the night pilot. There are those that see things and have dead reckonings. There are those in the night that move by other channels and other knowledge and in the darkness, and he was a night pilot. He moved through the darkness. It's one of my favorite lines from the *Iliad*, is when Aeneas, during the day, the rhythms are iambic pentameter. The motion is crisp, things are clear. And then night falls, and he hands the rudder over to Palinurus. There's this wonderful line, [Latin], I "It comes from nowhere. It comes from the world, searching for Palinurus, bringing you sadness that you don't deserve." And the rhythm changes, it's nighttime. There's slow strophic rhythms, and it's this different world, and Michael was part of that world.

17-01:36:19
Bancroft:

That's nice. Well, you just mentioned Chick [Ernest] Callenbach and I wanted to include him in the stories that you tell of friends because before I got to ask you about Jeff and Fred and Bob. So what about Chick? How did you meet him? You mentioned him in the writing of when you were all throwing together *Humphrey the Whale* but I know there was many associations before and after that, so I wanted to hear some Chick stories.

17-01:37:01
Margolin:

Denny Smithson was working at Cody's and he had a show on KPFA. I was in Cody's once and Chick [Ernest Callenbach] walked in and he introduced me to Chick. He said, "You two should know each other." It turns out that I had known Chick, but when Rina and I had a place on Edith Street—it was the place that we moved out of because I didn't want to live in houses--across the backyard there was another house, and you could see the porch up there and Chick was sitting on his porch, always typing a manuscript, and he was clack, clack, clack of the typewriter. And he was typing his book on how to live poor

with style. And his idea of living poor was not exactly living poor, but he nevertheless felt he was living poor. And then I got to know Chick a little bit, and Chick's dominant quality was a love of the pleasures of life. That--it didn't show as much in his writing. At the end of his life he was writing something called—it was a conversation between Dr. No and Vera. And Dr. No was this older man who was very cynical. The world was coming to an end, we couldn't stop global warming. We have destructive tendencies. We're just going to do ourselves in. And Vera was a young woman who was optimistic and believed in the human race, and the two of them were talking and having these conversations. And I realized they were the two voices of Chick. And it was a failure as a piece of literature because they could never reconcile. They were always separate. And each of them was a little bit exaggerated. Each of them was pushed out so that you had contempt for both arguments. But he was not as deep a thinker as people give him credit for, but he was a lively thinker. And he loved to go out, and he loved to eat. He loved to take a walk. He was so in love with Christine, his wife. He loved to make love to her. He loved to go out in the garden. Being with good friends was always such a pleasure to him. And he had lively and glib ideas. He wrote the stupidest book that anybody ever wrote with his friend, Michael Phillips. And Michael Phillips had written a book, *The Seven Laws of Money*. And Michael Phillips and he then wrote a book on citizen legislature. And citizen legislature was choosing people by lot. Choosing legislators by lot rather than by election. And they asked several people if they would write commentaries. And I wrote a commentary at the end of it just trashing the stupid argument, that we ought to choose our eye surgeons by lot. I just had nothing but contempt for this.

17-01:40.45
Bancroft:

They include the commentary in the book?

17-01:40:46
Margolin:

They included the commentary in the book, and when I was up in Nevada City, I saw the book. I was so surprised to see my name in it. I'd forgotten about it. But it was a wonderful critique.

17-01:41.09
Bancroft:

Of course, he was best known for *Ecotopia*.

17-01:41:09
Margolin:

He was best known for *Ecotopia*. Have you read *Ecotopia*?

17-01:41.22
Bancroft:

I read it a very long time ago, yeah, when it came out.

17-01:41:30
Margolin:

People still read it. It was prescient. And what it was that part of Chick that believed in the possibility of the human race, that believed in happiness, that believed in friendship. He and his wife Christine wrote a book on friendship and on one hand there's something so futile about writing—I mean, if you

don't know what it is, then you're not going to learn—learning about friendship from a book kind of misses the point. It was communal. People had drugs. There was sex. There were war games. It was an ecological utopia. I was at this benefit for Saint Mary's College writing program on Saturday, and Bob Hass was there and various other people were there and they invited me over. And it was at an art gallery. It was great wine and great hors d'oeuvres and raising money. And the panel that they had with three food writers, and they were talking about organic and local and making your own vinegar, and everything was more and more refined. And so I just talked about Jell-O molds.

17-01:43.13

Bancroft: The true revolution in cooking.

17-01:43:15

Margolin: And in fighting for the maraschino cherry and the canned fruit. It was so leaden. It was so dull. It was so stupid. There was something about his love of life that prevented him from being too moralistic. There was a lightness to Chick. There was a delight that Chick had. We go out to eat in a place where his wife Christine didn't like to go so it had the sense of sneaking out. And I didn't do any traveling with him that I remember. We went out on a whale trip once, watching whales once.

17-01:44.18

Bancroft: Before or after Humphrey.

17-01:44:18

Margolin: After, after. We went out toward the Farralones. Have you ever done that?

17-01:44.27

Bancroft: No, I never have. Sounds great.

17-01:44:30

Margolin: God, it's really wonderful. These big whales emerging and all the fish and all the birds flying around. It's just this tremendous amount of life that was so beautiful.

17-01:44.47

Bancroft: How did you choose him to do the Humphrey book?

17-01:44:59

Margolin: I don't remember. I was probably with him that day.

17-01:45.05

Bancroft: Yeah, okay. That sounds right. Okay, let me ask you a few other questions. One, is there anything else you want to add? I'm just conscious of time and I want to make sure I'm getting through my questions.

17-01:45:16

Margolin: Okay, why don't you get through the questions?

- 17-01:45.19
Bancroft: Okay. So actually, I asked you about the chair. And can you tell me the story of this table? I know that Reuben made it, but is there anything more you can tell about this beautiful table?
- 17-01:45:31
Margolin: No. I just asked Reuben to make the table. It's a basketry pattern. Know that?
- 17-01:45.38
Bancroft: No, that's what I was wondering because it's such a beautiful design. I'm going to take a picture of the table, too. Did he pick the design or did you ask him?
- 17-01:46:22
Margolin: No, he picked the design.
- 17-01:46.23
Bancroft: Wow. Oh, nice. Oh.
- 17-01:46:29
Margolin: So it's looking down at a basket.
- 17-01:46.30
Bancroft: Yes. Oh, that's great. Okay. I want to take a picture of that and the table if we're done. Okay. That's very beautiful.
- 17-01:46:46
Margolin: There's a lot of stuff that Reuben's made.
- 17-01:46.49
Bancroft: Did he make that cupboard by hand?
- 17-01:46:52
Margolin: Yeah, he made that cupboard and he made—oh. No, I think it's downstairs.
- 17-01:47.12
Bancroft: Okay. Well, another time, a question is to go through all of these little objects.
- 17-01:47:19
Margolin: Well, hold on for one second. I'll be right back. [break in audio] Well, it's got two eyes and a nose and a mouth.
- 17-01:48:01
Bancroft: Oh, very early. Very early.
- 17-01:48:02
Margolin: Very, very early.
- 17-01:48.05
Bancroft: I love this story. Okay, I'm going to take a picture of that, too. This story that's in the book about when you were robbed and the dragon—

17-01:48:11
Margolin:

Oh, wasn't that great, too?

17-01:48:14
Bancroft:

Leave that here because I want to take a picture. Okay, well, that's cool. Okay. Some other random questions. One was about why you left the Koerber Building because Patricia had her explanation, and then I actually just found some memos about it. But what's your explanation?

17-01:48:38
Margolin:

For years the building had been owned by this guy Richard Stancliffe, who was an old hippie, and the thing was all run down and it had Ninja Man, and Ross Gold was the maintenance man who was a complete derelict.

17-01:48:54
Bancroft:

Who was Ninja Man?

17-01:49:01
Margolin:

Ninja Man was this weird guy who had a little office that he lived in. So he was paying like a hundred dollars a month for a little closet, and he lived there. It was his home. And he'd stalk the corridors at night and he was spooky and weird.

17-01:49:25
Bancroft:

Why did you call him Ninja?

17-01:49:24
Margolin:

He had beard and something around his head, almost like a shroud. He was way off. The guy was way off. And people were scared of him. The first time I met him I said, "Hi, how are you?" and "My name is Malcolm." And he said, "Hello, how are you?" and couldn't speak and then I met him again and I said, "How are you doing?" and he couldn't speak. And I met him a third time and I said, "What's up?" and he couldn't speak. And one day he comes to me and he says, "My mother just died." I said, "Oh, I'm so sorry to hear it." He said, "Yes, I had to tell you because you're the person I'm closest to." And then he got paranoid and thought that I was kicking him out of a building and that I was telling stories on him. He was weird and creepy. But it was filled with weird and creepy people. The whole building was my style. And then the elevator kept breaking.

Did I tell you the story of Mary Jeffords. Oh, this was so right. So Mary Jeffords was on the East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors and she was a warrior for the environment. She was a warrior. She fought everything. For years she fought the East Bay Regional Park District. Then when she got on the board, she still fought the East Bay Regional Park District. [laughter] She wouldn't give up. And she was stocky, and when we were operating out of the house, when Heyday was in the house, then Mary Jeffords would come and Jake, as a little kid who loved everybody, would see Mary Jeffords and his face would drop in horror and he'd shriek. And

Francine was the other one that he had this reaction to once in a while. But Mary Jeffords, when she would come up the stairs, and I'd watch her come in the house, just bracing herself for this rejection. And Jake just sitting there, and he looked up at her and his face would drop in horror, and he'd shriek and it was completely unkind. You couldn't comfort him. So we finally moved to an office and she said, "Thank God that I can now see you and I don't have to have this baby yelling at me." So she came up and the first trip up the elevator got stuck for four hours, and she was in the elevator.

17-01:52.08
Bancroft:

Oh, my God.

17-01:52.09
Margolin:

And the elevator was continually getting stuck, and the heat wasn't working. And it was rundown and it was low rent. And I loved the place. I loved the top floor that we finally graduated to. We had the whole top floor. Had big views.

17-01:52.22
Bancroft:

Had great views. Yeah. There's a couple of pictures in there that I—

17-01:52.26
Margolin:

Had great views. And then it got bought up by this guy, Larson, Bob Larson, Bill Larsen. It got bought up, and he started to remodel the place and he kicked people out floor after floor, and we had the whole top floor. So we were the only ones that had a whole floor. So he like started on the second floor and there was somebody here and somebody there, and he'd kick them all out, and then he would redecorate that. And he was redecorating it in the most horrible, cold, icy modern, creepy fashion. And instead of people that I knew, like Ninja Man and Berzerkeley Records and all kinds of failed small scale enterprises, whole floors were now taken over by people into psychological testing or something weird. Truly weird. Made Ninja Man look normal. And people were coming in that were dressed well and the whole building had changed hands. And he really thought the world of Heyday and he wanted us to stay. And we would be the anchor tenants, but he would have to remodel the place. And then he kicked out the restaurant and he put in something else. And it was a combination of his wanting to remodel the place, and I'm sure it would cover the raise of rent and I'm sure I would have liked the thing. But it was more the sense of creepiness. That building no longer made me happy. My thought was that we would just keep our eyes out to see if we could move out. And this place came.

17-01:54.41
Bancroft:

Yeah. Well, there was a memo about finding this place, that you called the Heyday Castle and that there was this excitement that you'd have your own building. You were kind of first ambivalent about leaving that space behind because it had meant so much for you. For twenty-five years Heyday had been there. But you were, in characteristic optimism, embracing the new and the change and what this could represent.

- 17-01:55:10
Margolin: Oh, this was so thrilling. I told you the story of the landlord Meti from Persia?
- 17-01:55:13
Bancroft: No.
- 17-01:55:36
Margolin: So Meti is this Persian guy that owns Au Coquelet, and years ago he owned it with a guy called Mike, who was actually Mohammed, and they were partners. And I would come in there for coffee. And one day I come in there for coffee, and Mike pulled me aside and he said, "Can we talk to you for a minute." I said, "Yes." They say, "You're a publisher?" I said, "Yes." I go, "Oh, shit." This was not the request I had expected. "Listen," they said, "do you know a printer in town named Parviz? And I did know Parviz. And Parviz had changed his name to Perry. He was Persian. but he changed his name to Perry. He used to ride bicycles with spandex and was a thoroughly modern character. But he'd come from the old country, and he had some printing presses. And I did know Parviz. I said, "Yes, I do know Parviz." And they said, "Listen, we have something that we need some help on." I said, "What's that?" He said, "We've arranged a marriage for somebody in the old country who's coming to marry Mohammed, somebody named Mohammed who works for Parviz, and we need an intermediary to go to Parviz and find out if this person is of good character." So I said, "Sure." [laughter]
- 17-01:56:57
Bancroft: That's an adventure.
- 17-01:56:58
Margolin: I said, "Sure, sure."
- 17-01:57:01
Bancroft: You looked old and respectable to them, I suppose, or something. Why you?
- 17-01:57:07
Margolin: God only knows. I was a lot younger and less respectable. This was many years ago. And so I went off to Perry, and he's sitting there at a table. He's a printer, so he's got all kinds of paper around and stuff like that. And I come up, and he says, "What can I do for you?" I say, "Hey, listen, Perry." I said, "This is kind of odd and I have no idea how I've gotten into this, but there's something I've got to ask you." He says, "What's that?" I says, "You have somebody working for you named Mohammed." He says, "That's right." I said, "There's a marriage being arranged for somebody with Mohammed, and some people have asked me to come and inquire as to Mohammed's character." The minute I said this—I've never seen anything like it—Perry became Parviz. His whole body language changed, his whole attitude changed. We're now sitting in a Persian bazaar among rugs. We're now discussing old country things. We're now discussing things of importance and significance. And he said, "Weeeell," and he says, "I don't fraternize with my employees, so I don't know Mohammed very well. But everything that I've

seen of him—he works well. He’s worked here for five years. He earns good money. We once had to take a trip together, and I went up to his house and he opened the door and I looked into his apartment. It was well-kept and I didn’t see any sign of women. I don’t know him as well as I would like, but I think perhaps he’s of good character.” So I said, “Thank you,” and I went back and I told Meti and Mike that the guy seems okay. I repeated the conversation. The upshot of it was, they brought the woman over, introduced her to Mohammed; he didn’t like her. She was too old-fashioned. He wanted somebody more modern. And they sent her back. So this is my landlord.

17-01:59:25

Bancroft: Oh, this is your landlord. Oh, my God. Your landlord for this building now?

17-01:59:31

Margolin: Yeah, yeah.

17-01:59:32

Bancroft: Okay. So he still liked you, even though you failed as an intermediary to make the match.

17-01:59:36

Margolin: I didn’t fail as an intermediary.

17-01:59:38

Bancroft: No, I know. It’s not your fault.

17-01:59:38

Margolin: No, I did—

17-01:59:39

Bancroft: Not your fault that Mohammed didn’t like the woman.

17-01:59:43

Margolin: I remember sitting there thinking, it’s what I often think, “What the hell am I doing here?”

17-01:59:54

Bancroft: Right. Just open. Somebody just sees you as a potential. Okay. I was going through Adam David Miller’s interview, and he mentioned that his memoir was published as something called part of the Bay Series. Does that make—

17-02:00:16

Margolin: Oh, yes. It was part of the Baytree series.

17-02:00:20

Bancroft: Oh, Baytree series. Okay.

17-02:00:22

Margolin: And that was Judy Avery who gave us a grant of \$600,000, 200,000 a year for three years to do California stories and memoirs.

- 17-02:00.35
Bancroft: Oh, great.
- 17-02:00:36
Margolin: And she still supports us and she's still a good friend.
- 17-02:00.37
Bancroft: Okay. And are you still doing those memoirs? Because I'm sure *Married at Fourteen* was part of that and then Nesta Rovina?
- 17-02:00:44
Margolin: No, it wasn't. No, they weren't. Nesta's was. *Married at Fourteen* came afterwards. We stopped the series. We've tried different series and stuff, and series don't seem to work. My thought on doing series was that the weak ones would be pulled up by the stronger ones, and they would go as a group. What happens is the stronger ones are pulled down by the weaker ones. So that when you go into a bookstore there's a negative quality to bookstores and book sales. When you go into a bookstore and you say, "We've got a new one, it's part of this series," they'd say, "We just got one that didn't sell." As opposed to the fact that it gives the thing prestige and branding. And maybe we just haven't branded it right. But I gave it up as an imprint. We still do memoirs.
- 17-02:01.46
Bancroft: Okay. Whatever happened with Bay Nature? I see some copies there. You never really talked that much about your association, your getting it started. I know David Lieb [sic] was part of—
- 17-02:02:02
Margolin: David Loeb.
- 17-02:02.04
Bancroft: Loeb.
- 17-02:02:05
Margolin: Did I talk about it at all?
- 17-02:02.07
Bancroft: Very little.
- 17-02:02:09
Margolin: Yeah, yeah.
- 17-02:02.09
Bancroft: And maybe you want to.
- 17-02:02:12
Margolin: Yeah, yeah. I didn't talk about it very much. So David came to me with this idea of doing a magazine on Bay area natural history. And coincidentally, I had thought about this years before, and I actually had drawn up a proposal and I had a box full of possibilities. So I'd thought of it. And he came in with

some fresh energy and I thought this would be a good idea. And we talked about it, and then I went down to Packard Foundation and I got a couple hundred thousand bucks from Packard to create this magazine. This was the first thing that happened. We got the couple of hundred thousand, and we could now pay people to start working on this magazine. So we paid people to work at the magazine and because we had the couple of hundred thousand we could pay them at a higher scale than I was paying the people who were working here. And then came this moment. And I originally thought that I would include it in Heyday and the model was *Aperture*, the photography magazine which had book publishing and a magazine. And that they would work together like *News from Native California* and the Indian books was the model. But it came in with a couple of hundred thousand. And I went to Rebecca, who was working for me, and said, “We need new computers for Bay Nature.” And I suddenly became aware of the fact that there were people working here for less money and on old computers, and I had used my efforts to go out into the world to get money for this new venture, where these new people were getting better computers and better pay. And there was a resentment. There was a sense that instead of spending my time at Heyday, building up Heyday for them, I had gone off to form something else that was going to get more money than people were doing. And it wasn’t a revolt. I felt it was wrong. I felt it was wrong.

Then came the fact that what I wanted in this was a different kind of writing. I wanted something more imaginative, I wanted something more artful. I hate nature writing, the way it is usually, that it’s the same damn story. Once everything was beautiful, people came along and wrecked it. But a dedicated group of individuals are trying to restore it and are doing heroic deeds. This fragile little animal is hanging on by its teeth to a stronghold that is being surrounded by development. It’s the same story over and over again, and it’s boring and it’s not leading anywhere. I hate it. And David was more rigid in natural sciences and stuff like that, and I wanted more art. And I didn’t have time for it. I didn’t have time for it and didn’t fit in with the place. So I figured I’d just set it up as its own nonprofit, and I was the one that pulled the board together for it. I was the one that split it off. I took care of splitting it off. We paid to get the damn thing out of Heyday.

17-02:06.25
Bancroft:

It sounds like it was a good move.

17-02:06:29
Margolin:

It was a great move. It was a great move. And it flourished on its own.

17-02:06.33
Bancroft:

Yeah. Well, I learned about it from Jack Laws because he was drawing for it so I just wanted to hear about it from you. Well, let me—with time, there’s just—and I know we want to leave a little bit of time with your person coming. Who’s coming?

17-02:06:49
Margolin:

My friend Craig Strang. I knew him when he was a student at UC Santa Cruz, and he was in Burney Le Boeuf's class studying elephant seals. And Burney and elephant seals were of the same camp. [laughter] And Craig was this young kid in there, and I lectured and he became completely fascinated by me and my lectures and he's followed me around ever since. He now leads the Lawrence Hall of Science's ocean programs and he's been a devoted friend for many years. He married. He had a son named Kyle. He divorced his wife, he got married to another woman named Persis, who's Iranian. They got another kid. Kyle got killed recently, and it was just a tragedy—

17-02:07:48
Bancroft:

Oh, no. Oh, my God.

17-02:07:49
Margolin:

—of grandest magnitude. And their Christmas letters still have Kyle's picture. You just don't know what to do. You just don't know how to handle it. So Persis teaches over at San Jose State, and she told me about a colleague of hers, a professor over there, who had written a historical novel about Junipero Serra and would I be interested in seeing it? And I said, "Well, we don't do novels too well but sounds like something I might like to see." So a couple of weeks ago he sent me this novel, and it's a killer. It's a knockout. It just catches the tone, the nuance. It's phrased as his confession to Francisco Palau, and Palau is his confessor. And he confesses to things that are just horrific. It's the undercurrent of greed and demonic energies to save souls. And he'd stop at nothing to save souls. And it's the most astonishing portrait. And he came in last week. Our catalogue is about to go to the printer. November is the 300th anniversary of Junipero Serra's birth. There's going to be all kinds of Junipero Serra stuff. There's a possibility that they're going to try for sainthood.

17-02:09:24
Bancroft:

Oh, this would be a good—

17-02:09:25
Margolin:

And if we're going to get this novel, we just got to act right now. So I just—

17-02:09:29
Bancroft:

So is that the contract you were talking about?

17-02:09:31
Margolin:

That was the contract. The guy's coming in. We're going to meet him today. And if we get—

17-02:09:34
Bancroft:

Well, let me ask you, since we're really out of time, because I have a couple more questions I want to ask you about—

17-02:09:44
Margolin:

We can make time.

- 17-02:09.46
Bancroft: This afternoon?
- 17-02:09:47
Margolin: Right now.
- 17-02:09.48
Bancroft: Okay, right now. Okay. How about—[break in audio] One is about your relationship with Bill. So give me five minutes, if you can tell me some stories about Bill and then I'll ask you the other question. Because you did say you felt like you hadn't talked about him that much.
- 17-02:10:44
Margolin: No, I hadn't.
- 17-02:10.45
Bancroft: So I want to cut something back into chapter one.
- 17-02:10:49
Margolin: We were close as kids. And I'm mystified at how thoroughly he's faded from my mind and I have no idea why. But he has faded from my mind. And I had no idea why. We were close as kids. He was a different person from me. He was more cautious. He didn't like to eat foods. He was close to my mother. I remember hating him when he was first born with a real—
- 17-02:11.34
Bancroft: That figures.
- 17-02:11:35
Margolin: —passion. I remember his following me around. We played a lot together. I was lonely as a kid and he was a friend. He played chess. He went to the synagogue. He went to camp. He was a counselor at camp. He stayed close to the family. You know, Kim, I'm oddly mystified why I don't have this richer sense of memory and sense of story about him. But I don't. Let me see if I can find something.
- 17-02:12.30
Bancroft: Because in his piece he talked about how you only communicated twice a year, that he'd call you up and leave a message on your birthday and not really talk to you even.
- 17-02:12:43
Margolin: No. We don't talk. I once wrote this down. I once wrote some memories down. When people ask me where'd I grow up, I say Dorchester and think about Eighty-two American Legion Highway, a Jewish world, although we moved from there to West Roxbury. This was the seat of my deepest memories, perhaps even my deepest friendships, and a place where I felt most at home. This is my memories of Dorchester.
- 17-02:13.19
Bancroft: Oh, wow, look at that.

- 17-02:13:20
Margolin: I'd forgot about this. This is my friend Henry Schultz.
- 17-02:13:25
Bancroft: Wow. I remember when I talked to you about your stories. You said that you'd been writing some things down. This was two years ago. You've been holding out on me. Look at this. [Referring to a red spiral-bound notebook Malcolm handed over]
- 17-02:13:36
Margolin: I forgot about it. My father and his family.
- 17-02:13:44
Bancroft: Oh, my gosh. So I presume some of these stories you've told me--
- 17-02:13:55
Margolin: I assume I have. Yes, I'm sorry about this. I forgot about it.
- 17-02:13:58
Bancroft: No, no, that's great.
- 17-02:13:59
Margolin: My mother and her family.
- 17-02:14:00
Bancroft: No, I loved hearing about it. I'm wondering if there's anything more in there. And then you stopped.
- 17-02:14:07
Margolin: No, I stopped. I was going to continue it. I wonder if the stuff about my brother Bill—
- 17-02:14:20
Bancroft: Do you think you stopped because we were talking or—
- 17-02:14:21
Margolin: No, no. This was several years before.
- 17-02:14:28
Bancroft: Oh, okay. What would you say if I made a copy of that, just to see if there are any stories in there?
- 17-02:14:44
Margolin: Oh, why don't you just take it?
- 17-02:14:46
Bancroft: No, I'm not going to take it. We'll make copies.
- 17-02:14:49
Margolin: Memories of Milt.
- 17-02:14:52
Bancroft: Yeah. Okay.

17-02:15:03
Margolin: I'm wondering if I wrote something about my brother. There's Paragon Park. This is my Uncle Jack. My Uncle Sam.

17-02:15:18
Bancroft: Did you see Bill as being kind of more—since he was not—I don't want to say stuck with the family but attached to the family? He was the root and you were the shoot? You had taken off and had maybe—I don't know if you were more adventurous than he was, and so you just felt like your lives had gone in such different directions.

17-02:15:42
Margolin: God, this is wonderful. He is a conservative. He collects things. He collects baseball cards. He once became very excited that he had found a new collectable. It was blotters. Printed blotters. And he has a barn filled with collectibles. I just don't get it.

17-02:16:14
Bancroft: Which is utterly the opposite of you.

[portion deleted]

17-02:17:03
Bancroft: Now about Bill—

17-02:17:12
Margolin: Rina had read over that first chapter and said that I had to include more about Bill.

[asides deleted]

Margolin: Well, did I talk about the history of how it [Heyday] happened?

17-02:20:32
Bancroft: No.

17-02:20:33
Margolin: Didn't I? So it started out, I just owned it. There was no corporate enterprise. I just filed a schedule C at the end of the year, doing business as Heyday. And then when we started *News from Native California* in particular, started *News from Native California*. The place has always been broke. It's been broke in ways that are just utterly spectacular. If I were a different kind of a person I'd be alarmed. It was always broke and then I started *News from Native California*, and then John Kreidler over at the San Francisco Foundation said, "Why don't we give you some money?" So I said, "Okay." So he gave me a couple of thousand bucks and he says, "You have to go through a fiscal receiver because you're not a nonprofit." So we went through a fiscal receiver, through Intersection for the Arts, and they would give us the money. And then we started to get some other grants for the Indian stuff and for *News*. And Intersection for the Arts was out there serving as a fiscal receiver. And I

always thought of us as commercial publishers selling books and needed a small subsidy to make it work. And then the more subsidy I got, the more books I did and the more it allowed me to get into books that were never going to make any money. And we became more and more dependent upon the foundations, and then we started Friends of *News from Native California*, where individuals could send money. And it just got complicated. So then I went to Tom Layton, who was head of Gerbode Foundation, and Tom Layton is like my Mycroft Holmes. When Sherlock would get into trouble, he'd go off to the club, where his brother, Mycroft, was there. Come on in. Come on in.

17-02:22.50

Bancroft: I just have one more question to finish.

17-02:22.52

Margolin: So he'd go off and he'd—so whenever I got into trouble I'd go off and see Tom Layton of Gerbode Foundation. And it wasn't just trouble. At different crucial points in my life I'd go off and see Tom Layton.

17-02:23.08

Bancroft: Are you still finishing your meeting?

17-02:23.10

Margolin: She wanted to know about how we became a nonprofit.

17-02:23.14

Bancroft: It's this last little piece of this one chapter that we have to get.

17-02:2316

F_: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

17-02:23.17

Margolin: So I started bilking authors and taking their life's work and making tons of money off it and not paying them their royalties. Oh. [laughter] So I went off to Tom and I said, "Hey, listen," I said, "we've got all this Indian stuff we're doing. We're getting these grants, we're getting contributions. We're running it through a fiscal receiver. It's just complicated. And more and more the place is becoming a nonprofit, but I don't want to give up power. I don't want to give up power to anybody because I've been watching various of my friends who founded organizations turn into nonprofits, the board of directors comes in and fires them." So I just didn't want that to happen. So he said, "Well, what you do is you keep control of Heyday and set up a separate 501(c)(3) that'll be like a Friends of Heyday." And he says, "I'll give you a grant so you can go to Silk, Adler & Colvin, who are the big nonprofit lawyers, and I'll give you a grant so you'll get the best legal advice in the world and have them set you up with a designator of the board." So I went off to Silk, Adler & Colvin, and they set me up. We created something called Clapperstick Institute as a nonprofit, and I was the board designator. I could appoint a board member and I could fire them at will. So this was utterly

perfect. So then I got Bob Callahan and George Young and Lee Swenson and Leanne Hinton. I got four friends that were close friends and didn't know each other. So I structured this thing so that nobody would have any power over me. This is interesting, isn't it?

And I structured it that way. And then the money would come into Clapperstick Institute and then it would come over to me at Heyday. They were like a friends' organization for Heyday. So I was head of Clapperstick and I was head of Heyday. And then I was trying to keep track of the money. As president of the board of Clapperstick, I would write letters to myself at Heyday, "Dear Malcolm," and sign them "Malcolm" and explain where the money was going. I was keeping a paper trail. And it got kind of ridiculous. I was sitting there writing myself a letter, and I realized I'm going to end up in jail. That this is so complicated. And then I wasn't keeping good records. And then we had these board minutes. Were you taking minutes of the board meetings back at Clapperstick?

17-02:26.20

Wattawa:

I think Patricia was. I mean, from some of the memos. Were you?

17-02:26.24

F_:

Yeah, yeah.

17-02:26.27

Margolin:

The typical meetings, I forget who it was. Somebody wrote the minutes of the board minutes, was "Malcolm and the four bozos got together and said they were all wonderful."

17-02:26.40

Wattawa:

No, the nonprofit had already taken over the whole thing by the time I was writing minutes.

17-02:26.43

Margolin:

Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

17-02:26.44

Bancroft:

That was Patricia.

17-02:26.45

Wattawa:

Yeah, yeah.

17-02:26.42

Bancroft:

Yeah. Because she mentioned that was her perspective. "Like Malcolm and his friends are running this." And then David talked about coming in and trying to understand the accounting between Clapperstick and Heyday and said it was just phenomenal.

17-02:26.59

Margolin:

Oh, it was a complete shambles. So somebody comes in, they need some money, you just go to whichever account has the money and you pay them. I

didn't see what the problem was. And then at the end I'd have to go to the accountant and sort out the taxes. It really got complicated. And by this time I realized the thing was a nonprofit. The thing was functioning as a nonprofit. So I sold Heyday to Clapperstick and created one entity called Heyday. And created—

17-02:27.40
Bancroft:

You sold Heyday Books? That was the point when Heyday Books became Heyday? Is that right?

17-02:27:45
Margolin:

No, I sold Heyday Books to Clapperstick, and it was Heyday Books.

17-02:27.49
Bancroft:

Oh, it's still Heyday.

17-02:27:49
Margolin:

And then somebody named Kate came in and did some branding. So instead of being Heyday Books we became Heyday, and we got three acorns and a logo.

17-02:28.01
Wattawa:

But there was that weird time where we had Heyday Books and Heyday Institute and *News from Native California* and—

17-02:28:08
Margolin:

Oh, I changed it from Clapperstick to Heyday Institute.

17-02:28.11
Bancroft:

Institute, right. I just saw a memo about that. That was the first thing.

17-02:28:14
Margolin:

Yeah, I did that. So now there's a board of directors and the board of directors has full power to hire me and fire me and tell me what to do. And I figured that it's partly getting older, it's partly succession, it's partly creating a corporate structure, that something will last. I'm crafty but I'm not a good businessman. I'm really good at small schemes. I'm really good at putting things together. But this whole business of running something. When I used to have it, I knew where all that money was coming from. I'd sit around and I'd say, "Shit, it's the end of March. The rent is due on the first. We owe 7,000 bucks. Ingram owes us 3,000, Baker and Taylor owes us two and we ought to get another six from Amazon and I'll be able to pay that and meet the payroll." Now there are so many strands of income coming in and so many strands of income going out that I can't keep track of it all. And it needs a different level of accounting. It needs a different level of oversight. So the place has gotten bigger and it needs more. And I'm not too good at this. My dear friend Gayle has been working now for nine years. Do you have a job description?

17-02:29.49
Wattawa: No. [laughter]

17-02:29:50
Margolin: Have you ever had a performance review?

17-02:29.55
Wattawa: No. [laughter]

17-02:29:59
Margolin: How many times have we had an honest to goodness talk about your career and your performance?

17-02:30.05
Wattawa: I'm feeling super deprived now. [laughter] Let's have a meeting.

17-02:30:17
Bancroft: But there was a really good board that you put together, and it sounds like that was part of the evolution.

17-02:30:26
Wattawa: Was Lee the last original one? Is Lee the last original one?

17-02:30.31
Margolin: Yeah, Lee is the last original one from that board.

17-02:30.32
Bancroft: So he says he feels like he's more honorary now because he's not participating.

17-02:30:35
Wattawa: He's cycling off in April. Yeah.

17-02:30.38
Margolin: He's cycling off.

17-02:30.38
Wattawa: That's weird. End of an era.

17-02:30:39
Margolin: Yeah, Lee is the last original one. Yeah. The board is a wonderful asset. They raise money for us. They give us stability. They do things for us. They're a complete pain in the ass. My insight from the last few days is that we're too big to be managed by somebody that has no discipline, that is so goddamn emotional he can't keep his act together for more than two hours. That has deep friendships and strong loyalties and is almost psychotically optimistic. That only sees how things can work. And it needs other controls and the other controls are difficult. It's just been going through these things. I keep thinking that she and I are going to run off and start another publishing company.

- 17-02:32.12
Wattawa: So much of it feels like it's not about the books right now. It's frustrating, you know. Yeah.
- 17-02:32:23
Bancroft: What is it about?
- 17-02:32:24
Wattawa: I don't know. Making sure nobody feels defensive. [laughter] It's walking on eggshells.
- 17-02:32.36
Margolin: We had a rough day yesterday. The place is a joyous place.
- 17-02:32.41
Wattawa: Yeah, it is.
- 17-02:32:41
Margolin: And people love working here and people have been here for a long time and it's a happy place.
- 17-02:32.49
Wattawa: That speaks volumes.
- 17-02:32:48
Bancroft: Oh, I know that because I've talked to everybody here.
- 17-02:32:52
Margolin: It's a happy place. Yesterday was not a happy day. And the thing is when it became a nonprofit, I felt it had found its proper form. I don't care that much about money. I don't have that instinct for maximizing profit. I love what we do as a cultural enterprise. I love the effect that we've had. I love watching things come in and be shaped and shape the people that work on them and go out and re-tinge the way California thinks about itself. I just love the process of what we do. And money is something that we need, that we've got to pay attention to, but it's a secondary thought. It's not at the top of my mind. It functions as a nonprofit. It functions. This is a nonprofit educational institution. And I feel much more comfortable in the nonprofit world than I do in the for profit world. I used to hang around publishers a whole lot. I haven't seen a publisher in—I think I had lunch with Jack Shoemaker about a year ago and that was it. I'll hang around Indians, I'll hang around artists, I'll hang around writers, I'll hang around friends. I'll talk about literature and values and beauty and truth and all of that other stuff. And this whole business of business is—I'm not good at it and I don't care about it. Last night we had that event at the California Historical Society. We did this book with the San Francisco Art Commission. And it was the Art Commission. Tom Layton was there from Gerbode Foundation, San Francisco Foundation. Tere Romo was there from San Francisco Foundation. It's a nonprofit historical society, it's a government agency. There were artists there. Gayle's friend Ira Nowinski was there.

- 17-02:35.32
Bancroft: Oh, really?
- 17-02:35:35
Wattawa: Bless his heart.
- 17-02:35337
Margolin: And there were various photographers and various artists that were there. And this is where I feel at home. This is where I feel at home. And I feel at home with that civic art. There was that wonderful statement that somebody made, I don't know who it was, that the purpose of art is to lessen the distance between people. And that civic art, if you're going to have a culture, if you're going to have people in different ways, lessening the distance between them is an absolute necessity, otherwise you end up having warring camps that don't relate to one another. And just being part of that enterprise that bridges cultures and gets things from authors into readers and gets things from artists into people's hearts. This is where I live.
- 17-02:36.35
Bancroft: Well, that's a great statement. Thank you.
- 17-02:36:39
Margolin: You're welcome.
- 17-02:36:45
M_: I could listen all day.
- 17-02:36:47
Bancroft: Yes. That's my privilege.
- 17-02:36:50
Margolin: He teaches at San Jose State.
- 17-02:36.53
Bancroft: Oh, okay. [break in audio]
- 17-02:37:24
M_: I do. I know him well. Yeah. See him all the time.
- 17-02:37:30
Margolin: When Fred Cody was alive, Alan worked at Cody's Books. And Alan was kind of a poetry hustler, and he knew people like Robert Bly and people like that that he would invite in. And he was active in the poetry field. He wrote a wonderful poem about me once. And was taking a hike and he talked about me at the end of the hike as a man emptied of himself. This was just a lovely line. And Alan and Ben Flowers and somebody else started *Poetry Flash*, this magazine. And they started this magazine and they went through about a year and a half of issues and they realized there was nothing there. It was going to be a whole lot of work, it was going to be a whole lot of effort, it was a drain on their effort. They were going in for professional careers in teaching and in the arts.

And Joyce Jenkins was this young intern. Joyce was the most gorgeous young woman you could imagine. She had lovely skin. She was young, she was fresh. And I was sitting at the table when they said, “Joyce, do you want to take *Poetry Flash*?” And she took it, and I realized to my horror what was happening in there. And this became this weight around her. She aged with it. They handed it off to her. She could never let it go. It became her whole life. It became something that cursed her and became her whole identity.

17-02:39:13
Wattawa:

Wow.

17-02:39:15
M_:

She still runs it.

17-02:39:16
Margolin:

And I knew when I was sitting at that table that this was her doom. And I just wanted to tell her. It was like warning her away from the devil. Stay away from this damned thing. You’re young. You’re going to go somewhere else. Don’t take it on.

17-02:39:31
Bancroft:

Well, actually, that was another question because there was a poetry series, the California Poetry Series that Heyday had for a while with Joyce as the editor but then that—

[portion deleted]

17-02:40:50
Margolin:

It wasn’t profitable. I set it up as a separate imprint and I had a distributor through Consortium in Minnesota because Heyday, with its local, we weren’t good at distributing poetry. So I set it up as an imprint to be distributed by Consortium. It wasn’t terribly bad. It was losing money, but it wasn’t losing a whole lot of money. It was losing just a little bit of money. They were short books. And a few of the early books we did were thrilling. The book we did with Steve Kowite.

17-02:41:35
Wattawa:

Oh, yeah, that’s my favorite.

17-02:41:37
Margolin:

That was such a damn good book.

17-02:41:38
Wattawa:

God, he’s a good poet. Yeah.

17-02:41:40
Bancroft:

Steve Cower [sic]?

17-02:41:43
Wattawa:

Kowite.

17-02:41:43
Margolin: Kowite.

17-02:41:44
Wattawa: Kowite. K-O-W-I-T-E. Yeah. Is that *The Dumbbell Nebular*?

17-02:41:48
Margolin: It's *The Dumbbell Nebular*.

17-02:41:50
Wattawa: Oh, yeah, that's good. Oh, I should review that.

17-02:41:54
M_: You should interview some of my colleagues if you want some perspective, some outside perspective on Malcolm. A lot of them know him well and have for years, like Alan. Persis Karim was another colleague of mine who knows him well. Do you know Persis?

17-02:42:06
Bancroft: No, but he just talked about her.

17-02:42:10
M_: Her. Yeah. Right.

17-02:42:10
Bancroft: Her. Earlier. Right.

17-02:42:12
M_: She's a Berkeleyite. Kathleen Miller is another one of my colleagues here who knows him.

17-02:42:18
Bancroft: Well, I'm trying to wind down the interviews.

17-02:42:22
M_: I'm sure you have enough material.

17-02:42:23
Bancroft: I've interviewed like forty-two people already.

17-02:42:26
Wattawa: Wow.

17-02:42:27
Bancroft: Yeah, and then I've got seventeen of Malcolm. I'm in the writing phase. And I actually want to talk to you later about getting help with thinking about images and stuff.

17-02:42:40
Wattawa: Okay. Yeah, yeah.

17-02:42:45
Margolin:

Just turn to any page. [Reading] “The poetry reading was a disaster. And I had expected so much. All the big kahunas would be there. The New York literati and foundation honchos and publishing magi and hordes of insouciant groupies and millions of poets. The shaggy vanguard, the green adidas snapping their fingers, surrealists swirling about by the ceiling like adipose Saint Therasas in mufti. Cowboys and tatterdemalion beatniks and Buddhists with mandarin beards and big goofy eyes and Iowa poets in blazers and beanies and poundians nodding gigantic foreheads. What tumultuous applause would erupt when I stepped to the stage. What a thunder of admiration. The room would be shaking. The very city would tremble. The whole damn Pacific plate starts to shudder. One good jolt and everything west of San Andreas would squirt back into Mesopotamian waters and this time for good. Jesus, but they would love me. Except when I got to the place it was a tiny hole in the wall, and only a handful had shown up and as soon as I walked to the front of the room my kids started whining, a chap in the second row fell asleep and a trashed out punk roller with a swastika t-shirt, drool in his chin and arms down to his knees started cackling out loud, the razor blade chained at his throat bounced up and down. Somewhere a couple must have been screwing around under their seats. I heard tongues lapping it up, orgasmic weeping. Groans that grew louder and louder. The kid wouldn’t shut up. The sleeper started to snore. Potato chip eaters in every direction who were groping around in tinfoil bags while the poetry lover, my host, was oohing and aahing at all the wrong places. [laughter] I looked up politely. Couldn’t they please be a little bit more quiet? Somebody snickered. There was a slap and the brats started to brawl. Someone stormed out in a huff, slamming the door. Another screamed that I was a pig and a sexist. [laughter]

So a heavysset woman with thick Mensa glasses leaped to her feet and announced that she was a student of Mark Strand. In the back, the goon with the tattooed shirt and the blade was guffawing and flapping his wings. What could I do? I read for all I was worth, straight from the heart, all duende and dazzle. No one and nothing was going to stop me. Inspired at last, I read to a room that had fallen oddly silent. They must have been awed. I wailed to the winds like Cassandra, shoring our language against the gathering dark. I raged at the heavens themselves and ended the last set in tears on my knees. When I looked up it was night and I was alone, except for an old lady up on a stepladder scrubbing what looked like glops of dung off the wall and humming. The place stank of ammonia. Thank you so much had been scribbled over my briefcase in lipstick or blood. Someone had stepped on my glasses, lifted my wallet, and sliced off all of the buttons, half of my mustache, and one of my balls.” [laughter]

17-02:46:06
Bancroft:

Oh, my God. [laughter] Yeah.

17-02:46:12
Wattawa:

It’s good.

17-02:46:13
Bancroft: Very good. Nice.

17-02:46:16
M_: That's really good.

17-02:46:173
Margolin: And Suzanne Lummis's book I liked. Yeah, Suzanne Lummis was fun.

17-02:46:22
Wattawa: She's a wonderful poet, too.

17-02:46:24
Margolin: And when we started it out, there was people that hadn't been published that had good bodies of poetry. But by the time we got to the eighth one, the reservoir was drained; we were scraping around.

17-02:46:43
Wattawa: Interesting.

17-02:46:44
Margolin: And my mistake in that was having set it up as to do on a quarterly basis.

17-02:46:49
Wattawa: Too much. Yeah.

17-02:46:50
Margolin: So instead of being driven by manuscripts, it was driven by schedule. And that was a mistake. That was a mistake.

17-02:47:02
M_: Do you think it could have sustained two per year?

17-02:47:04
Margolin: Possibly. Yeah. Possibly. Or one per year. Or an occasional. My thought on it was that I would have it as a series and I'd have people subscribe to it. And I thought I would try the subscription model and that didn't work at all.

17-02:47:21
Bancroft: Well, you certainly try out a lot of different possibilities over time. Okay. I'll stop—

[End Audio File 17]

Interview 18: May 22, 2013

[Begin Audio File 18]

[preliminaries deleted]

18-00:03:12

Margolin: I remember somebody was once talking about how on, I think it was her twenty-first birthday, that she just remembers she was utterly miserable. She was completely miserable. Just totally unhappy and hated everybody and hated her life and was miserable. And there were pictures that were taken and in every picture she's looking joyous. [laughter] And there's something about the way the camera catches you. There's something so peculiar about this. I'll look over what people are saying about me. People attributing things to me that I've never said. There are people attributing thoughts to me that I've never thought. There are people attributing attitudes toward me that I never had. There's people giving me credit for things that I've never done. And for a while I thought maybe I was being left out of my own biography. That they're talking about somebody else, and they're talking about their image of me. And I guess that's who I am, is people's image of me. And this is the way we deal with each other. This is the way we create each other. This is the way we make each other better. This is what life is all about. There were these wonderful statements. Jake made the statement about his coming out of the closet and my saying something, that he knows who he is. I never said that.

18-00:05:28

Bancroft: Are you really sure that you didn't say that?

18-00:05:30

Margolin: Pretty sure. Yeah, I'm pretty sure. Reuben talked about how we went off on a vacation, and I woke up at 5:30 in the morning and out-hiked him and beat him at chess and beat him in the pool and stuff. That's true, but there were other parts of me that were there also. And I remember once when he went off to Indonesia for six months or so on one of these student abroad things. He used to wrestle and he came back and we started wrestling again, and I could feel him stronger and bigger. He could now pin me. And I could feel him holding back, that he didn't want to pin me. He wanted me to be strong. He wanted me to be the person that he thought I was. And it's this creation of somebody in his mind that he wants out there. It's just such an interesting thing that we do with each other.

18-00:06:29

Bancroft: Well, so in that case, where he talked about how you raced up the hill ahead of him and you beat him at chess and you beat him at billiards, that's still part of him wanting—

18-00:06:41

Margolin: That's picking out the various parts of me that—

18-00:06.44
Bancroft:

Fulfill.

18-00:06:45
Margolin:

There were other parts of me that he decided not to see. I don't know how to deal with this thing. And maybe I'll say something about it if I write an introduction. I don't want to undercut this. I know I tend to be more modest and more self-effacing than is perhaps truthful or appropriate. This heroic character that lets people flourish, it's because I don't know how to give them orders. [laughter] It's not a strategy. I'm afraid of them. I want them to like me. [laughter] And it's being attributed to some kind of big understanding of the world.

18-00:07.59
Bancroft:

I think all of that is true also. They can both be true. You contain multitudes.

18-00:08:05
Margolin:

I contain multitudes. And what they're saying is part of the truth. There are other truths in there. Hey, so listen. By this time I am so muddled what's been covered and what hasn't been covered that I have no idea what I've said and what I haven't said and what's in the notes and what's in—

18-00:08.39
Bancroft:

I did send you, and you should print out—I'm going to send it to you again now. I did make an index. And, in fact, I updated it with the last few interviews and I think that's really—I'm using it because I al—

18-00:08:52
Margolin:

When did you send this to me?

18-00:08:53
Bancroft:

Well, I don't know when I sent it. I'm going to send it to you again.

18-00:08:55
Margolin:

Just send it to me again.

18-00:08.56
Bancroft:

Because I use it also. In fact, I'm going to also make a list of where everybody else says something because I've got some people chopped up. Like I've got Jeannine [Gendar] partly in three and four and six and whatever. Okay. Let me send this to you because I think it helps. Right? Because I think that was something that you were feeling the last time. You said, "Oh, well, I didn't talk about this or that." And I said, "Well, actually, some of it was in chapter two and some of it's in a chapter coming up."

18-00:09:31
Margolin:

Yeah, this would be very good. Thanks. As I go around I realize that I mean a great deal to certain people, and they should be at least mentioned. And I don't want to overload you with my politics, but there were some people, if they were left out, they would feel very hurt.

- 18-00:09.54
Bancroft: Right. Well, that's where I keep saying to you, if you've got more people you want to talk about I'm—okay, I'm sending it.
- 18-00:10.24
Margolin: Well, here it is. I gave the first chapter to Guy Lampard, who's my board president. He just loves it.
- 18-00:10.47
Bancroft: Oh. Oh, good, good.
- 18-00:10.50
Margolin: So that was a good sign.
- 18-00:10.52
Bancroft: And are you going to do that with a few other people?
- 18-00:10.54
Margolin: Yeah, I will.
- 18-00:10.55
Bancroft: Yeah. Well, I gave it to my friend Jeff, who doesn't know you at all, and he loved chapter one. I told you this. But he also grew up Jewish in Baltimore, and so he really identified with the Jewish stuff. But he also liked the other stories, as well. But it'd be interesting to try to keep circulating it to people who don't know you at all and kind of get a sense.
- 18-00:11.21
Margolin: Well, there's something about circulating it. There's something about—
- 18-00:11.25
Bancroft: Not widely but—
- 18-00:11.27
Margolin: You just get all these opinions and you have to deal with all of the ideas.
- 18-00:11.44
Bancroft: Did I just hear you say, "If I write an introduction." Did you just say "if" you write an introduction?
- 18-00:11.52
Margolin: Well, I did, but I'm intending to.
- 18-00:11.54
Bancroft: Okay, good.
- 18-00:11.54
Margolin: No, no.
- 18-00:11.55
Bancroft: I just wanted to make sure that "if" was a mistake.

- 18-00:12:19
Margolin: What an immense amount of work. I mean, what an immense amount of work. Thank you so much.
- 18-00:12:28
Bancroft: Oh, well, it's definitely my pleasure.
- 18-00:12:33
Margolin: So this is the table of contents.
- 18-00:12:45
Bancroft: Now, also, you know what I'm going to send you? I sent over the outline and I think that would be really good for you to have and print out because you can see what I'm using, the outline after I write a chapter, then you can see what's in each chapter. So that's a good overview.
- 18-00:13:30
Margolin: So these are the interviews.
- 18-00:13:31
Bancroft: Those are the interviews.
- 18-00:13:39
Margolin: I'm just so surprised at the richness of this life. I've never just seen it before. It's just so surprising to me. Did I ever tell you the story of picking blueberries with Sadie?
- 18-00:14:40
Bancroft: Un-unh.
- 18-00:14:42
Margolin: This is the most wonderful story. It's very self-congratulatory. I'd forgotten. Somebody remembered my telling it, and it was such a beautiful story. Sadie must have been just in the first grade. She was learning how to read and she was just getting her letters straightened out, and we were off in a meadow, and we were picking blueberries. I was picking blueberries with her. And she was picking blueberries and she had this little daydreamy look on her face. And the whole family was there. We'd gone up on a vacation. And I looked at Sadie and I said, "What are you thinking?" And she said, "I'm thinking that I'm Sadie and I'm a stream, and Reuben and Rina are rivers, and Jakie's a drop of water, and you're the meadow we're all floating through." It was the most beautiful thing that anybody's ever said to me. Did we talk about Dan Carr in the chapters?
- 18-00:15:59
Bancroft: Mm-hmm. Okay. Why don't you also print out this outline from the book. I just sent it to you. Because now you'll see what's actually in the book and where. It's still notes but it's a five-page outline. Do you see it? Is it there? Okay.

18-00:17:10
Margolin: Okay, so you've got Dan Carr on the trips across country, Mexico. And then do you have the Book Camel?

18-00:17:20
Bancroft: Do I have the what?

18-00:17:23
Margolin: The Book Camel.

18-00:17:23
Bancroft: Yeah, the Book Camel is in—

18-00:17:25
Margolin: That was Francine's.

18-00:17:25
Bancroft: Yes, Francine's. Yes.

18-00:17:28
Margolin: Do you have Rick Heide in there?

18-00:17:29
Bancroft: No. So who is Rick Heide? You mentioned him in a note.

18-00:17:33
Margolin: Yeah, Rick Heide has got to be—so Rick Heide, in that wonderful period of time when people were starting their own presses and people were doing their own work and typesetting was something that you sent out to do—some of us did it ourselves but some of it was sent out to a typesetter. And somebody would send galleys of type and you'd end up getting these galleys and correcting them and pasting in words and cutting them with scissors and waxing them and putting rubber cement on them. Rubber cement and I were not friends. And you'd end up pasting them down on sheets of paper and create page layouts that would then be photographed, and then from the photographs plates would be made. And it was the height of modern technology and replaced metal type. And Rick Heide was a typesetter. He had something called Archetype in Berkeley. He was a typesetter and he was setting type for a whole lot of left-wing political things but some really great things. He was setting Paul Krassner's *Realist* for a while and he was setting the various political left-wing things. And he did it with a complete sense of the craft. He was doing Black Panther stuff. He was doing a whole lot of these different things out there. And I got to know him. And we had some typesetting equipment, and he had some typesetting equipment. And we ended up combining our operations into something that—we worked together. And we worked together also in co-producing and co-publishing books. The older books were Heyday and Archetype, where he'd put some money in it and I'd put some money in it. Or he'd put sweat equity. He put the typesetting into it. And the whole idea of it was that we would share our space. He had some

downtime. He could end up typesetting some of our books, and it would be profitable for him. And there ended up being a wonderful friendship in there.

And then he later on dropped out of the typesetting world. He wrote a couple of books for us. Did the collection of a book, *Under the Fifth Sun*. He was a Latin American scholar. And he ended up doing *Under the Fifth Sun*, this collection of Latino literature of California. And then he also worked on a collection of illuminated landscapes, this collection of material from the Sierra. And it was partly through him that I got an association with Sierra College Press. I don't see him very much, but there's been a sense of, as they used to say in those old days, solidarity. And he's one of the army. He's one of the good soldiers in the fight for justice and for beauty and for truth. So I would love to see a mention of him in there. Did I talk about Bay Nature at all?

18-00:21.00

Bancroft: Yeah, you did.

. Actually, Jack Laws mentioned Bay Nature, in terms of that he had been drawing for it. Somebody else mentioned it.

18-00:21:32

Margolin: It must have been somewhere around 2000, the year 2000.

18-00:22.07

Bancroft: I can look it up online.

18-00:22:10

Margolin: Okay, thanks. Whenever it was. David Loeb came to me. And he was somebody that I didn't know. And he was working for Guatemalan Freedoms or something like that. It was a political journal about the situation in Guatemala, which at that time was just gruesome. It was slaughter and misery. And he was working in that political work and he came to me with this idea; what did I think about starting a magazine of natural history of the Bay Area. That he had this illumination that this would be a great idea. I'd already had that idea and I already had that idea to the extent that when Mary Jeffords was running for the East Bay Regional Park District board of directors, she had some campaign funds and she didn't use it all and I snagged that so that I could do a plan and an appeal for starting a magazine on the nature of the Bay Area. So he came to me with an idea that I had had and I put it away, like many other ideas. There's an abundance of ideas. And I start some of them and I leave them behind.

And we decided to do this magazine called *Bay Nature*. He would do it under our nonprofit. We got some consultant in. We sat around and we planned the magazine is what we did. Planned the magazine. And then I went down to Packard Foundation and I got 200,000 bucks from them to start this thing. And I came back with the 200,000 and we had a small planning group, me and

David and somebody named Marilyn Smulyan. And we got a consultant in to help us envision this. And the consultant ended up giving us all kinds of wrong advice. And what I had in mind was something like *News from Native California*. Something that would create a community. Something that would be fairly simple. Something that would be artful. I think you can create a community through a magazine much more than you can through books. That there's an ongoing readership, that there's ongoing writing, that it's more current, that you have more events. That books are much more leisurely and aristocratic and *sui generis* and they're islands. They're grand islands. Whereas a magazine is a continuity of writing and of people. And you're engaged. You're always engaged. You talk about current events. You have calendars. You have obituaries. It's newsy. And I figured that we could create a wonderful community with that.

And we got the couple of hundred thousand bucks and we ended up getting into these first issues. And I remember that it now had its own budget. It now had a couple of hundred thousand. And with that couple of hundred thousand I came into the office to ask somebody to help us buy some computers so that we could get this thing running. And there was a feeling of resentment. There was a feeling of resentment that I had taken my time and the reputation of the place. I had set up something else outside with other people that was going to get really great computers, and we didn't have great computers.

18-00:26.07
Bancroft:

Was there another office for *Bay Nature* elsewhere?

18-00:26:10
Margolin:

No, at that time there wasn't. And we were going to get wonderful computers. And then because there was that grant money we could pay people better. There was a discrepancy. And what I originally thought would fold into Heyday got set up in some way that never folded into Heyday. David had his own ideas about how to run it. And it kind of went along for a couple of years with me in the role of publisher and David in the role of editor. I'm trying to phrase this. I'm working at this, I'm working at this. So finally I think the public story was that I realized that I wasn't really active as a publisher. That I wasn't really guiding it, I wasn't giving it the time. And because I was there in this role, nobody else was fulfilling that function. That I was just throwing little bits of time. So I ended up getting several friends to create a board of directors for David. I set it up as its own 501(c)(3). I moved it out of Heyday. It's flourished. It's been going for ten years. And David has moved from editor to publisher and he's got somebody else in there doing the editing. And it's done a lot of good in the world. It's been loved. It has a community of people around it. It has support.

18-00:27.53
Bancroft:

That's good.

- 18-00:27:54
Margolin: That was good.
- 18-00:27:55
Bancroft: Yeah, that was good.
- 18-00:27:55
Margolin: Can I have a drink?
- 18-00:27:56
Bancroft: You told me the part about the money that was being seen as a kind of distraction or the competition between people already here. So I didn't really want to put that in. But I like what you're saying about community. You launched this magazine. You helped launch it. And I think that's the main point. But I really like what you said about your vision of community through a magazine.
- 18-00:28:27
Margolin: Yeah, yeah. And it happens through *News*. We have friends out there that are just so wonderful and go out into the community. It's just so loved.
- 18-00:28:39
Bancroft: Well, that's really clear, and I think that comes through. People talk about *News* more in chapter three than in chapter four.
- 18-00:28:49
Margolin: There was something in there. Between us, there was something in there where he liked birds better than he liked people. I don't like birds better than I like people. I like people. And I love the creativity of the human endeavor. I love the stories that people tell. This is for the record. There's something about natural history writing that I'm sick of. It's the same story over and over again. Once everything was beautiful. White people came along and wrecked it. There's a brave group of people trying to restore it.
- 18-00:29:33
Bancroft: Keep the bypass from going through the wetlands.
- 18-00:29:35
Margolin: And these people are saving this last remnant and there's something about it all that is the same story again and again. There are other themes that I would love to develop. There's the theme of fecundity, the theme of diversity. I love eucalyptus. I think eucalyptus are just utterly wonderful. We've lost some battles. We're not going to restore every piece of land. There's no such thing as wilderness in this area. It's a fiction. There's a mixture of people that had been cultivating this land and had been working on it for 15,000 years. They've been burning it, they've altered it. This is a human landscape and we live in a human landscape, and we'd better figure out how to live in it and we'd better figure out as things come in how we, instead of just having these rigid lines, how we create something that is fecund and is healthy and is

thriving and is beautiful. And this business of bad plants and good plants. It's moralistic, it's fascist. I don't like it.

18-00:30.54

Bancroft: You thought *Bay Nature* was doing too much of it. Was kind of retelling the same old story.

18-00:31:01

Margolin: It was the same stupid story. And there was no playfulness to it. There was no joy. There was no delight.

18-00:31.17

Bancroft: Righteous. Self-righteous.

18-00:31:18

Margolin: It was self-righteous. And I can go way off in the other direction. I can be so impossible. There was a conference on new concepts for state parks, on what a state park could be. That we end up having historic parks and natural history parks and seashores. What else should we have? And I suggest a "get laid" state park because this is what people go to the state parks for. And it helps the underserved because they don't have money for motel rooms, and they can meet and go into the state park. I got kicked out. [laughter] And I suggested little pathways that wander around.

18-00:32.04

Bancroft: They didn't appreciate that idea.

18-00:32:04

Margolin: No, they did not. No, they did not. No, they did not.

18-00:32.08

Bancroft: Well, also, tell me about Inlandia Institute because you mentioned that and we haven't talked about that at all.

18-00:32:16

Margolin: Inlandia Institute, back in the year 2006, did this anthology of Inland Empire literature and it was the most wonderful thing. It was Riverside and San Bernardino. Gayle put it together, and it was an absolute hit. We ended up selling thousands of copies. College of the Redwoods. It wasn't College of the Redwoods. It was Redland—

18-00:33.13

Bancroft: Somewhere down there.

18-00:33:28

Margolin: Yeah, it was Redlands. Ended up buying one for every student. And there were partisan celebrations. And it defined a literary area. And it's funny that they didn't understand what they had. That there were little towns out there that had writers that were writing about their town. People writing about Covina, people writing about Ontario. There were people living in places and

writing about their hometown, and it had something to do with UC Riverside and the creative writing department in there that had the most wonderful influences. People like Susan Straight and Chris Buckley and various people in that wonderful department. And the literature was so good, and Gayle found it and put it together, and we came out with this thing, and there was a program at the library, at the Riverside Public Library.

And when we had this reception in there, I said, “Hey, listen,” I said, “we can have this anthology, and people can read it, and it’ll all go away. But I would really love to see a permanent institute here to work with you.” And I had just been on a panel in Washington for the National Endowment for the Arts looking at applications to the National Endowment for literary programs. And there were these literary programs all over the country, the Loft in Minneapolis and these places that had centers for literature and for reading and for residencies for artists. And I said, “This is what Riverside needs.” And damned if they didn’t take me up on it. And there was this woman, Marian Mitchell Wilson, who was working for the Riverside library in development. And when she saw this, it was like a retriever seeing a duck for the first time. She just lined up and she knew exactly what this was and she went for it. She became so streamlined. She became so effective. She used all of her contacts. She got this thing together. And we worked with her. We were partners in it for several years, and I was down there maybe six or seven times a year and ran programs with them. And we ended up having manuscripts generated from it. And it’s still going. I kind of tended to just drift away. I’m not sure why. Just drifted away. It wasn’t anything--

18-00:36:21

Bancroft:

Was it just too much to keep making those trips along with everything else going on?

18-00:36:29

Margolin:

I don’t know.

18-00:36:30

Bancroft:

Well, also, you tend to be a firestarter. Mariko made a very wonderful statement about that. You’re the idea man, so you provide these great ideas and energize people, but it’s up to them to keep it going.

18-00:36:47

Margolin:

Yeah. I get things started. I’ll get things going. I’m interested in them for a while. And if I’m interested in something, I’ll stay with it. But if I’m not interested in it, it just goes away.

18-00:37:03

Bancroft:

Well, there’s a lot of competing demands. Well, okay. Is there anything more, then, you want to say about Inlandia Institute? So it’s still going?

18-00:37:13

Margolin:

Yeah, it’s still going.

18-00:37.14
Bancroft:

Okay. Amy Kitchener, speaking of magazines, was telling me about the magazine *Living Cultures*. When I went through the archives, I saw one facsimile of what it was going to look like. But why didn't that take off?

18-00:37:36
Margolin:

It didn't take off because there were several members of the board that didn't feel magazines were going to be effective, that everything should be computer--and the other reason, and I didn't push it, and I didn't push it because I came to feel that the magazine wouldn't work. That the folk arts are not a coherent enough definition to have an audience around it. That people that are interested in mariachi music are not going to be interested in California Indian basket weaving, are not going to be interested in—

18-00:38.13
Bancroft:

Language revitalization.

18-00:38:14
Margolin:

Language revitalization. That these are all different groups, and you're not going to have people that are interested in one folk art reading about another folk art. It just wouldn't happen. It was partly the feeling over that for a couple of people that it should be electronic, there should be an electronic newsletter, which there now is. And it was partly my own not wanting to push something that wouldn't work. And I think I'm right on that. When I went to New York recently, I went off to see the Royal Cambodian Dancers. And I've known the Cambodian community here. Did I talk about the dancers, the Cambodian dancers at all?

18-00:39.16
Bancroft:

Yes, they do this *khong*.

18-00:39:20
Margolin:

Yes, that's right. So here was the Royal Cambodian Dancers playing at BAM, at Brooklyn Academy of Music. So I went off to see them, and it was stately. It was stately. It was this slow movement, it was poses. Forty-five hundred hand gestures. The warfare between the demons and the princes are done with such elegance and such grace and such ritual. It went on for two hours, and I didn't breathe. It was that beautiful. But there was something that they gave as a program where there was an explanation of some of the things that you were seeing. And then later on I was over in Roseville at the Maidu Cultural Center and Frank LaPena's group was dancing the Maidu traditional dances, and his son Vince has taken over the leadership of this to some extent. And Vince was explaining some of the things. And I thought, "That's what I would like, is a program for them." And I was thinking about having programs for these different folk art groups and maybe doing it as a core of something that would go out on a quarterly basis and have some news around it. And I was thinking of approaching Amy on it. But I haven't done it because the place is a little bit overloaded right now, and to bring something in that's completely strange, it's not the right time to bring it in. But it's on my mind, is that I would love to

have like thirty-two page pamphlets or twenty-four page pamphlets that talk about California Indian Maidu traditional dance. I'd love to have one on traditional roundhouses. I'd love to have one on different elk horn carving by Indians. I'd love to have one on boats and boat building. I'd love to have all this Indian stuff. I'd love to go beyond it. I'd love to hang out for a couple of weeks with Nati Cano, Natividad Cano, who's a mariachi master from Los Angeles, who's so fun and so elegant, and just get into the sparkling uniforms and the way in which they kind of gather and how they learn their music and where it comes from and what its traditions are. Wouldn't that be fun?

18-00:41:58

Bancroft: Yes, definitely.

18-00:41:59

Margolin: Wouldn't that be just great fun? Oh, did you get that thing from Theresa Harlan that I emailed you?

18-00:42:08

Bancroft: Yes.

18-00:42:08

Margolin: Yeah, I thought that was a wonderful description. I thought she caught me on that one. I saw myself. That was me. That was clearly me. So nothing came of the magazine. I think it's the problem of folk arts in general. It's a category that embraces too many disperse things to really be successful. Amy's great.

18-00:42:54

Bancroft: Yes, she and I had a great talk. And so she's in one of these chapters.

18-00:42:59

Margolin: Yeah, I saw that.

18-00:42:56

Bancroft: Okay. What I'm thinking is I have to move my car because it's been sitting there. So how about if we take a station identification. Because you have some more things, people that you want to talk about.

18-00:43:10

Margolin: Theresa Harlan, Book Camel, Rick Heide, Malcolm and his meadow, Dan Carr {inaudible}.

18-00:43:20

Bancroft: Okay. So let's—[break in audio] Are you going to Kule Loklo on—

18-00:43:55

Margolin: Yeah, yeah.

18-00:43:55

Bancroft: Okay, good. Because I will see you there.

- 18-00:43:58
Margolin: Oh, that's good. Oh, I'm sorry you couldn't interview me down there in {inaudible}.
- 18-00:44.02
Bancroft: I know. Okay, so what was that about?
- 18-00:44:05
Margolin: It's a benefit for Heyday, and it was going to be a hundred dollar a plate dinner and then something at Toby's Feed Barn, where I'd be in conversation with somebody. And I thought it would be really fun, since you know me better than I know me, that I could interview you. [laughter]
- 18-00:44.22
Bancroft: Yes. I'll probably be the only person who hasn't been interviewed for this book. But I am going to write a preface, so I'll have something in there.
- 18-00:44:33
Margolin: Oh, you haven't been. Oh.
- 18-00:44.37
Bancroft: I'm interviewing myself.
- 18-00:44:39
Margolin: Oh, what a peculiar possibility. How complicated that would be. How impossible.
- 18-00:44:46
Bancroft: No, but I'm writing a preface, so I get to have my say in that.
- 18-00:44:50
Margolin: Denny Smithson has a radio show on KPFA, and for years Denny has been interviewing me. And I'm always on his show, whenever he needs somebody in a hurry, I'll be on the show. I'm on it for the fundraisers. So I just kept getting interviewed by Denny, and one day I said, "Hey, screw this, Denny. You always interview me. The next show I'm going to interview you."
- 18-00:45.13
Bancroft: There you go.
- 18-00:45:14
Margolin: So he said okay. So we ended up going in there. He was scared out of his wits.
- 18-00:45.17
Bancroft: Yeah, definitely.
- 18-00:45:18
Margolin: He was utterly terrified that it was now his turn to be interviewed, and he was on stage. And I was terrified. What happens if I don't have good questions and he's clammed up? That role reversal was just absolutely horr—

18-00:45.32
Bancroft: I heard you on KZYY, speaking of.

18-00:45:36
Margolin: Oh, with that idiot. That was the dullest interview that—

18-00:45.39
Bancroft: I know. The questions were--Cal Winslow.

18-00:45:43
Margolin: Cal Winslow. Is he this slow?

18-00:45.45
Bancroft: Yeah, often he is. I just thought he's not asking questions clearly or interestingly. And apparently Leanne Hinton had been on just two weeks before that. And he hadn't even done his homework. He didn't really even understand what you had written or any of that. Okay. Well, let me ask—

18-00:46:10
Margolin: I found him thoroughly annoying.

18-00:45.14
Bancroft: Yeah, I could tell. You were struggling to get something out relevant to him. Okay. Let me see.

When I sent you back chapter three, I had an overwhelmingly long letter to you with lots of questions, some questions in it. So you just sent back chapter three, so I think that will answer it. And then I had all of these things for chapter four. What's your thought? And I think there were some for chapter three, as well, because they came from—less so but from *News*. What's your process or thoughts on trying to get these excerpts?

18-00:47:06
Margolin: I thought I'd just clip some stuff out and put them in folders and give them to you.

18-00:47.10
Bancroft: Okay. That sounds good.

18-00:47:19
Margolin: That's what I thought I'd do.

18-00:47.21
Bancroft: Okay. When are you going to do that?

18-00:47:24
Margolin: When am I supposed to have chapter four? On the 27th?

18-00:47.30
Bancroft: Yes, I believe—

18-00:47:32
Margolin:

I assume I'll have it out by the 27th. Oh, you will be so proud of me.

18-00:47:54
Bancroft:

[laughter] Yeah, you've got this down. So a week from Monday. And then I'm going to send you chapter five. Oh, that's great. [laughter] Yeah, you were ahead of it with chapter three. Okay, so that's very good. That schedule is only slightly off because I ended up dividing one of the chapters. I think it had eight chapters. There's now nine. And what I wanted to ask you was, if you look at--go to the outline. And I asked Gayle this a little bit. I just finished cobbling together chapter eight, which is on page four.

18-00:48:36
Margolin:

You have? No kidding.

18-00:48:40
Bancroft:

Yeah, it's happening. So I'm going to spend at least another week on it. But as you can see from number eight, I have a lot of information in there because this was really the chapter about how Heyday makes books. But I begin with all of these quotes that I think are really great from people who've had books made for them, including Frank, Jack, and Fred and Susan, as well as an interview in there from Lee that's also really great. But all of that amounts to about nineteen pages single-spaced and then the rest of the chapter gets into the actual making of the book. So the editing. You can see I've broken it down into the different departments. Actually graphics and design now goes with production. And it's really long. Now, I'm going to go back through it again and cut as much as possible but I just want to get some of your guiding thoughts about this.

One thing I'm doing with the interviews—I'm really enjoying that there's a little bit of—you saw the actual interviews obviously. So I'm keeping in a little bit of personal stuff, maybe a paragraph or two about kind of where somebody came from and their trajectory, and then what it's like working here or what they think about you, what they think about their colleagues. And then as I was saying, like about Diane, what their job actually entails. So some of them are pretty long. But I think they're fun and interesting. Somebody else may not. But it comes to 48,000 words, that chapter alone. I'm going to try to cut it down to maybe 40,000 words but still a lot of information, and the majority of it is about how people here describe their work. So I could potentially make it into two chapters. One is what other people say on the theme of making beautiful books, which includes that kind of first third of what's now fifty pages. Actually, I think it's sixty pages. And then leave the second part that's about the actual editing, the making of the books, more interviews from people here into a second chapter.

18-00:51:27
Margolin:

Forty thousand words is a lot of words.

- 18-00:51.30
Bancroft: I know. Definitely I know it has to be cut down.
- 18-00:51:40
Margolin: Somebody would have to read it, outside of the theory of whether it's good or not, to see how it actually—does it hold interest? Do people really want to know this?
- 18-00:52.00
Bancroft: Yeah. Actually, the way I have it now, I need to cut more, but it's like 48,000. Okay. So yeah, that's the question, is how much—if I cut it—
- 18-00:52:13
Margolin: Yeah, first thought is it's a separate book, how to make a book. Yeah. So that's clearly impossible and stupid and divisive and doesn't work. That was my first thought. Because it's book length.
- 18-00:52.27
Bancroft: But assuming I can cut down a lot of extraneous stuff, I could make this into two chapters, one about kind of the theme of how beauty is celebrated here, because here's a lot there also from you in one of our chapters or one of our interviews where—
- 18-00:52:47
Margolin: If it's interesting, if people are going to sit there and read it and go from one page to the next, not from a sense of obligation but from being drawn through it, then that's great.
- 18-00:52.59
Bancroft: Yeah. But certainly for one chapter 48,000 words, or even 40,000 words, is too long, right? So I should subdivide it. I ended up doing that with the Indian stuff. It became chapter three and four because there was just so much material there.
- 18-00:53:15
Margolin: It can be divided into separate chapters.
- 18-00:53.19
Bancroft: Yeah. We'll see if that works.
- 18-00:53:24
Margolin: That's making tapas.
- 18-00:53.26
Bancroft: Yes, exactly. Lillian will like it better. Okay. So that means then there's ten chapters and that will be it. Because the last chapter is kind of the journey from here. Okay. So I'm going to—
- 18-00:53:45
Margolin: So what's the overall length of this?

- 18-00:53.47
Bancroft: You can see on the chapter outlines I've put how many pages single-spaced. But I actually have another document that's called chapters/words/pages. So I haven't added up—let's see, do you have a little calculator?
- 18-00:54:07
Margolin: Yeah.
- 18-00:54.07
Bancroft: I got up through chapter seven. And, again, it's still kind of rough. Oh, I've got a calculator on here. Wait, I can do it right here, Malcolm. I forget that I'm so—
- 18-00:54:28
Margolin: Do I have a calculator out here?
- 18-00:54.30
Bancroft: No, I have one right on my computer. I'm getting to be technologically advanced.
- 18-00:54:35
Margolin: Oh, it's right out here.
- 18-00:54.36
Bancroft: Oh, duh.
- 18-00:54:37
Margolin: It's right out here. There it is. You may have it on your computer, but I found it.
- 18-00:54.41
Bancroft: Yes, you have the actual one. Well, I'm interested in, since I have you, before you finish with number four, are there any sort of general comments you want to share with me about it?
- 18-00:55:14
Margolin: Let me review it. When I'm looking at it, I'm attentive. When I'm not looking at it, it just merges into the general flow of this overabundance of—
- 18-00:56.07
Bancroft: Oh. Oh, wow.
- 18-00:56:11
Margolin: And then Vivian Snyder made me this.
- 18-00:56.13
Bancroft: What's inside it?
- 18-00:56:15
Margolin: Huh?

- 18-00:56.16
Bancroft: What's inside it? A treasure? Ooh, nice. Oh, my gosh.
- 18-00:56:24
Margolin: She made it. I just go to places, people give me these wonderful gifts.
- 18-00:56.30
Bancroft: Yeah, actually that's something else I wanted to interview you about, is kind of talking about some of this stuff that you have and where it comes from.
- 18-00:56:40
Margolin: That was a gift. She made it for me. And the little hangings over there. So when you walk along, the snakes will know that you're coming and you won't surprise them.
- 18-00:56.49
Bancroft: Oh, abalone. And who is it again that made it?
- 18-00:56:53
Margolin: Vivian Snyder.
- 18-00:56.54
Bancroft: Vivian Snyder.
- 18-00:56:54
Margolin: Vivian grew up in Orick on the Klamath River. She left Orick, this old village site, and she left Orick when she was thirteen and she ended up moving to Nevada. And because she left so early, she's my age, she's seventy-one. She'd been gone for so long that her memories of Orick are untainted by change. So she remembers it as it was in the forties. And we sit down when I come there, we just unfold these wonderful stories of that old Yurok world. I tell her about my world, and she tells me about her world, and we just sit there and just exalt in each other's company. She makes presents for me. She made a present for Rina. Nobody's ever met Rina. She made a present for Rina. And there's such love and such warmth and such kindness. She grew up in an aristocratic family, was one of the ruling class families. She was related to Georgiana Trull and related to the people at Requa. When you talk to somebody like that, it's another voice, it's another world, it's another way of being human. It's another country that you visited. And you just stop and you listen to it and you listen to these—she wrote me the most wonderful letter. I don't know where it is now, but she wrote four pages of total incoherence in beautiful penmanship. Her memories of growing up. I love those aristocratic old Yurok women. I'm not sure where I got off on that.
- 18-00:59.11
Bancroft: Well, I love that story in there, too, about the language revitalization, the story you told about—
- 18-00:59:17
Margolin: Georgiana Trull. Georgiana.

- 18-00:59.18
Bancroft: Yes, and the apprentice who said, “Oh, we’re not getting anywhere with this. There’s so many different ways to look at one word even.”
- 18-00:59:27
Margolin: Oh, counting.
- 18-00:59.27
Bancroft: Yes, counting. Counting. Right, right.
- 18-00:59:28
Margolin: Counting. Eighteen different ways of counting. I was with Lindsie, and there was this {Wachumne?} speaker. So I learned how to call Lindsie “pig ear” in {Wachumne?} [laughter] and I was rather proud of myself for putting this together in one lifetime.
- 18-00:59.47
Bancroft: Oh, yeah. Well, you had said that on the interview at KZYX, that you had just been up—it sounded like you were just up in Yurok country now.
- 18-00:59:57
Margolin: Oh, I was up in Yurok then.
- 18-00:59.58
Bancroft: Yeah. Was there a particular event there? I know they’re building the—
- 18-01:00:07
Margolin: It was partly my friend Doug Smith had died, so I went up to give a eulogy for Doug. And he was a Pomo Indian. I went up there, and it was to see Merk Oliver. He’s on this issue of *News*, this fisherman that’s up there. And I was spending time with Merk and sitting there and coming into this room and there’s Merkie sitting on a chair. He’s eighty-three years old. He’s sitting on a chair. He’s whittling his sticks for salmon, to cook for salmon steaks and he’s surrounded by—yeah, that’s Merk. He’s surrounded by shavings on this little stool. He gets up, he’s eighty-three, he’s old. This old house with wonderful pictures all over the place of his aunt, Florence Shaughnessy. Of Merk as a young man with the biggest sturgeon that anybody’s ever caught on that river. I was up there with Merk and Willard Carlson. And Willard Carlson has a place that’s six miles down the dirt logging road to a place called Ah Pa, which is rebuilding with houses and a Yurok village on his own. Across the river his mother lives and she’s the last person—there may be others but she’s the last person I know that has a house on the Klamath River to which no road comes. And she has to leave and come by boat. It was this wonderful old world. In Merkie’s house there was eels in the sink. He was sitting around smoking some weed. He was talking about things in this sad wonderful voice. I think Lindsie got some pictures of it down there that are just utterly beautiful. And it was such a blessing.
- And then we were there with Willard Carlson and John. No, it wasn’t John. It was Tiger. I forget Tiger’s first name. But they’ve both been at Wounded

Knee and there were these endless stories of running guns and being in jail or being out of jail. This world of tough Indians, this world of people. The people of the Klamath River don't know they've lost the war. They think the river belongs to them. They're still smashing boats of the Fish and Game. Merk, there was one time where I had to work to get—he was on trial in this federal court. They'd drag him down to the federal court for poaching elk on park service land. They're his elk, and he doesn't give a damn that it's a national park. It's his elk. And they busted him for poaching the elk and then for having a gun as an ex-felon. And he's eighty-three years old. He's lived always in the same house. He's never moved away. He grew up in that house. There's a sadness, there's a sweetness, there's a defeat. There's a humor. He's getting frail. And it was seeing other old friends. It was seeing Brian Tripp and hearing him sing, and it was being out there with David Tripp and Julian Lang and all these marvelous old friends. It was wonderful. It was just wonderful. And then we had Willard come over to the office, we had an event for him in the office and invited some funders, foundation people, some wealthy people, to talk about his village site and the various people that are making friends with him. And then we hung out. It's not very efficient. But it's just utterly lovely. It's just utterly lovely.

18-01:04.58
Bancroft:

And what took you to New York?

18-01:05:00
Margolin:

Jake had a performance out there. Jake and Nick had a play, a performance out there.

18-01:05.03
Bancroft:

Oh, great.

18-01:05:05
Margolin:

Rina liked it.

18-01:05:17
Margolin:

It had to do with gay marriage. The question was interesting. The question is when it gets accepted, what's been lost? To what extent does it get co-opted by society? And now they moved to the suburbs so the whole thing was about whether they should move to the suburbs or not. And I sent him a note about moving to the suburbs, which was part of the show. New York, I wrote down in my notebook, "There's only one thing better than being in New York on a spring day and that's being young in New York on a spring day." And I was wandering around and looking at things.

18-01:06.28
Bancroft:

Did you get to go back to some of the places? Like where you used to live?

18-01:06:30
Margolin:

Yeah, I did. I did. I'm not nostalgic for any of the stuff. What I felt more than a sense of wanting to see the places where I lived was the new stuff that was

going on there. The vibrancy of all these young people, all these things are being done. There was a show at the Brooklyn Museum of a garment sculptor named Anatsui, which is the most amazing things. These big metallic fabrics. You walk among these big metallic curtains and they're so thrilling, and there was stuff at the new museum down in the Bowery that was just so thrilling. And there was the walking through Central Park where the leaves were tiny and the flowers were bursting and the people were so varying. And the Brooklyn botanic garden and the sweetness of the air. And I didn't earn it. And I didn't have to spend the whole winter to get it. It was just given to me at the end.

18-01:07.25

Bancroft: Oh, that's right. That's right. Very nice.

18-01:07.26

Margolin: It was such a gift. It was such an amazing gift.

18-01:07.31

Bancroft: And what are other good things you have going on? Do you have other big trips coming up or anything? What's your summer look like? I guess in part I'm asking because we'll be closing in on this project.

18-01:07.50

Margolin: Earlier I had a board member, I gave him a tour of my desk just to see what I'm doing. And I don't think that I've got any out-of-state trips this summer. I've got several ongoing things. Did I talk about these Indians that want to build a roundhouse?

18-01:08.29

Bancroft: A little bit. You had just gone to a meeting when I talked to you last in March. You were there as the mediator, in effect.

18-01:08.40

Margolin: Yeah, and it didn't work out. And I learned so much from that. I went back and saw them and interviewed them. And what I realized was that they could have compromised. They could have had a roundhouse. That compromise would be to have a roundhouse that wasn't derived from spirit, wasn't derived from tradition. It was an imitation of a roundhouse. It was a physical roundhouse that would look like the real thing but it wasn't the real thing. And what they were going to do was be defeated in their attempt to get a physical structure. And what they're holding on to was the idea of it, the integrity of it, the religious spirit.

18-01:09.16

Bancroft: Authenticity.

18-01:09.17

Margolin: The authenticity of the spirit. And there's no way this thing's going to work out. And I was so filled with love and admiration for them. We had some strategic planning today and we're going to be studying other publishers to see

how they make out and how they do things. And the whole thing is to make certain that we understand the core of what we—that you can study other people for how to do things. That doesn't determine what you do. That we have a core of integrity, we have a core of interest. We have something that is moving and legitimate. And you hold onto that. You hold onto that. You don't produce something that's an imitation of what you want to do and call it the real thing.

[interruption; asides deleted]

18-01:11.06

Bancroft: I have to say one thing. I wrote a whole list of notes somewhere about what I love about this book. I think I even have it. Oh, did I bring it? I did. I did. One night when I was talking about what I like about the Heyday book. Just so you know, from somebody who's very biased. Why I like the Heyday book. I even called it that. I'm such a nerd. I said such a great main character. Funny, smart, thought provoking, intriguing, warm, likable, familiar and strange both, engaging. Interesting development of his life story. I like how we proceed through your life and that through—

18-01:12:03

Margolin: Yeah. I worked on that.

18-01:12.03

Bancroft: —the stories that come up. Voices weaving in and out from all different parts of his life and they get to be even more—other people's voices than yours, obviously, as we keep moving through. I have these little prefaces that help form a transition between and within chapters, tying together the seemingly disparate voices at time. That's a good little challenge for me because I'm trying to kind of show why this person's interview gets spliced in here and how it relates to the chapter and to the person before and after. I'm working on editing so that the essential voice is there. That's you actually. But a sense of being reflective. Well, within each interview keep that person's voice. I've cut myself out. So how does it flow together? Sometimes I'm cutting and pasting. But is it still reflective of the speaker's own voice or their written work? Eventually wonderful images and design. So as I'm going through you'll see this more and more. Like, for example, there was an interview with L. Frank in there. Well, and you talk about how if you're a Tongva you're really fucked because your land has been taken away, right. And then I put in that little image.

18-01:13:36

Margolin: That picture of her sitting in—

18-01:13.37

Bancroft: Sitting.

18-01:13:38

Margolin: —a desolate area.

- 18-01:13.39
Bancroft: Yeah. So I haven't been doing a lot of that. There's actually one in a later chapter of the three Malcolms. You were talking about the three Malcolms so I just couldn't resist and I put the picture in. But I'm really excited about—
- 18-01:13.50
Margolin: The Mount Rushmore picture.
- 18-01:13.51
Bancroft: The what?
- 18-01:13.53
Margolin: The Mount Rushmore picture.
- 18-01:13.52
Bancroft: Yes, yes. Oh, my God. You and Leonard, I think it's Leonard, look like you could be twins. You're just identical twins.
- 18-01:14.00
Margolin: Yeah. They're both named Leonard.
- 18-01:14.02
Bancroft: Oh, that's right. They're both Leonard.
- 18-01:14.03
Margolin: The middle Leonard.
- 18-01:14.03
Bancroft: Yeah, the middle Leonard. That's the other thing that's so bizarre. But really, like the two of you, you could be—
- 18-01:14.08
Margolin: No, it's just amazing.
- 18-01:14.09
Bancroft: —identical twins. That's so funny. I like the themes. I want to make sure you like them, too. But the themes that are coming out. Like, for example, about when Heyday becomes a nonprofit or how Heyday continues to expand into these other areas as a cultural institution and those are chapters coming up. I think there are some realistic critiques, kindly done, of Malcolm's—I said "failings" such as they are. And I remember you saying that in the beginning, don't make this just all "Malcolm's wonderful" because the issues about—and this becomes even more true in the chapter on calling. "We're not making money anyhow," and Heyday becomes—
- 18-01:15.03
Margolin: That was completely irresponsible.
- 18-01:15.05
Bancroft: Yeah. So you see that about yourself?

- 18-01:15:06
Margolin: It's criminal.
- 18-01:15:07
Bancroft: Other people reinforce that.
- 18-01:15:09
Margolin: It's just criminal.
- 18-01:15.14
Bancroft: It's not all hagiography, as Peter Nabokov said. Yeah. And then I think some of the themes keep coming through, as I see it, as I'm now in chapter eight. Like your adventurousness, your daydreaminess, that sort of haphazard approach to life. As you even just said, it's not like you really designed some of this stuff. But out of it comes meaningful pattern and meaning. The connections to the Native world that keep coming back, storytelling, generosity. And I think that I put interesting side stories that teach about these various organizations. So that's one thing I'm interested in in particular, like chapter four, getting into some of these other stories. Like Lynn—
- 18-01:16:05
Margolin: Some of them, I thought they were really interesting.
- 18-01:16.07
Bancroft: Yeah. Like so when Leanne's teaching us about language revitalization, we're learning from just the other kind of substories there. That that's an opportunity for us to learn about the work, the larger universe of Heyday. And then you'll see, I think throughout the book, some of these subsections keep kind of coming back as to how Heyday works and how people get along or how they care about books here.
- 18-01:16:57
Margolin: I was over at Jennifer Bates' house Saturday night and I thought that business of my sleeping under a tree was so funny. That was so funny.
- 18-01:17.09
Bancroft: Well, it was wonderful to hear her say that. And then, of course, from the archives. There it is.
- 18-01:17:24
Margolin: Yeah. You have it on the tapes.
- 18-01:17.27
Bancroft: Yeah. Okay. You asked about page numbers or word counts. So so far it's 103,000 up through chapter seven.
- 18-01:17:41
Margolin: So it'll end up being—

18-01:17.44
Bancroft:

And that's not even everything yet because I have yet to get from you excerpts from *News from Native California*. Now, I was also wondering how much you want to include any excerpts from books that people had written and published, like a sidebar that's a couple of paragraphs from Fred's book or Susan's book or Leanne's book. Maybe that's not necessary. Well, what do you think about that? Or do you want to just wait and see?

18-01:18:32
Margolin:

We might wait and see. It might be nice. I'm conscious of how long this thing's going to be. I'm conscious of how much there is to read on this. I hope it's not just me but I really find it interesting. I find there's a theme that I keep coming back to. I repeat it about ten different times. Somebody's tone. Going into that tone rather than the content. And I hadn't quite realized. I said it so you think I knew it, but I had to read it to understand. It's funny. If we say things without knowing it, I then have to read it and learn it. But that's in a "deep hanging out." That's what I do, is I listen and I make certain that's true to that tone. This is why I get away with this stuff, is because people recognize it as them. And it's not my words or my sensibility describing them. I'm picking up something. It's that protean quality. I didn't quite realize that I had that. I don't know. So look at Jennifer's house. That was her sister Kimberly and Alison, their daughter, and Aurora, who's another daughter. And I remember once being over there when Alison—did I mention this? So Alison was about seventeen years old and these powerhouse New York women, Dorothy Stanley's daughters, Jennifer, Kimberly, and Sandra are sitting there and Dorothy Stanley was this amazing art—she was more present in that house when I visited last night than people who were there. You could sense it in not only her daughters but her granddaughters and her great-granddaughters. You could see Dorothy right in there. And Alison walks in and Jennifer looks at her. There's a room full of people. And she says, "Alison, are you still a virgin?" [laughter]

18-01:21.07
Bancroft:

Whoa.

18-01:21:10
Margolin:

It's so funny. It's just so funny. It's wild. There were some things that I crossed out. There were some stories that I crossed out. I didn't feel comfortable with them. And some of them I crossed out because I didn't exactly make them up, but I exaggerated them for the sake of the storytelling. And once it was down there, I felt uneasy about putting out that exaggeration. I love Bun Lucas. I just love him.

18-01:21.55
Bancroft:

So do I. I want his picture. Well, you gave us a picture of him. I love him in his rat's nest of blankets.

18-01:22:03
Margolin:

Have you seen a photograph of him?

- 18-01:22.07
Bancroft: No. And I took a picture of a roundhouse that he made. See, that's the other thing. I think it would be great. I wanted it to have as many pictures as possible. And when I asked, and you saw my interviews, I asked everybody, "So what do you think should be in this book?" And having lots of pictures, photos, images was a very popular response.
- 18-01:22.40
Margolin: Well, we've got tons of wonderful pictures.
- 18-01:22.47
Bancroft: Well, let me ask you about that. So with the pictures that you have, pictures that Rina has, these pictures, at what stage should I be thinking about—I've been exposed to a lot of stuff that I could suggest. And, in fact, I do see a failed photo of so and so in here, a photo of so and so. But is that something that comes in August? Like you said, August 15th you want the text to be ready. So then do we really work on incorporating pictures at that point or before?
- 18-01:23.26
Margolin: I think that what I would end up doing was just accumulating possible pictures and then at some point we whittle it down to a choice. And I think the idea of having lots of pictures is really great.
- 18-01:23.47
Bancroft: Well, maybe what I'll do is—I have a whole batch here. Jeannine's photos, Jim Quay, L. Frank, Lee Swenson, Rebecca. So several people had sent me images. And I'll just burn them to a disk and make a copy for you and for Gayle and then that way—
- 18-01:24.06
Margolin: I have bunches of photos and *News* has bunches of photos. The archives have bunches of photos.
- 18-01:24.10
Bancroft: Yeah. So these were just the ones when I asked people. And then the ones that other people gave me, I just said, "Well, let's see what you have and then if we like them we'll come back to you to get a more print ready version of it."
- 18-01:24.28
Margolin: What you've tended to do is have longer interviews with people and the pictures off to the side. There might be some people that will have a picture and a caption with a quote. I'm aware of meaning a lot to several people, and I don't want to burden you with a whole bunch of interviews, but there are so many people out there that should be contacted. Maybe what we can do is run a picture with a caption of some sort or other.
- 18-01:25.02
Bancroft: Well, I think if you talk about them at this point, because it is true, I've long—like when you're thinking of some people, who are they?

- 18-01:25:10
Margolin: Linda Yamane is one. She's essential.
- 18-01:25:17
Bancroft: Because you mention her. So there can always be a separate little sidebar or I can make—
- 18-01:25:23
Margolin: And she wrote all kinds of things for *News* that we could pull. She was very prolific.
- 18-01:25:36
Bancroft: You mentioned Logan Slagle.
- 18-01:25:38
Margolin: Yeah, Logan Slagle. And who could believe somebody like Logan Slagle—who could believe that such a person could ever have existed. There was Logan Slagle. There was my wonderful friend David Risling and I so admired David. And I saw his son recently, Ken Risling and I saw his daughter-in-law, Lynn Risling. His daughter, Lynn Risling and I saw his other daughter Kathy Wallace the other day. That ruling class--Hoopa Yurok Karuk family. Hey listen, there are people that have worked there for years that have been—I don't want some sloppy album where everybody is included. I don't want an archive. It has to be a book. It has to be honed down to stuff that's interesting. And it can't be a record of everybody's that's passed through. Linda Yamane will look to see if she's there. If she's not there she'll be hurt.
- 18-01:27:00
Bancroft: Well, there's a story about her. There's actually a couple. There's one about—
- 18-01:27:03
Margolin: Yes, her learning her language.
- 18-01:27:04
Bancroft: Yeah, about her learning her language. That was very, very moving. And then you also mentioned that she was at this conference in Monterey.
- 18-01:27:12
Margolin: Yes, that's right.
- 18-01:27:15
Bancroft: And Jeannine mentions about her giving the basket. If there's an article from *News* that has, again, an excerpt with a picture, I think that's a great way to kind of capture some folks. Somebody had the idea of getting a list of all the people who have worked here and interned here. And Patricia has a lot of those people. But then once you start that list, then if somebody's left out that becomes awkward.
- 18-01:27:47
Margolin: There's several people I'd like to leave out. Can I have a good hand on that?

- 18-01:27.54
Bancroft: Well, do you think that would be useful in having a kind of index of all the people who've come through Heyday?
- 18-01:28:03
Margolin: Maybe an appendix. It's not terribly exciting for me.
- 18-01:28.09
Bancroft: Yeah, it's just a list of names.
- 18-01:28:10
Margolin: Now there's a list of all the books I've done.
- 18-01:28.14
Bancroft: Now, see, I think that would be great. And the image, and I put that somewhere in one of these chapters—and we talked about this actually in one of our early interviews—is you have an image of the spines, so they're lined up. So here were five books that were created in 1982 and then eight books in 1985. They were later than that. But I'm saying that image of the shelf with all of the names of the books on it. I think that would be really great somewhere in here. And maybe the bottom of the page is an illustration.
- 18-01:28:52
Margolin: A timeline in order of publication and the dates above them.
- 18-01:29.00
Bancroft: Yeah. But seeing the spines is kind of cool because they are the physical image. They're such physical things.
- 18-01:29:12
Margolin: That'd be pretty cool. I'd like that. That would be neat. I think we've got most of the books we've published. Some of them seem to have slipped away. We forgot *Let's Park in San Francisco*. That's still there.
- 18-01:29.37
Bancroft: So who does that, for example, when it comes to, say, lining up the books and taking a picture of them for the image of the early 1990s?
- 18-01:29:47
Margolin: Lorraine.
- 18-01:29.49
Bancroft: Lorraine, okay. Okay. Let me see. I don't know, when it comes to the very last chapter, I don't know how much you want to talk about Parkinson's on tape because none of the interviews talks about that. Like your healthcare. Some people bring it up and they kind of mention it obliquely and I haven't put it in. But I wonder if you are open to having that, one, on tape and then, two, we can see about including something in the book. Just you talking about what it was like to get the diagnosis and how you're coping with it and what it means for you and Heyday. You don't have to do that today, but I wanted to put that out there.

18-01:30:50
Margolin:

Well, let me think about it for a minute here. It's the kind of thing that stamps your identity. I guess the reason I'm not clear on it is because I haven't come to terms with it. That it's something that's there. It's something that's off in a corner somewhere. I keep it off in a corner. Every so often it growls and comes out and causes difficulties, and I push it back in the corner. I'm planning to pay absolutely no attention to it until it kills me. That I'm not planning to surrender. I'll wait to be conquered. I keep going from six o'clock in the morning until late at night, and I'm pushing it and I'm getting closer to the edge and I know that. It's something that I just have no use for. It's contemptible. Just deal with it the best I can. I don't find it very interesting. I don't find my identity in there. Other people get it, this becomes their identity. I don't feel it's my identity. It's something that I have. It doesn't have me. It seems wrong not to mention it. It seems that it's such a major thing that it should be mentioned. I don't know, Kim. I really don't know. Maybe if we don't pay any attention to it, it'll go away. [laughter]

18-01:33:23
Bancroft:

I think that your prevailing disease, the anxiety deficit disorder, is taking over.

18-01:33:27
Margolin:

Yeah, it is. It is.

18-01:33:33
Bancroft:

That's the more important condition that you have.

18-01:33:34
Margolin:

I'm making appointments to give keynote speeches for the next years and assume that at some point I'll get up there and it won't work. It seems like I should mention it. It seems like it should be in there, and I'm not sure how to handle it. I don't like having people feel sorry for me. I don't like people helping me. I don't like having this damn thing. It's the elephant in the room in terms of succession planning and in terms of other things that are going on around here. I've tried to camouflage the elephant as if it were a sofa, but it's not fooling anybody.

18-01:35:16
Bancroft:

Do you notice symptoms are they progress? I don't notice a whole lot.

18-01:35:17
Margolin:

Oh, sure. Oh, sure. Oh, sure.

18-01:35:19
Bancroft:

But you probably—like what?

18-01:35:20
Margolin:

There's a constant stream of pills that I'm taking that are substituting for the dopamine deficit. And the dosage is increasing. There's a slowness of movement. There's a gracelessness. There's a wobbliness of talk, there's a hesitancy of speech. There's the beginning of something called dyskinesia,

which is peculiar gestures that you end up having. The nervous system ends up being effected by the medication that is increasing to a degree, to a substitute. You'll see these kinds of waving gestures that people have. It's progressing slowly. It's progressing slowly. And I'll probably get through the next ten, fifteen years without complete collapse but it's there. I think it has to be packaged in something else. It has to be packaged in some other insight. It has to be mentioned casually. I think it has to be dealt with, and I'm not sure how we deal with it.

18-01:37.20
Bancroft:

Well, I'm asking in part because I'm coming up on the last chapter, "The Journey from Here." I'm calling it that just because we talked about your idea of liking images of boats setting sail, and it's not the end; it's just Heyday taking off into new directions. People talking about succession and what they want to keep at Heyday. I actually liked the beginning of the chapter and imagining stuff that didn't fit in chapter eight, which is about working at Heyday. People talking about what they enjoyed about working here, enjoy about working here, and keeping that. So what is this stuff that everybody has talked about in these interviews that they want to keep on when Heyday continues into the future, and how will it continue? And you're going to retire one day. You're putting in place a separate entity almost, or sub-entity of the California Indian, the roundhouse. So at some point in there, there can be some mention of this but almost in passing, and I think what you just said is—

18-01:38:31
Margolin:

I think mentioning it in passing, packaging it in something about growing older, something about—it seems like I'm lying if I don't. Seems that—

18-01:38.52
Bancroft:

That's part of the whole picture. And if this book is giving as much of a whole picture of you as possible, that should be in there. And what you just said is in line with how you dealt with a lot of other things. This is to say I'm not going to focus on the negative. The main statement in the editing section in chapter eight, from Jeannine and Gayle and others, is let's focus on what's good in this manuscript and get the writer to do more of that. Let's not focus on the negative. And that that somehow magically works for people to produce good stuff. And that sounds kind of like your attitude here.

18-01:39:49
Margolin:

It's a wonderful life that I lead, and I'm surrounded by people. I had the most wonderful event last week. I was on a panel. It was a performance with Gary Snyder and Michael McClure and Joanne Kyger. And there were the four of us reminiscing about Nanao for a new book that's coming out about him. And then at the end Sako comes up to me, this wonderful Japanese woman with the most beautiful words in the English language: "Malcolm, it's big party. You come. Very good sake." [laughter] And it was such a delight and it was such a—

- 18-01:40.36
Bancroft: I know. I wanted to go to that.
- 18-01:40:36
Margolin: It was such a delight to hang around these people.
- 18-01:40.38
Bancroft: Your stories about Nanao come in. Oh, chapter seven. I like chapter seven. Heyday's cultural community. And so it's your friendship. I got you talking about several of your friends, including Nanao, Jeff, sections here. That's a really fun chapter.
- 18-01:41:37
Margolin: Yeah, great people. It'll be mentioned in a sentence and then passed over. Be mentioned in a sentence and then could be a context. Just be part of growing older and part of—maybe Nanao's wonderful comment about strong legs, strong me, not very good teeth. Getting older.
- 18-01:42.55
Bancroft: Who is that old man in the mirror? That poem. You read that poem.
- 18-01:43:02
Margolin: I know that poem. There's one of his loveliest poems, one of his absolute loveliest poems. We all read it at the reading. [Reads poem] "If you have time to chatter, read books. If you have time to read, walk into the mountain, the desert, an ocean. If you have time to walk, sing songs and dance. If you have time to dance, sit quietly, you happy, lucky idiot." [laughter] It's just so lovely. Just so lovely. I've got all these excerpts to collect and all these—
- 18-01:43.53
Bancroft: Yeah. Actually, I think what we'll do now, let me make a date with you, and then we can take a little break because Rina's going to come. I don't know if you like the idea at some time of talking about all of these objects that you have around. If you remember who—
- 18-01:44:12
Margolin: Oh, I don't remember what half of them are. Where the hell is this? I think I showed it to you.
- 18-01:44.32
Bancroft: Well, you showed me Reuben's. Yes. But like, for example, this. What's this?
- 18-01:44:39
Margolin: Oh, a different way of packaging knowledge.
- 18-01:44.50
Bancroft: Oh. Interesting.
- 18-01:44535
Margolin: So it's a kind of package of maps and stuff. People contributed different posters and different things.

- 18-01:44.59
Bancroft: Oh, flags. Okay, that's interesting. What about like some of this stuff? Like this. Is this a particular pestle, mortar and pestle that—
- 18-01:45:10
Margolin: It's a mortar and a pestle, and when it was given to me the hole was broken out so it would cause no harm, so that it's soul would be killed and the person that had it wouldn't harm me.
- 18-01:45.26
Bancroft: Oh, wow. Do you know where it came from or who had it?
- 18-01:45:30
Margolin: I'd rather not say.
- 18-01:45.30
Bancroft: Okay. Yeah, that's fine.
- 18-01:45:33
Margolin: I know who it came from. I shouldn't be having it. And I can't get it back. And then L. Frank made this for me.
- 18-01:45.48
Bancroft: I didn't know she did that. Oh, my gosh.
- 18-01:45:53
Margolin: L. Frank made something really funny. Let me look at the stuff.
- 18-01:46.10
Bancroft: It's kind of funny. Just thinking about like—
- 18-01:45:16
Margolin: L. Frank made this. There's something else that she made. And then people give me things. So this is a bracelet from Dixie. This is something from Wanda Quitquit. And these are things from I forget who.
- 18-01:46.42
Bancroft: Do they all have little objects in them?
- 18-01:46:45
Margolin: Sometimes. Sometimes.
- 18-01:46.50
Bancroft: What's this?
- 18-01:46:51
Margolin: That's a ram's horn. And then Reuben made this for me. My different identities.
- 18-01:46.59
Bancroft [Reading] "Writer. Margolin. Leonard. The phone number. Dad. Editor. Naturalist. Hiker. Publisher. Sixty-year-old." That's nice.

18-01:47:29
Margolin: This is my home phone number.

18-01:47:32
Bancroft: “Billiard’s player. Old car driver.” That came up in--Lillian talked about the old Volvo. “Writer.” Nice.

18-01:47:50
Margolin: Oh, here it is.

18-01:47:59
Bancroft: “Friend, publisher, spokesman. Tribal members.”

18-01:48:10
Margolin: Tribal members.

18-01:48:11
Bancroft: Oh, tribal members.

18-01:48:11
Margolin: So these are the tribal members. These are the spokesmen of the tribal members, and this is the friend and the publisher’s. Giving a present.

18-01:48:17
Bancroft: Okay, I see. Oh. That’s so cool. Ancestors. That’s beautiful. L. Frank made this?

18-01:48:26
Margolin: Yeah, L. Frank made this. That’s an imitation of the sand paintings they used to inaugurate people. You’d draw a painting in the sand and it would explain how the universe was constructed. Oh, I think maybe this is the most beautiful thing I have. I just love this. I picked it up in Guatemala. Do you know what this is?

18-01:49:05
Bancroft: No.

18-01:49:09
Margolin: So these are weights, and you end up having—I think this is one.

18-01:49:23
Bancroft: So for weighing spices or—

18-01:49:25
Margolin: Yeah. Because you end up having one ounce. This is two ounces. This is three ounces. This is four ounces.

18-01:49:39
Bancroft: Oh, great. Wow. All very old style.

18-01:49:40
Margolin: This is five ounces.

18-01:49.41
Bancroft: Yeah, exactly.

18-01:49:43
Margolin: And it's just so clever, and it feels so good. When I was down in Guatemala it was one the one thing that I wanted.

18-01:49.52
Bancroft: Nice. This looks interesting. A turtle.

18-01:50:06
Margolin: Yeah, I forget who gave that to me. Somebody in Southern California.

18-01:50:09
Bancroft: Turtle rabbit.

18-01:50:10
Margolin: I don't buy anything. It's not that I am cheap, I just don't want anything. I put things aside.

18-01:50.73
Bancroft: I know. That's why I was kind of interested in your collection, because I'm sure people give you things.

18-01:50:21
Margolin: Yeah, people give me things, and I just kind of put them aside somewhere. And I never look at them. I never see them. I was sorry about that.

18-01:50.36
Bancroft: I noticed, too, that you had talked about having a gallery space here.

18-01:51.06
Bancroft: Yes, I know. I love that. I think that should be in there. Oh, beautiful.

18-01:51:12
Margolin: She was so wonderful. There's the two girls.

18-01:51.22
Bancroft: I saw them at the Heyday party, holiday party.

18-01:51:24
Margolin: That's up in the Klamath River. That's Lindsie and that's Willard.

18-01:51.29
Bancroft: Nice. Oh, great.

18-01:51:37
Margolin: How much time do we have?

18-01:51.40
Bancroft: So we have half an hour. So I think what I'm going to do is go back and move my car one more time and let you hang out and do what you do. Oh, I did

want to find a date, though, for when we can have a next meeting. The next time I'm planning to come back for sure is—

[interruption; asides about scheduling deleted]

18-01:52:48

Margolin: Back to the inbox. Here's a letter from a Yurok tribe member with the Resighini Rancheria in Klamath. "I am at the present being held as a political prisoner of the State of California and being housed at old Folsom State Prison in Folsom and am due to be released October 2013, this year." He's written two books.

18-01:54:31

Bancroft: You got wonderful letters at times, I've seen. Okay. Your desk. Is there order?

18-01:55:31

Margolin: So this is an annual book prize. This is an old letter. Let me see if there's any letters. Oh, here's some of the good letters. So here's Marion Weber.

18-01:56:15

Bancroft: [Reading from Malcolm's letter] "I'm spending more and more time sitting under trees with Indians developing manuscripts, working with someone who has been interviewing me and others for a biography of my life and a portrait of Heyday, meeting face-to-face with poets, artists, clowns, and shamans, worrying about the state of the world while shamelessly celebrating my joyful participation in it. I am perhaps like one of those Greek sailors of myth, sailing ancient seas, blocking my ears so I can complete my journey without being distracted by the seductive enchantments of the time, in my case LinkedIn, Facebook, and many et ceteras, which may be a self-flattering way of saying that I'm stubborn, self-defined, and an incorrigible Luddite."

18-01:56:57

Margolin: Isn't it fun?

18-01:56:56

Bancroft: Yes. Very good. Very appropriate. Good self-description. Yeah. I just ignore all LinkedIn invitations.

18-01:57:08

Margolin: [Going through papers and explaining them] This is David Wilson, who wants his daughter to work as an intern. Here's an architect, Trachtenberg, who came to a poetry reading and stole a book and wanted to pay for it. So this is a memo from Bruce Lunberg to all of the rice farmers and water people. "This year Malcolm Margolin's presence and words have also given us a similar enthusiasm for the Sacramento Valley as a special place. His thoughts at the NCAA annual meeting were both engaging and inspiring and he has now provided a written proposal for us to consider."

18-01:57:46

Bancroft: Oh, okay, good. Is that the one you're working on with Fred?

- 18-01:57:47
Margolin: And I'm getting Fred Setterberg in.
- 18-01:57:48
Bancroft: Yeah. Mariko also mentioned that.
- 18-01:57:53
Margolin: This is to the reporter for the *New York Times*, sending her a catalogue.
- 18-01:57:56
Bancroft: Nice.
- 18-01:58:03
Margolin: So we did the book with them on the Mid-Peninsula Open Space District which I intentionally misspelled.
- 18-01:58:11
Bancroft: "There was a bit of mutual flirtation about the possibilities of our working together on another project. Do you have any interest in taking this flirtation to the next step to run the flirtation metaphor into the ground? My place or yours?" That's fun.
- 18-01:58:25
Margolin: [laughter] Yeah. It just goes on. This is the East Bay Regional Park District. This is getting this book that Fred worked with to a Chinese publisher.
- 18-01:58:53
Bancroft: So what happens to this pile? Are these things that Mariko sends out?
- 18-01:58:56
Margolin: No, they just get lost. So let's see if there's anybody. This is Steve Costa, his Point Reyes book. So he's on our board, he wants to serve on a committee. His Dropbox of something that I'll never be able to figure out how to open. Ken Oakland wants us to do a book. This is Rafael Gonzalez, wants me to read a poem. Strategic planning. New dates. This is Kim Bancroft sending me the index.
- 18-01:59:43
Bancroft: God, look at that. This is all in the last two hours.
- 18-01:59:56
Margolin: Oh, what a lovely thing. Ray {McDevit?} is a lawyer and I invited him to a reading of Dan Gerber. Did I talk about Dan Gerber?
- 18-02:00:00
Bancroft: Un-unh.
- 18-02:00:08
Margolin: I was in Yosemite for a meeting of the National Wildlife Federation, and I'm sitting around this table. Did I not talk about Dan? So I'm sitting around the table, and there's the head of the National Wildlife Federation and the

supervisor of Yosemite and the ruling class of the Bay Area environmental movements and conservation movements and a poet, Dan Gerber. And I'm thinking, "What's a goddamn poet doing here?" So somebody says, "You'll really enjoy Dan Gerber. Sit next to him." So I sat next to him and was sitting there at the table and we're talking about poetry and I just loved this guy. I thought he was the nicest man. And I'm wondering, how does a goddamn poet get involved in this? And then he tells me the story about how, when he was a little baby, his father wanted to take his mother out for a date and the mother said, "Hold on, I've got to make Danny some food." And the mother went to the sink, and she had a strainer and she's mashing peas through the strainer, and the father says, "Is that how you--" and I suddenly realized "Gerber."
[laughter]

18-02:01:12
Bancroft:

Yes, of course.

18-02:01:16
Margolin:

The strategic planning. She can't join me. So this is just some of today's emails that I haven't—

18-02:01:41
Bancroft:

Yeah, that's like just the last two hours since I sent you that stuff. Hoo. Well, listen, shall I let you—

18-02:01:50
Margolin:

Oh, this is Kathy Zonana. She's head of the Bill Lane Center, she's coming by. This is a guy, Pete Bancroft.

18-02:02:00
Bancroft:

Yeah. Graham. Okay, well, I need to get my dog out and move my car.

18-02:02:11
Margolin

Come on back. Thanks.

18-02:02:12
Bancroft:

And I'll come back. Where are we going to go for dinner?

18-02:02:18
Margolin:

Why don't we just walk downtown?

18-02:02:22
Bancroft:

Yeah, that sounds good.

[End Audio File 18]

Interview 19: August 19, 2013

[Begin Audio File 19]

19-00:00:00

Bancroft: I would like to start. It's August 19, 2013.

19-00:00:07

Margolin: And we're just about on schedule.

19-00:00:10

Bancroft: Just about? We're on schedule. I got the book in. Now we're on the next stage, aren't we?

19-00:00:17

Margolin: Yes, we are. Yes, we are.

19-00:00:21

Bancroft: My daddy taught me to be on time.

19-00:00:23

Margolin: God, there was a teacher that came out in this thing. I can see teacher Kim in this thing. I can see you getting your homework done on time.

19-00:00:30

Bancroft: Yeah, most definitely.

19-00:00:32

Margolin: The dog didn't eat your homework.

19-00:00:34

Bancroft: Yes, Professor Kim, too. "Let me tell you what you're about to learn," and that's the stuff that I needed to cut out, which actually reminded me of your comment about Jeff, that some of his writing, when it was kind of less spontaneous, because it was the professor, the academic coming out. So that was a good lesson to me. It was, okay, we don't need to tell them what we're going to tell them.

Let me just begin with a few questions that I had and then we'll go back over some of your stories. So Vera Mae and David Fredrickson, you gave me some excerpts from your obits. And I didn't copy those in yet, but I presume you just want all of—it's like two pages from *News*. I'll put those in.

19-00:01:20

Margolin: Yeah, it can be cut, but that's what I thought would go in.

19-00:01:25

Bancroft: Okay, all right. I'll put it all in, and then we can decide if it needs to be cut. There was something I wanted to clarify. In chapter four where you're talking about making *News from Native California* and there was a sentence there where you said you and Vera Mae were designing it on the napkin and you

thought, well, there would be fewer events in the summer and fall than there are in the—I mean in the summer—

19-00:01:52

Margolin: No, it's fewer events in summer and winter than there are in fall and spring.

19-00:01:57

Bancroft: Okay. I'm not sure it came out that way. But that surprised me, why there are fewer in the summer, because there's always, to me it seems like there's these Big Times and Pow-wows. So why are there fewer events in the summer?

19-00:02:10

Margolin: I might be wrong about it, but it seems to me that there are more events in the spring and in the fall than there are in the summer. And it just seems that way.

19-00:02:19

Bancroft: I know, but it kind of surprised me because I think about all these events. But you have the experience. Joan Villa talked about Logan and always going to Washington to testify. I kind of knew what that was referring to. It's like this thing about my dad saying, "What's a didgeridoo?" Well, I know what a didgeridoo is so I assume other people know what that is. I wanted to add even a phrase there. When she says, "We're always going to testify," what would they be testifying about or for?

19-00:02:55

Margolin: It was almost always federal recognition of unrecognized tribes. So it was getting tribes officially recognized as sovereign nations that can deal directly with the United States government. And there's a long process that you go through. There are hearings. There's all kinds of filters to keep people out of this and not to give them the recognition that it may deserve. And there are all these hearings that are going before the judicial and the legislative and the—

19-00:03:25

Bancroft: And the BIA.

19-00:03:27

Margolin: And the BIA. And it's just an endless number of hoops that have to be gone through. Logan's specialty was federal recognition of unrecognized tribes.

19-00:03:40

Bancroft: Okay. There was an image that was drawn of you that was in my records. I'll have to pull it up. But somebody who drew that picture of you that's on the twentieth anniversary brochure. Do you remember who did that image? Maybe that'll come up when they're doing the design. It's just such an iconic drawing of you.

19-00:04:10

Margolin: There was a drawing of me that was done sitting in the bar at Specs on North Beach with some of these old beat poets and there was somebody that drew

me and handed it to me. And I'm not sure whether that's the one or not. There were several drawings of me. I'm not sure where that comes from.

19-00:04:28

Bancroft:

Okay. If somebody wants to attribute it, I just wondered if you knew. Okay. And I mentioned I wanted to remind you to do the excerpt from Linda. You mentioned something about the name of her husband, and I kind of cut it out in my next version because it's this guy?

19-00:04:47

Margolin:

Tim.

19-00:04:48

Bancroft:

Tim. Tim Yamane? Was that his name?

19-00:04:52

Margolin:

Oh, no. Oh, no, no, no. No. Her husband was Glen. Glen Yamane.

19-00:04:56

Bancroft:

Oh, Glen Yamane. Okay.

19-00:04:57

Margolin:

Yamane. And I cut that out because they're divorced. He's out somewhere. She's with this guy named Tim, and I just thought I'd expunge him from the record.

19-00:05:07

Bancroft:

Yeah, okay. I took him out, too. The Breath of Life. There's references to the Breath of Life and also the Languages of Life conferences. And I'm not clear what the difference is.

19-00:05:23

Margolin:

Yeah. I'm not clear either. I'm not clear either. They're both things that the Advocates for California Indigenous Language Survival run, and it's run through Leanne and Marina, and they're just these different conferences. Silent No More was one name. Breath of Life was one name.

19-00:05:42

Bancroft:

Oh, okay. And then Language is Life.

19-00:05:45

Margolin:

Language is Life.

19-00:05:46

Bancroft:

Okay. Because you mention one of them, she mentions another, and I don't know if that needs to be clarified, people will be confused, or if it doesn't matter.

19-00:05:54

Margolin:

Well, I'm confused. You can join me. [laughter]

- 19-00:05:58
Bancroft: Fine. All right, now, one last thing here was mentioning--and you put something in your notes about this, to change it--so your comment about Sadie going on these trips with you and that you thought she would be the last person to have witnessed this beautiful world. I think when I reread it I put in the last white person because it seemed to me, to be honest, presumptuous that she would be the last person because there are already these Indians who are witnessing this up and down California. But I was taking it from the idea of somebody who's an outsider, as a small child.
- 19-00:06:44
Margolin: No, I meant the last human being.
- 19-00:06:47
Bancroft: And I thought it—
- 19-00:06:47
Margolin: That there was nobody else that traveled around that way. There's other Indian kids acquainted with their own language, but there was nobody that saw the range of it.
- 19-00:06:54
Bancroft: The range of it. Okay. So I think that's the point. Because when you said this beautiful world I kind of focused on here's—
- 19-00:07:01
Margolin: No, no, no. It's the range.
- 19-00:07:03
Bancroft: The whole world. Okay.
- 19-00:07:05
Margolin: It's the range and the variety.
- 19-00:07:05
Bancroft: Okay. So that clarifies that. Okay. That's it. That was it for my questions. So we can go to some of these stories that you would like to share with me.
- 19-00:07:23
Margolin: So did I not tell you the story of Mahatma Gandhi's grandson?
- 19-00:07:25
Bancroft: No. You mentioned him. The only story was about when you said that the Ted Williams—no, it wasn't the—
- 19-00:07:33
Margolin: No.
- 19-00:07:34
Bancroft: Not Ted Williams but when he said, "Well, I've grown up with a famous grandfather. You wouldn't understand that."

19-00:07:39
Margolin: Oh, this is the most extraordinary story. This is the story. If you're looking for the guiding story of Heyday and my life, this is the story. So Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, Ramchandra Gandhi, was around and I was setting up these events for him, these talks and readings and various other things for him and we hung around for several weeks. And one day we're up at the old office on the Koerber Building and we're up in—hey, come on in.

19-00:08:12
Bancroft: This is Vincent? [Vincent Medina enters, a new hire for the Native programs at Heyday. He and Kim discuss scheduling an interview, then Malcolm invites Vincent to sit at the table while he tells this story.]

[interruption; asides delted]

19-00:10:51
Margolin: Did you ever hear the story of Mahatma Gandhi's grandson?

19-00:10:55
Vincent: No.

19-00:10:56
Margolin: Sit on down. Sit on down.

19-00:10:57
Bancroft: Take a moment. He was just saying it's the—

19-00:11:02
Margolin: This is one of the great stories that I've heard and have experienced in my lifetime. So Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, Ramchandra Gandhi comes in and I'm showing him around and setting up readings for him in various things. And one day we're up at the office in the Koerber Building and he says, "I would like to know more about your Jewish background. I would like to meet your rabbi." And I said, "Hey, buddy, you're thirty years too late. I dropped out of that world. But there's a Jewish museum in town, the Magnes Museum, and let's go up to the Magnes Museum, we'll look at some of the displays, I'll talk about how I grew up, and we'll discuss what it meant to be a Jew." And he says, "That would be very good." So I get on the phone and I call Seymour Fromo, was the head of the Magnes Museum. Did you know Seymour?

19-00:11:44
Bancroft: Un-unh.

19-00:11:45
Margolin: So I call Seymour up and I said, "Listen, Seymour, I've got Mahatma Gandhi's grandson in tow. We're going to be over there in about fifteen minutes. You give him the royal treatment. You open the door, you don't charge him admission. You bring him into the back rooms. This is a world-class man. You treat him well." So like fifteen minutes later I come up to the front door with Ramchandra Gandhi, and we come in, and Seymour has

already got a photographer, the newsletter editor, and the chairman of his board is already assembled. Seymour knew how the world ran.

So I come in there and we're looking around and we're walking around and everything is just so wonderful. They're so polite. And we're looking at Korchin in Kettawa on the Malabasi coast. There was a wonderful old synagogue that I visited once, and it was created after the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem, and the Jews fled to India those centuries and centuries ago, and there was this temple that was set up and it was in existence until the fifties and the sixties when everyone went back to Israel. And I came there. When I saw that temple, there was a couple of old men hanging around and it somehow reminded me of some of the Indian stuff that I've seen, where it was an older world, that a couple of people were describing what once was. And this was my own culture. And I was so touched by it.

And then we looked around and there were some Chagall paintings that he liked. When the Torah is unfurled you can't touch the letters directly. You have little brass hands on stops. And he noticed that some of the hands were right hands and some of the hands were left hands, which only a Hindu would ever notice. And nobody had ever noticed that in the history of the universe. And we were discussing this. And we're walking around and it's utterly pleasant.

And we come up to the third floor, and I'd forgotten about that goddamn third floor. It was the Holocaust room. And the place is gloomy. The place is just dismal. The photographs are just chilling. The artifacts are dusty and grey, and the stench of death is up there, and there's something horrible when you come up into that place. And he's looking around, he's trying to figure it out. And Seymour picks this moment to attack him. He says, "Have you heard of Hitler?" And Gandhi says, "Of course." And he says, "Have you heard of the Holocaust?" And Gandhi says, "Of course." And Seymour says, "This is where we have absolutely no use for people like your grandfather. There are some things for which you cannot be a pacifist. There are some things that must be fought. There are some things that can never be forgiven." So I'm standing there saying, "Boy, this one just went to hell in a hurry." And we stumble around and make some polite sounds, and we walk out.

And I was shaken by this. And we walk out, and I say, "Hey, listen, Ramud, I'm sorry about what happened, but I don't know what to think. It seems that something happened that was so horrendous you can't just forget it and forgive it. On the other hand, if you dwell on it it poisons you. No matter what you do you're screwed. There's no way out of this one." And he said the most astonishing thing. He said, "There are some things that have happened in this world that are so momentous no one of us is big enough to have the full response. So some people like my grandfather will forgive, some people like Seymour will be full of hatred and anger. Some people, like you, will be

confused. And we need all of us to work out the right response.” Isn’t that just great?

19-00:15:16

Vincent: It is. That’s really beautiful.

19-00:15:17

Margolin: That was just so beautiful. It was so capacious. It was so inclusive.

19-00:15:22

Vincent: It is.

19-00:15:23

Margolin: Yeah. And it was the Hindu practice of Advaita, of bridging the dualities. That when you see things in opposition you rise above them to see what the commonalities are. That I am not the opposite of this table. We don’t have anything in common. I can be the opposite of you. And the reason that I can be the opposite of you is we have so much in common. And when you see opposition there’s something in common. So I do it again and again, and it was just the most instructive and wonderful thing. It gets you beyond that world of right and wrong. That for me to be right, you have to be wrong, but for you to be right, I have to be wrong. That it can just be a complicated world, and we can each have our own ways of going about things.

19-00:16:16

Bancroft: You prefaced this story, just before Vincent walked in, by saying that this was related to kind of the inspiration to Heyday. How do you tie it back to Heyday?

19-00:16:30

Margolin: That I’m dealing all the time with folly and stupidity. I deal with it all the time in this Indian world, of people that go out there and do ridiculous things. I mean, what happened to California Indians? That the crime was so momentous that the response—and I watch different people responding. I see some people become Christians, some people become old believers. Some people take it one way, some people take it another way. I don’t take sides on this. That somehow or other all of us are working out the solution to this thing. I’ve got my own values, I’ve got my own principles. But there’s a recognition that if the thing is narrowed down to my capacity to see and feel, it’s too narrow. It’s got to have other ways of seeing and feeling to it all.

19-00:17:31

Bancroft: Well, I’m going to keep interviewing you.

19-00:17:36

Vincent: I’m enjoying what I hear because I agree with that. I’m going to get lunch, though.

19-00:17:41

Margolin: Oh, there’s another story.

19-00:17:43

Vincent: Oh, yeah? Okay.

19-00:17:44

Margolin: Did I tell you the story of Naxos in Greece?

19-00:17:49

Bancroft: No. I think there are like three stories you needed to tell me.

19-00:17:51

Margolin: So the story of Naxos was the most interesting—so it was the Greek island of Naxos, and I had spent—and this was about 2003, I went there by myself, stayed in Leonard Cohen’s house on Hydra and wandered around, and then I went over to the island of Naxos. And the island of Naxos had not gotten electricity until recently. So consequently there was an older type of music that was being played there that had not been influenced by electronic music, by records, by things that people had heard. There was an older kind of European music, and there were a couple of ethnomusicologists that were out there recording it. And I hooked up with them and I went around with them for a few days, and we went off into the hills of Naxos and it was the middle of winter, it was cold, it was rainy. There was this old farmhouse where they were going to assemble some singers and some musicians, and they had come in from the surrounding meadows. There were shepherds, there were goatherds. It was a farmhouse when you entered it. There was a stone entryway, and you came in and there were skins hanging down and herbs hanging down and long things hanging down, and it had the smell of what I imagine old peasant Europe smelled like and the coloration and the tone of it all.

And you enter this hot kitchen, and the women were cooking things, and there was lots of ouzo that was being drunk and there were people that were playing various instruments and singing, and I sat in the corner and I’m sitting there eating and I’m drinking, as I tend to do, and things are happening and people are getting up, and I suddenly become aware that across the room there’s this young guy and he’s glowering at me. He’s staring at me. And it’s a very uncomfortable staring. So I do what I tend to do, which is drink too much. And then every so often he gets up and he does this dance of anguish, of such anguish. People dance solitarily, in solitary dances. And it’s this expression of such deep pain. And he then sits back down again and he’s sitting back there and he’s glowering at me. And finally he finds somebody who can translate and he comes over to me and he says, “I’ve been looking at you.” And I said, “I know.” He says, “I know who you are.” And I said, “Who am I?” he says, “You’re a Jew.” So I said, “Oh, boy, we’re heading down that one?” And he says, “And you people don’t have a country. You people live in other people’s countries. You live in other people’s cities. You live around in Europe. You live in Asia. You live in America. You live everywhere. I have a country, I have a home. This is my place. That field that I’m in is my field. Those goats are my goats. They were my father’s goats, they were my grandfather’s goats.

They were my ancestor's goats. This place is where my ancestors are buried. This is the land that I'm attached to. You don't have—you wander around. You go anywhere. You live in other places. I have this place that I live in. I once wanted to get away. I went to Germany, I lived in Berlin, I got into trouble. I got thrown in jail. I came back, I'm living here, I have to live here. You're free. I have to live here, and that's why I'm so jealous of you."

19-00:21:15

Vincent:

Oh, wow. That's intense. That's intense.

19-00:21:18

Margolin:

I hadn't expected it was going to take that turn at all. And it was something about it, that we so praise rural life and so praise people that have a place. The whole history of the last centuries have been people escaping from place. They've been escaping from their homeland. And when I lived in Puerto Rico years ago, between San Juan and Ponce there were these little villages out there, Caguas, Cayey, these little villages, and you'd go there and there'd be these stucco houses covered with bougainvillea, rows of papaya bushes, big mango trees, citrus fruit, chickens running around, dogs, hibiscus flowers and bougainvillea growing up against the houses. Balmy air. Everything was beautiful. Half the houses were deserted because people had moved to Harlem. Why? Why had they done that? And it wasn't just poverty. It wasn't just poverty. There was something else. The tedium, the boredom, the fact that you're living next to the guy that stole your girlfriend and is still living with her. The fact that the other guy had beaten you up since the third grade and was still domineering. The unhappiness of small town life was there, and it was absolutely amazing.

19-00:22:46

Vincent:

Is it okay if I talk on the recordings?

19-00:22:49

Margolin:

Yeah, of course.

19-00:22:50

Bancroft:

Yeah, of course. Yeah.

19-00:22:52

Vincent:

I thought about that not too long ago. Me and Lindsie were actually just talking about this, about traditional village life for California Indian people because people are living so closely together in such centralized villages that, where, a lot of times you have to realize that there's going to be jerks and there's going to be people who annoy you and there's going to be people who say things that are rude or who cheat on you, cheat on your—and it's like this whole romanticization of California Indian culture, it's like, well, at the very base of everything, there's humanity. And humans are usually pretty annoying. [laughter] That's the truth. So I think that having like this romantic image, it's like that took a lot of grace. It took a lot of, I'm sure, restraint not to say things. And that's also why I'm sure traditional seasonal encampments,

the effect is to ease tensions of people who were annoying. Let's get away from this. I wouldn't want to be around the same people. Like I love my family, but I wouldn't want to be around them every single day, twenty-four/seven. It would make me uncomfortable and it would probably annoy me. And as much as I love my family that's—and so I think it's just interesting to think of traditional village life here and how people—they did have to walk a fine line because they needed each other. They needed this way of life but at the same time these like tensions would arise and that's probably why seasonal villages were so important.

19-00:24:32
Margolin:

So you're living in this village, you're annoyed to hell by everybody. You're irritated. New people come in, they set up a mission, they've got something in there to offer. I think they don't have to force you in there. I think you come in there voluntarily.

19-00:24:48
Vincent:

Imagine a UFO being parked underneath the Golden Gate Bridge one day, looking up and seeing it there. New looking groups of people, new looking technologies. People who have things you don't have. What would be the first bet? And most of the kids say, "I'd be interested in it." And then a lot of the kids say, "I'd be scared of it." And at the root I think that that's how people actually felt. But then going into the missions was an alternative to a place that really didn't have that much social mobility. There really was no social mobility, I don't think.

19-00:25:26
Bancroft:

Yeah. Well, as you were saying, though, about the seasonal villages, if things are not working out in the winter village, at least in the summer you get to decamp, move somewhere else, and have a slightly different living arrangement.

19-00:25:41
Margolin:

So I'm talking about the Gold Rush and I'm talking about the Sierra and I'm talking about how I picture the young men of the East Coast setting out for the distant gold fields of California. There are tears in their eyes as they say farewell and receive the blessings of aging parents, as they clutch a photograph of loved ones to their chest, as they tenderly hide a locket of hair and a love note among their belongings. These dutiful sons, faithful husbands, and caring fathers are off on the quest of the hero, the wealth quest, and they bring back the gold that will free their family from toil and poverty. It is part of the image as providers, as loyal family members. I know the tears are real. These were sad and emotional moments. But would you think badly of me if I were to suggest that beyond the tears was part of them itching to get away from the importunities of a spouse, the criticism of parents and neighbors, the whining of children and the never-ending lowing of the damn milk cow. They were at least part deliriously happy to leave the business of life to the polite, the timid, the obedient, and the prudes who would stay behind, have tea on

Sundays and go to church, while the wild ones broke loose and headed for the hills. Hey.

[Interruption; asides deleted]

19-00:27:51

Margolin: Yevtushenko. Did I ever tell you this story?

19-00:27:54

Bancroft: No, I have not heard any of these stories.

19-00:27:55

Margolin: So Yevushenko was coming to San Francisco Bay area.

19-00:28:04

Bancroft: And say who he is because some people don't—

19-00:28:05

Margolin: The Russian poet. And this was about fifteen to twenty years ago. And a group of us were supposed to get together and show him around San Francisco, and he came in with his translator, who was a guy from Brooklyn, and the translator had just married this Russian woman, who was a Eurasian actress and who may have been the most gorgeous woman I'd ever seen in my life. And it was her first days out of Russia. She had never been out of Russia before. And the previous day they had landed in New York. The translator had tried to bring his wife over to Brooklyn to meet his parents and she got lost in the New York subways. She didn't speak any English. She was thoroughly traumatized. So they come over, they're jetlagged. She's traumatized. The translator is beside himself with remorse. Yevtushenko is arrogant and grumpy over the best of circumstances and was supposed to show them a good time.

So I get together with—I think Bob Hass was there and Mark Dubois from Friends of the River was there, and we got a bunch of people together and we bring them up to Mount Tamalpais on a wonderful spring day and prepare a wicker basket with fruit and cheese and baguettes and some chilled white wine, and we sit on the grassy slopes of Mount Tamalpais, and there are little wildflowers around us and the air is balmy and the sky is blue and there are little puffy white clouds and little sailboats on the bay and everything is just utterly beautiful, and we had this marvelous time sitting there talking. We then go down to Green Gulch, to the Zen Center and we introduce them to the zen monks. We go around gardens, the zen-do. We walk down to Myrtle Beach; there are a couple of naked people swimming in the distance that looked quite lovely. We walked back to the Pelican Inn, we have a drink. We come back to the Green Gulch, we say goodbye to the zen monks. We then go to North Beach and we walk around and we have a table reserved at Green's Restaurant and we're sitting there at Green's Restaurant. And this gorgeous actress turns to her husband and she says something to him in Russian, and he turns to me and says, "She would like to thank you from the bottom of her

heart and says it's as if all of her life she's been in a box and today somebody let her out." And somehow I've always talked about that in terms of the beauty of the Bay, in terms of the stunning beauty of the Bay. That we just don't get used to it. But that first vision of the Bay can just be so beautiful.

19-00:30:41

Bancroft:

Well, and you took her to Mount Tam to get the ocean, the whole works.

19-00:30:49

Margolin:

Hermann Heinzel was the foremost bird artist in Europe. He's illustrated the *Birds of Europe* that have been translated into every European language and about six or seven years ago, the Bohemian Club hired him to come to Bohemian Grove and do *Birds of Bohemian Grove*. And he did a special book on the birds of Bohemian Grove and he was charming and everybody loved him. And the Gamble brothers, Lance and George, who are the Proctor and Gamble heirs, who own half of Napa County, were so in love with him that they wanted to do a book on birds of Napa County, and they call me up and they say, "If we hire Hermann Heinzel to come and do this book, will you publish it?" And I said, "Of course." So they hire Hermann Heinzel, and he comes to visit me in Berkeley and up comes this man. He's in his seventies, he's a boulevardier. He's handsome, he's well-dressed. Every woman that is here is the most beautiful person he's ever met. He brings them flowers, he brings them wine. He asks them out for dinner. I forget. I'm going to get hit by a goddamn harassment suit. I better hustle this guy the hell out of here.

So I hustle him out and I say, "So let's just go for a drink, Hermann. I'll bet you like to drink." He says, "Yes." So I hustle him out and I say, "Hey, listen," I said, "you're a hell of a bird artist. You seem to be more interested in women. You're a boulevardier." And he was born in Germany, he was living in the south of France. I said, "How did a guy like you get interested in birds?" He says, "I'll tell you the story. When I was a young boy I was in the concentration camps. My brothers and my father were killed. I was there alone with my mother in the work camps, in the barracks. My mother went off to the labor camps, and I was left all alone in the barracks by myself. I was a young kid. I was scared, I was hungry, I was lonely, I had nothing to play with. I was terrified. Into the barracks flies a baby owl and the baby owl begins fluttering against the window. And I picked the baby owl up and I put it under my shirt and I walk around with it all day, and I can feel the beating of its heart, I can feel its warmth. My mother comes home from the work camps. I pull the baby owl out. We killed it, we plucked the feathers, we cooked it up, and we ate it. That's where I got my feelings for birds."

19-00:33:36

Bancroft:

Of course you see this story going into this. It's his friend, this one bird that he gets, this creature, wild creature. But yes, you have to eat it.

19-00:33:45

Margolin:

You have to eat it.

19-00:33:47
Bancroft:

And you appreciate the feathers.

19-00:33:52
Margolin:

Yes. It's a little bit like this Indian stuff. It's the way in which beauty gets born out of pain, that knowledge of the world sometimes does not come to those who are comfortable, and there was something about—this was a knowledge of birds that went beyond studying, that went beyond Peterson Field Manuals, that went beyond anything. This was another knowledge of birds. And he shows it in his artwork. I thought that was just great.

19-00:34:28
Bancroft:

Yeah. It reminds me, I just was looking at the latest *News* and the stories from Lila Rhoades about that she could have been a taxidermist, all of the animals that she—her beloved creatures that she has created, stuffed, lovingly stuffed, and now they've been taken from her.

19-00:34:54
Margolin:

There's one more story that I thought of telling. Did I ever talk about Fred Meeter?

19-00:35:06
Bancroft:

No.

19-00:35:06
Margolin:

So Fred Meeter was a guy that lived in Berkeley for a while in the sixties and seventies. I knew him in the seventies slightly. And he was one of these people that came out of the sixties questing for the perfect land, for perfect human society. And he traveled all around, living in different places. I think he lived in Indonesia, I think he lived in Africa. He lived with different cultures to see if he could find someplace that was perfect, human beings were kind to one another, where there was social justice, where there was a sustainable environment. And he couldn't find anyplace. And he decided that the only place you could do this any longer was by living by yourself, maybe up in Alaska, hunting your own food, just turning your back on society. And he had married a woman named Elaine by this time, and Elaine and he were living together. And he moved up to Alaska to what was the Brooks Range before it was a national park. And he ended up hunting and fishing and he was maybe one of the few people that had this kind of life, dependent upon game and dependent upon the land. And he lived up there with Elaine. They had a kid named Dion, and Dion grew up with them, and Elaine and he would talk about how they'd be in the cabin over the wintertime and it would be dark all the time and they had no idea where one person began and another person ended. And Dion, when he was a teenager, fell through the ice in the lake and died. And they built a coffin for him, and they buried him by the side of the lake. They then had two other kids, two girls. I don't quite remember their names.

19-00:37:01
Bancroft:

How do you spell Dion? I thought it sounded—

19-00:37:03
Margolin:

D-I-O-N, I think. As in Dionysius. And then they had two girls. And as they were living up there, more and more people began to come there to hunt and the lake that they lived on. Planes were beginning to land and drop off hunters who were having camps, and he realized the caribou were no longer coming through. He could no longer maintain this kind of life. That the only hope for this area was to become a national park. And he wanted to do a film on his life, as the last of these people living this wild life as part of an effort to run it into a national park. So he then came back to Berkeley and Lou Loeb—did I ever talk about Lou Loeb?

19-00:37:53
Bancroft:

No.

19-00:37:55
Margolin:

Oh, my God. So Lou Loeb had the Ark Bookstore up the street, right on this block, and Lou was a book dealer and Fred used to hang around the bookstore and he came to Lou and Lou helped him get some camera equipment and some instruction and he began to come down more and more as he was doing this film, to learn how to do films, and he began to get together with a network of creative people and funders and investors. And for the first time he saw something in humanity that he had never seen before in this creative exercise, this artistic exercise. He was doing the film and he had the film just about completely done. He got an orchestra together for the sound and it was a matter of splicing the sound into the film and adjusting the levels of it. And on his last trip down he got on the plane, got on the pontoon plane, he fell into the propeller and got chopped up. So Elaine made a pine coffin for him and laid him up there, and Elaine came back down to Berkeley and I spent the next two weeks with Elaine, with the kids, and we spent it at George Lucas's studio. George Lucas gave us his studio to mix the sound. And we ended up mixing the sound. I think the film was called *The Last Wilderness*. And you can still see it in there. But it was just spending all that time watching Fred on the screen with Elaine, mixing that sound, was just so beautiful. It was so sad.

Elaine, when she was around Fred, saw the truth in Fred's manner, the truth in Fred's life. Fred was the greatest man that had ever lived. After Fred died, several years passed, she married some Jungian. She now got into the Jungian shit, and she's been off with this other great man and this other great insight ever since. And I haven't seen much of her in recent years. But there was something about art and that way of seeing things. It becomes the way that you can form relationships in these worlds where nothing else works. And it had something to do with the formulation of art.

- 19-00:40:34
Bancroft: How about this? Because I should go just check my car. I want to go back to Lou Loeb, any stories you have about him.
- 19-00:40:45
Margolin: Oh, Lou is great.
- 19-00:40:46
Bancroft: And I have a couple of other questions. So should we just take a break for a few minutes and I'll come back? [break in audio] Yeah, I saw that they've got this exhibit opening in October.
- 19-00:41:30
Margolin: They're getting people together to review the exhibit.
- 19-00:41:33
Bancroft: Okay, great. Yes. Allison, I've spoken with her before. So that's from 2:00 to 4:00, so I would be happy to join you.
- 19-00:41:44
Margolin: Sounds good. It probably depends upon whether I'm feeling healthy and strong enough to make the trip back and forth. And I think I probably will. If I don't, it's a big chunk of time that—
- 19-00:42:04
Bancroft: Yeah. You've got a lot going on.
- 19-00:42:09
Margolin: It's just astonishing the stuff that—as we're talking there are seventeen emails and all these letters that have just piled up. It just goes on and on.
- 19-00:42:19
Bancroft: Is this something that you feel like it's important for you to be there? Because it's only this afternoon event and you're going a long distance. It is. I mean, you are an important personage in that world of understanding these—
- 19-00:42:33
Margolin: Victoria Patterson asked me to do this, and she was an old friend of David Peri's and I knew her husband, who took the greatest picture that's ever been taken.
- 19-00:42:41
Bancroft: I would love to meet her.
- 19-00:42:42
Margolin: Scott Patterson.
- 19-00:42:44
Bancroft: Yeah. So tell me a story about him because I heard about him through somebody else.

19-00:42:49
Margolin:

He's dead.

19-00:42:49
Bancroft:

Right. But tell me about both of those because somebody else asked—now I can't remember who it was. But when I said I was doing this book with you, they said, "Oh, he probably knows Scott—"

19-00:43:00
Margolin:

Yeah, I knew Scott.

19-00:43:01
Bancroft:

—"and Victoria because they knew them, their people up there." And I said, "Oh, I'm sure he does, but he's never talked about them."

19-00:43:20
Margolin:

It was kind of complicated. Let's drive past it and wave. [laughter]

19-00:43:35
Bancroft:

Yes, that's fine. Okay. So how about Lou Loeb?

19-00:43:41
Margolin:

When I worked with Fred Cody on the *Inkslingers*, Lou Loeb joined in on this. And Lou Loeb was this wonderful old guy. His brother was Moishe Loeb, who headed Yivo, Y-I-V-O, which was the repository of photographs from the shtetls of Europe and the memories of the shetls of Europe. And Lou spoke a wonderful Yiddish. He was an old Communist. He'd been a member of the Communist party. His Jewish practice was the Shalom Aleichem tradition. So he'd go off to his house to celebrate Passover, which was the escape of the working class from bondage. But he was the most wonderful man. He had only graduated from high school. He had never had college, so he understood books with a particular reverence and passion that people that go to college never will. They were objects of worship, they were objects of beauty. He had this bookstore called the ArK and in the back of the bookstore was this huge table, and he would go off into the hills and buy libraries from professors that had died, and their widows would sell the libraries, and he'd bid on them and he'd go up in this old carryall that he had and bring the library down. And he talked about setting the books out on the table. And he'd set the books out on the table and he went over it. He began to develop a sense of this person's mind and he saw what they were into when they were young, who signed the books for them, their marginalia, letters that he found in the books; their interests changed during time. It was the evolution of the mind. And he felt the whole mind was intact. As long as the library was intact, the mind was intact. And then he talked about it came time to split it up and to sell it and the tension that he would feel as he would send the book off to NYU because they were collecting books on opera and send the book somewhere else. He'd disperse the mind into the world at large.

And Lou, I'd meet him every Thursday for lunch up at the Chinese veggie house up on Telegraph Ave, and we'd have tofu with spicy garlic sauce and brown rice. And I'd come there, and Lou would come in, and every week something amazing had happened to Lou. Something utterly miraculous had happened to Lou. The most wonderful thing had happened to Lou. The most wonderful insight, the most wonderful person, the most wonderful thing. And he came in and he was just thoroughly amazed at this great thing that had happened to him. And I just loved talking to Lou because the world was so exciting. And if only I had a better understanding of the dialect, I'd be a good person but I didn't give a damn about the dialect. I just loved Lou.

He had two boys, and then one of his boys had a grandchild and the grandchild was about a year old and he worshipped the grandchild. And at that point he got cancer, and he was in the hospital, and they opened him up and they saw that it had advanced as far as it could advance, and there was nothing they could do, so they sewed him back up again. And I remember his family was up there. I visited him, and the family left, and he was putting on a good front. And I said, "Well, how is it, old friend?" And he says, "Well," he says, "it's terrible." He says, "I'm dying. I'm thirsty all the time, I can't drink, I'm cut up, I'm in pain. And all day and all night I see death looking at me." And I said, "You do?" "Yes," he says, "it's not who you think it is, Malcolm. I thought it was going to be this shrouded figure with a sickle that would tap me on the left shoulder, but that's not who it is." I said, "Who is it?" He says, "It's a young guy with a KQED t-shirt and a smirk on his face lounging on a couch." [laughter] So Lou ended up sharing his death with me, and I'd visit him every day, and we'd talk about what it was like, and I saw him right through the end. And it was very beautiful and very dramatic. In the end he says, "There's no death, there's just life. That's all there is."

I remember the last time that I saw him, he was lying in bed. He was a horrible color. He was almost a green color. He didn't believe in God but he was nevertheless bargaining. If only he could make it to his grandson's second birthday, if only he could make it to here, if only he could make it to there. If only he didn't die during the night so that Edith wouldn't wake up with a cold body. And it was these endless bargains. And finally he had run the course of them out. He was lying in bed toward the end of his life. And I came in for that last visit and I sat there next to him and I was looking for some kind of insight. I was looking for some statement that would say what it all meant and I kept probing him, but he was tired and he wouldn't respond. And it was very unsatisfactory, and there wasn't much left in there. All of a sudden, as we're talking, as I'm trying to get at the last truth, this horrible woman comes through the door. She's a member of the party. And she comes and she says, "Lou, you're never going to believe this. You're never going to believe this. I went down to the hall. I said, 'We want the hall for Thursday night.' You know what he says to me? He says, 'You can't have it on Thursday night. I saved it for someday else.' I said, 'We rented it on Thursday night.'" And I'm thinking this is obscene. I'm looking, and Lou is sitting up and he's

completely transfixed and he comes alive and he's interested. [laughter] Isn't there a great lesson in that?

19-00:49:59

Bancroft: That must have been a really amazing event that was happening on Thursday, or maybe not at all.

19-00:50:04

Margolin: No, it wasn't.

19-00:50:06

Bancroft: Just a meeting.

19-00:50:07

Margolin: It was a meeting. It was a meeting. It was this irritating woman that came is. This is what keeps people alive, is these stories, these interactions, these gossipy interactions.

19-00:50:22

Bancroft: So it occurs to me as you're saying this that how—what year was that about? Was that ten years ago or was that longer—

19-00:50:29

Margolin: Oh, no, it was about twenty years ago.

19-00:50:30

Bancroft: Twenty years ago. But just think about all of the friends that, even since I've known you, that you've talked about in the year, almost a year and a half, over a year and a half that we've been doing interviews. The friends that you've talked about longer ago that have passed away like Lou, and more recently. Chick and Jeff and Chris and more.

19-00:50:55

Margolin: Yeah, Nick and John.

19-00:50:56

Bancroft: Yeah. And that's kind of the nature of when we're aging, in our seventies and eighties. In my fifties I've seen a lot of my elders and people I know go. And it makes me want to ask you, how do you feel about death and dying and looking at that when it comes at some point? What are your attitudes or ideas about what it means or what it could be, your feelings about it, if you want to talk about it?

19-00:51:35

Margolin: Let's see, what do I feel about it? Doing this book with you has made me feel good about my life, so I feel good about my life. I'll be sorry to see it end. I've enjoyed it. I'll keep it going for as long as I can. I don't give a damned about it. I hope I'm not a bother to too many people at the end. I would hope there's not a kind of gradual deterioration and a long period of incapacity. That's what I'm afraid of more than death. You know, Kim, I feel I should say

something profound. This is like this conversation with Lou, looking for some profundity. All there is is the engagement in life and what there is. The rest of it is inevitable and thus boring. It'll come, it'll take me away.

19-00:53:18

Bancroft: It's not like you have any beliefs about an afterlife?

19-00:53:21

Margolin: Oh, shit, no. Oh, God, no. Oh, oh, oh, absolutely not.

19-00:53:24

Bancroft: I assumed not. Yeah.

19-00:53:26

Margolin: Oh, no. Oh, no. It ends. It ends. And the thought that I'm going to go up and see people is just so stupid.

19-00:53:33

Bancroft: Or see the light or come back again in some other guise.

19-00:53:41

Margolin: No, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that. It's the end. That if you live, you live in what you've done for other people and that's your immortality. Do you?

19-00:53:55

Bancroft: I don't. I like the idea that maybe one comes back in some other—I had a dream about dying and that I was sort of this spirit that was floating around others as they were talking and I could be with them in that way. That was a comfort to my deep psyche, I believe. But I don't believe that that's actually true, but that's just what we want, we need to believe in. That's my belief. I don't believe in karma.

19-00:54:32

Margolin: No, I don't believe in karma, I don't believe in justice, I don't believe in—I believe in good luck. I was down in Baja a couple of weeks ago.

19-00:54:49

Bancroft: I wanted to ask about that.

19-00:54:51

Margolin: And I was wandering around these little villages, and one of the funniest things I've seen in my whole life was this Kumeyaay village, San Jose de la Zorra. San Jose de Zorra. In the middle of nowhere this little kid with a Camp Kee Tov t-shirt playing with a dead squirrel. And the dead squirrel's head is cut off and the guts are coming out, and he's got this Camp Kee Tov t-shirt, and I thought it was just utterly wonderful. But there were people over there. There were these women over there that were invulnerable. They were magnificent. They'd lost kids, they'd been betrayed, they'd been poor. They'd seen everything that you can see in this world. They were living out there with

a sadness and a joy and a fullness of humanity. There was nothing you could do to them anymore, and they were who they were and it was just a wonderful thing to see. They were complete human beings. They were isolated, they were insular. Some of them didn't speak Spanish even. They spoke just Indian. They were just amazing people. And it was a slow way of life. It was an old way of life. It was California as it was a hundred years ago. No, more than a hundred years ago.

19-00:56:14
Bancroft:

Right. What took you there? What was the intention of the journey?

19-00:54:21
Margolin:

To get away.

19-00:54:23
Bancroft:

Were they people, friends that you knew?

19-00:54:25
Margolin:

Yeah. They were friends. I'd known about these villages for a long time and my friend Mike Wilkin, his father was Tomas Robertson, who grew up in a utopian community in Sinaloa and wrote books about Mexico and was prominent in Mexican culture, and Mike has kind of taken it on to help introduce Indian crafts to the United States.

19-00:56:50
Bancroft:

So let me ask you, in looking at these last stories that you've talked about and kind of thinking about the chapter in a way you had talked about--some of these stories--was in the context of thinking about encounters that have resulted in principles that have guided us, your travels, bringing Heyday people in and nourishing the enterprise. We're talking about restructuring the book. When you think about those stories, what can you say in terms of weaving them together or perhaps weaving them separately, especially now that you've told me some of those last ones?

19-00:57:52
Margolin:

Well, if we're going to have natural history, the Hermann Heinzel, Yevtushenko fit in well with that. Oddly enough, that story of Naxos fits in more with the California Indian stuff. It has something to do with the rural stuff that we tend to do. The fact that I give these rural communities and people that live there a voice, but I don't believe that this is necessarily happiness, that there's something—it's that wonderful statement that a virgin is not the best person to describe virginity. That a person living in small towns is not necessarily the person best equipped to describe what these small communities are. And I love cities. I just love the urbanness of this place. I'm in the middle of trying to set some stuff up with some people where we'll have a store and we'll have crafts and something in there. I'm not sure anything will come of it overall, but I've been just so infatuated with what you can do in a city and how you preserve—I'm stumbling around on it because other than the fact that it makes a good story I'm not sure where it fits.

19-00:59:50
Bancroft:

Well, this might also be a little bit of a work in progress, when I take this chapter, reorganize, create subheadings, try to place some of these stories in there, and we can see how it works out, and then you may have more developed ideas, too, or new ideas about how to change things around.

19-01:00:13
Margolin:

Yeah.

19-01:00:17
Bancroft:

Okay. I have two other questions. One is, so, in relation to Rina and trying to create even a brief picture of her in some way in chapter one, I have a couple of ideas. One is that I could ask her, beg her to let me interview her and give her even a couple of—just two paragraphs, a sidebar, if there's something that she might want to say, because her voice is not in here. And to say, I respected her desire to not be interviewed way back in October, but now the book is here and we miss her. Or I could ask you to say something, in relation to where you talked about meeting her, and give me two paragraphs about what you saw in her, what she saw in you. You tell some things that will give us more of a picture, so we don't have to wait until chapter five to hear her kids give us a sense of her as an artist and a mother and all of that. Or, three, you could write something, kind of write something and send it to me to insert somewhere. Or even as is.

19-01:01:53
Margolin:

Do I talk anywhere about how she grew up in here?

19-01:01:54
Bancroft:

No.

19-01:01:54
Margolin:

Did I talk anything about her background?

19-01:01:55
Bancroft:

No, you don't talk about her at all.

19-01:01:57
Margolin:

Do you know how she grew up?

19-01:01:59
Bancroft:

I've heard a little bit about a very oppressive father, in particular, but I don't know that much, no. And that might even be all.

19-01:02:09
Margolin:

Did I ever talk about the trips to the Ukraine?

19-01:02:11
Bancroft:

No.

19-01:02:20
Margolin:

Let me talk it over with her tonight.

19-01:02:23
Bancroft: Yeah, do that, because I will be seeing her tomorrow. So either she can agree to a little bit of an interview or you can decide to do it some—

19-01:02:32
Margolin: Is the tape on?

19-01:02:33
Bancroft: It is.

19-01:02:34
Margolin: You can leave it on. So this was one of the most remarkable stories of all. Her background is clouded. She was born in Warsaw in 1940. Her parents were escaping from the Ukraine. There was a relative in Poland. I think it was one of her grandfathers. They named her Irina, which means peace. And somehow things fell apart. Her father ended up in Dachau. Her mother took care of her with an aunt, and the aunt's name was I think Helen. Was it Helen? I'll have to ask her. So this aunt and her mother took care of her in what may have been labor camps or may have been refugee camps. Later on, they were in the refugee camps, but it was in some kind of a diminished, miserable impoverished setting. She remembers the aunt from earliest years, and the aunt ended up—after the partition in Germany, the father came back from the camps. The mother died from mysterious causes in a hospital, from illness that may have been due to a beating, but nobody is certain. The aunt had disappeared. The partition of Germany, they ended up in different parts of Germany. And Rina came over with her father, and the father was so impossible and abusive that either she was taken away or put into a convent, into an Anglican convent for years. And she ended up being schooled by these nuns in Waltham, in a convent there. All the time she had been wondering whatever happened to that aunt. It was also her grandfather. Her mother's father was around somewhere.

19-01:04:46
Bancroft: Were they all Jewish?

19-01:04:46
Margolin: No, they weren't Jewish. No.

19-01:04:48
Bancroft: Oh. Why was the father taken to a camp then? I just assumed it was—

19-01:04:53
Margolin: It's a world of mysteries within mysteries.

19-01:04:50
Bancroft: As you said, the whole world. Yes.

19-01:04:57
Margolin: It's a world in which there are so many secrets and so many betrayals. She spent years trying to sort it out in Russian, in German, and in English, and it

just seems to be mysterious and sordid and something horrible was there. The aunt had moved to the Ukraine and became a professor of medicine at a university and was always thinking about this niece that she had been separated from all those years. She got married, and when her husband died, she changed her name back to her maiden name in case this niece would be looking for her after all these years. And then came one of these things that is so—I don't believe in any of this stuff. I don't have any religious beliefs, I don't believe in ESP, I don't believe in any of this shit. At some point Rina found out that there was somebody that knew the family that had moved to Winnipeg. The aunt somehow found out that there was somebody that knew the family that had moved to Winnipeg, and they both wrote letters to this person, to this address of this person in Winnipeg. The person had long since died but the postman opened the letters and read Russian and Ukrainian and realized these two people were looking for each other and put them in touch. [laughter]

19-01:06:46
Bancroft:

Wow. That is amazing.

19-01:06:48
Margolin:

Yes, it's just astonishing.

19-01:06:53
Bancroft:

It does almost make you want to believe in God. So they finally got in touch.

19-01:07:05
Margolin:

So they got in touch. And we went over. I went over with her because she was just terrified of confronting this one alone. We went over there, and it was the most dramatic thing. She comes off the plane, and the old lady grabs her arm and she looks for a slight scar that was there from a stove in the camps to make sure it was the right person. And then came three weeks of dragging her around to other people's houses like a trophy, and everywhere she went, this niece had appeared. This niece had appeared. And there'd be drinks and food and the most amazing food and vodka, and then after a couple of drinks of vodka, the tears would begin coming for the Nazis, for the people in the gulags, for the people that had died, for all of the tragedy that these people had—it was just so soaked in death and tragedy. And Rina went back about three times, brought the various kids over there, and the aunt died about five or six years ago.

19-01:08:08
Bancroft:

What a story. I remember her showing me some pictures and saying, "Well, this was back, these relatives from back there," but I didn't get the whole story. Okay. Well, that's good to hear as background.

19-01:08:28
Margolin:

Let me talk to her about—

19-01:08:31
Bancroft: Okay.

19-01:13:02
Margolin: Hey, you're writing this book. Are you an author? We don't have a contract. We don't have any kind of a formal relationship.

19-01:13:10
Bancroft: Well, that's true.

19-01:13:13
Margolin: So we should have an author's contract.

19-01:13:15
Bancroft: Isn't it a little late?

19-01:13:19
Margolin: Well, we should anyway.

19-01:13:20
Bancroft: No, we should. It's just funny because we had this conversation about when I interviewed Jack. He said, "Oh, yeah. I forgot that I was supposed to have a contract with Malcolm and we never—"

19-01:13:30
Margolin: No, we did have a contract. It came after the fact.

19-01:13:35
Bancroft: Yeah, exactly. So we'll follow that and kind of do it after the fact.

19-01:13:38
Margolin: Why don't I send you the ordinary contract that we send to every other author?

19-01:13:44
Bancroft: Okay. And when does the title get—

19-01:13:48
Margolin: The title's clearly going to be *Heyday* with a subtitle.

19-01:13:51
Bancroft: Right, but just a subtitle. I'd like something about stories.

19-01:14:00
Margolin: Well, let's get—

19-01:14:02
Bancroft: Okay. A little brainstorming.

19-01:14:05
Margolin: Hey, how are you?

19-01:14:07
Wattawa: Good. It's Monday.

19-01:14:10
Margolin: [conversation out of room] Hey, hey, come over to Gayle's office and take a look at something.

19-01:15:15
Bancroft: Okay. Also, you know what? I realized since I did an interview with Graham late he—I don't think he was in this version.

19-01:15:23
Margolin: No, he's not in that version.

19-01:15:24
Bancroft: I put him in my last read-through. It's only maybe about a page.

19-01:15:40
Margolin: Yeah, that's what I think.

19-01:15:42
Bancroft: This is what I'm reading for my next personal experiences. Awesome.

19-01:15:48
Wattawa: What a cool cover.

19-01:15:48
Bancroft: It's actually an old book idea.

19-01:15:51
Wattawa: [laughter] That is a cool idea.

19-01:15:54
Margolin: I met Anneli Rufus, who's doing a book on low self-esteem, how to achieve low self-esteem. [laughter]

19-01:16:00
Wattawa: Oh, funny.

19-01:16:01
Bancroft: Nor that you come back up from it.

19-01:16:02
Margolin: No, I think it's just sick and tired of all these things that are making us into better people. Let's just get down to it.

19-01:16:13
Wattawa: [laughter] You write about that in your forward to Sierra stories. Something a little bit like, "It's not all about the truth. Let's not talk about the truth anymore."

19-01:16:21
Margolin: Wasn't that fun?

- 19-01:16:22
Wattawa: Yeah, I think that's great. It's about the imagination.
- 19-01:16:25
Margolin: Hold on. Let me just read that.
- 19-01:16:32
Wattawa: [laughter] That's good.
- 19-01:16:34
Bancroft: So I just think somehow—because storytelling, that's Malcolm's, like Malcolm telling stories, and Heyday's producing stories and people are now telling stories about telling stories through Heyday. And, of course, I understand, because I read chapter nine, how these things get settled at launch meetings.
- 19-01:17:11
Wattawa: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I like that idea. I don't know that he will like this, but I like the idea of having his name in the subtitle.
- 19-01:17:21
Bancroft: I would like that, too, because, actually, what's interesting, especially after reading my father's comments, the first real outsider who's emphasized the point that Malcolm's been fighting, that this book is about Malcolm and that you're the most important and interesting source of storytelling, that it would be interesting. So it could still be Heyday or, I don't know, so Heyday, Malcolm.
- 19-01:17:50
Margolin: Well, I won't fight it too hard because it is about me. So there's truth in labeling. You don't want to tell people it's about a publishing company and then have my childhood all over the place.
- 19-01:18:02
Bancroft: No. Okay. So we get to brainstorm?
- 19-01:18:07
Wattawa: Yeah, yeah.
- 19-01:18:08
Bancroft: Okay, so Malcolm Margolin and the story of Heyday. Malcolm Margolin and Heyday: something stories or storytelling.
- 19-01:18:23
Wattawa: I love the idea of just Heyday as the title because it's all sorts of—first of all, it's such an evocative word. It's the name of our publishing company. It has like the celebratory feel, the Heyday of Heyday, even though that's not it.
- 19-01:18:47
Bancroft: Okay, so Heyday, colon, then?

- 19-01:18:49
Wattawa: Yeah, exactly. So Heyday would be the title and then the subtitle would be something like—
- 19-01:18:54
Bancroft: Malcolm Margolin--
- 19-01:18:58
Wattawa: Malcolm Margolin and the story of his—like something about being a publishing company, to explain Heyday.
- 19-01:19:05
Bancroft: Yes. His publishing, the story of.
- 19-01:19:11
Margolin: I think poetry empire. No. [laughter] Pissmeyer. [laughter]
- 19-01:19:21
Bancroft: Yes, we're just brainstorming. Okay. Does publishing—
- 19-01:19:25
Wattawa: Yeah.
- 19-01:19:29
Bancroft: The story of Malcolm Margolin. No.
- 19-01:19:41
Margolin: Malcolm Margolin and the story of his small press or something like that? And the story of an independent publisher.
- 19-01:19:47
Wattawa: Yeah, yeah. The story—
- 19-01:19:52
Margolin: Story seems to be getting in the way.
- 19-01:19:56
Bancroft: Malcolm Margolin and his—what about *The Story of Heyday: Malcolm Margolin and his Independent Press*.
- 19-01:20:33
Margolin: Maybe it ought to be something like Heyday. Not exactly Malcolm Margolin and the joys of publishing but something like that. Close to the *Joys of Cooking*.
- 19-01:21:06
Bancroft: How about *Heyday and Malcolm Margolin: The Story of a Small Press*.
- 19-01:21:14
Margolin: Oh, that's interesting.
- 19-01:21:16
Wattawa: That's elegant. Well, I don't know if you'll like this but—

- 19-01:21:37
Margolin: Oh, go ahead and say it. Go ahead and say it. You're going to say it anyway.
- 19-01:21:40
Wattawa: *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin: The Story of a Small Press.*
- 19-01:21:45
Margolin: Oh, that's pretty good.
- 19-01:21:47
Bancroft: I like that.
- 19-01:21:47
Margolin: That sounds great.
- 19-01:21:48
Bancroft: Let's not squelch our ideas here. We are brainstorming.
- 19-01:21:53
Wattawa: *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin.*
- 19-01:21:54
Bancroft: I love that.
- 19-01:21:55
Wattawa: Because then it's like it's your heyday, but that it's also your—
- 19-01:21:58
Bancroft: Yes, I really like that. That gives me goosebumps.
- 19-01:22:03
Wattawa: [laughter] That's a good sign. It is hot in here though.
- 19-01:22:07
Bancroft: So you like that idea so much it's making it hot in here.
- 19-01:22:26
Wattawa: *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin: The Story of a Small Press.*
- 19-01:22:29
Bancroft: I like that.
- 19-01:22:30
Wattawa: I do, too. I like it a lot. Small press sounds more poetic, but we're not so small anymore. But you don't want to say mid-sized.
- 19-01:22:41
Bancroft: In fact, George would argue that it's not a small press or even have that in—
- 19-00:22:49
Wattawa: Does it make sense, an independent press?

- 19-01:22:50
Bancroft: Independent, although that's kind of a mouthful.
- 19-01:22:54
Wattawa: Yeah, it is. More syllables.
- 19-01:22:56
Bancroft: Of a medium sized press? No, just kidding.
- 19-01:23:00
Wattawa: A regional press.
- 19-01:23:02
Bancroft: Oh, regional.
- 19-01:23:02
Wattawa: Yeah, we don't have California in there. I don't know if we need it.
- 19-01:23:05
Bancroft: Oh, of a California press. Since that's so much about what Heyday is about and California is so cool. Of a California press.
- 19-01:23:18
Wattawa: A California publisher?
- 19-01:23:22
Margolin: You need Malcolm Margolin and Hey—
- 19-01:23:25
Bancroft: No, the Heyday of Malcolm—
- 19-01:23:27
Margolin: *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin: Telling California Stories.*
- 19-01:23:31
Wattawa: Telling California stories. That's great. You don't get publisher in there but maybe you don't need it.
- 19-01:23:39
Bancroft: Publishing California stories?
- 19-01:23:41
Margolin: No, telling.
- 19-01:23:42
Bancroft: No, I like telling, I know, but I was just saying to get publishing. But no, publishing California stories.
- 19-01:24:04
Wattawa: Yeah. It's more active. I do sort of like the story of a California publisher or the story of—

- 19-01:24:12
Bancroft: A California press.
- 19-01:24:14
Wattawa: Yeah, a California press.
- 19-01:24:17
Bancroft: Press. I wonder what you think, because you're actually here. It's shorter than publisher. Somehow it seems more all-encompassing somehow. I'm not sure why. That doesn't seem actually true.
- 19-01:24:39
Margolin: People will object to California.
- 19-01:24:41
Wattawa: People will object to it?
- 19-01:24:43
Margolin: Yeah.
- 19-01:24:43
Bancroft: Because it's—
- 19-01:24:45
Margolin: So limiting. But this is where we've limited ourselves.
- 19-01:24:49
Bancroft: Right. California's pretty big. But regional seems so—
- 19-01:24:58
Margolin: "Regional" is so bland. So what is it? *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin*?
- 19-01:25:04
Bancroft: Yeah.
- 19-01:25:04
Wattawa: *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin*.
- 19-01:25:05
Bancroft: Yeah, I really like that. Following California's stories. The Story of a California Press.
- 19-01:25:24
Wattawa: Yeah. Are we trying to look up the California—
- 19-01:25:43
Margolin: *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin: Telling California's Stories*. Sounds pretty good.
- 19-01:25:48
_: The telling California stories?

19-01:25:50
_: Yeah. That does sound good.

19-01:25:55
Bancroft: I don't think publisher or press has to be in there. Maybe somebody else would object because I think if he {inaudible} either knowing you, knowing Heyday, or the first page of the book that that's what this is about, the inside blurb. Whatever. But somebody else might say, "Well, it should be identifying."

19-00:26:17
Wattawa: I know. I can already hear that. Lindsie's going to say, "Explain the book."
[laughter]

19-01:26:26
Bancroft: Because it could mean that you're a storyteller, which is also true. Which is actually really true.

19-01:26:32
Wattawa: Yeah, that's true.

19-00:26:32
Margolin: Do you want to get Lindsie up here now?

19-01:26:34
Wattawa: I think she left to go meet with Theresa. Yeah, I just got an email from her.

19-01:26:39
Bancroft: Well, I think that's a good start.

19-01:26:47
Margolin: What we ought to do is, we ought to put something out that Lindsie can shoot down, and then we can pull this one in. [laughter]

19-01:26:53
Wattawa: Strategy.

19-01:26:55
Margolin: So then she'll be happy, and we'll be happy.

19-01:26:57
Wattawa: Are you upset about California limiting things or—

19-01:27:01
Margolin: No, no.

19-01:27:01
Wattawa: Not in that context?

19-01:27:03
Margolin: No. This is what we do.

- 19-01:27:06
Bancroft: It is. And also, it's something that you celebrate. I feel like it's something I've heard a lot doing these interviews. People saying, "Hey, this is really great that there's something that's about California, and other states should have this." And California's huge and diverse so it encompasses—
- 19-01:27:27
Margolin: It'll prepare the way for the California almanac.
- 19-01:27:32
Wattawa: No comment. [laughter] Actually, it would be a really fun idea, but it just sounds like a lot of work. [laughter] Well, I love that title, too. *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin*.
- 19-01:27:52
Bancroft: I love that. That's great.
- 19-01:27:55
Wattawa: And I can see going either way about having "press" in there. Seems like there are books out there that are about publishers, both in the sense as people and as companies. I was kind of dipping into some of them recently. It's kind of a cool genre.
- 19-01:28:21
Bancroft: Yeah, I thought about trying to read more of them in preparation of this book, but there was enough material in the book really.
- 19-01:28:28
Wattawa: Well, I think that's a wonderful start, if not it. Yeah. What's the cover image?
- 19-01:28:45
Margolin: No. [laughter]
- 19-01:28:51
Bancroft: That will be interesting. A good challenge.
- 19-01:28:55
Wattawa: We have that beautiful new awning. [laughter]
- 19-01:29:02
Margolin: Hey, what's this Facebook all about? So all those people that press "Like," do people plug into your Facebook account that you don't know? Can anybody look at your Facebook account?
- 19-01:29:16
Wattawa: Anybody can look at Heyday's Facebook account because it's a company, it's an organization, and you want to get as much exposure as possible.
- 19-01:29:23
Margolin: So this is open to the world?

- 19-01:29:23
Wattawa: For example, though, if you were to just go on Google and say, “Gayle Wattawa Facebook,” I have mine hidden. I don’t want—
- 19-01:29:29
Margolin: So anybody could look at our public Facebook page?
- 19-01:29:37
Wattawa: Yeah.
- 19-01:29:41
Margolin: These people that respond that they like it, this is images, this is things that are being sent to them?
- 19-01:29:46
Wattawa: So we have our Heyday page on Facebook, and Lillian and various other people here post things to that page. Now, you can say as an individual—I have said I “like” Heyday. So that means that I want to see Heyday’s updates in what’s called a newsfeed. So people have these newsfeeds, and I see, for example, when my cousin posts a picture of her son, and I see that my friend was at this restaurant, and then I’ll see a photo of you and the new awning because I have “liked” Heyday. And then I’ll get the latest news about the events at Zizaba, all these different things. You have a newsfeed and you have control about what kind of stuff you want to see from people.
- 19-01:30:33
Bancroft: So, for example, when the book is coming out, then people can say, “Oh, wow,” if they like Heyday or they’re friends of Heyday, they’ll be able to see this book is coming out and when there’re talks given.
- 19-01:30:46
Wattawa: Yeah. And when there’s a great review. We post things like that. We let our fans, people who’ve liked us, know that like, oh, there’s an event in the area or we just got this great review.
- 19-01:30:58
Margolin: I was stunned when that photo of me with the awning was public. Did Lillian tell you?
- 19-01:31:02
Wattawa: Yeah, there’s over like a hundred likes. Yeah.
- 19-01:31:04
Bancroft: My gosh.
- 19-01:31:05
Margolin: And they were from people that I haven’t seen for twenty-five years.
- 19-01:31:08
Wattawa: Yeah. Well, about 700 people like Heyday. So we have about 700 fans out there on Facebook.

- 19-01:31:14
Margolin: Is that a lot? Doesn't sound like too many.
- 19-01:31:15
Wattawa: It depends. Yeah, it depends.
- 19-01:31:18
Bancroft: Well, how long has it been up?
- 19-01:31:20
Wattawa: A couple of years but we've never really aggressively pursued getting people to like the page and so it really has just been people—
- 19-01:31:28
Bancroft: Yeah, the liking thing is new.
- 19-01:31:28
Wattawa: —people coming and seeking us out. Yeah. And every now and then somebody will share something through their own page and then we'll get a whole lot of likes.
- 19-01:31:35
Margolin: So if there were a hundred responses, that means that one out of seven people actually pressed a button and said they liked it?
- 19-01:31:41
Wattawa: Yeah. That's pretty remarkable.
- 19-01:31:42
Bancroft: I haven't liked you yet, but I will. I'm not a big Facebook user but I'm promising to do better in order to help sell *Literary Industries* and then to help sell *The Heyday of Malcolm Margolin*. So I'm going to get with it. I'm going to like you, too.
- 19-01:31:59
Wattawa: Get with it. [laughter]
- 19-01:32:01
Margolin: Hey, we'll send her an author's contract. Just the standard author's contract.
- 19-01:32:04
Wattawa: Oh, yeah. Great. Yeah. Yes, it is about time. Let's do that contract.
- 19-01:32:07
Bancroft: I would have totally forgotten. I prefer the contract that you talk about that's in the book, about that you wrote it for the lawyers. We agree that we're going to do this in good spirit, have fun, and every now and then go out for drinks and dinner. Agree to laugh a lot and you're going to have a good time doing that.

- 19-01:32:28
Wattawa: Yeah. That actually really set the tone for that relationship. I've been the one mostly dealing with them, but it's been consistently nice. Yeah.
- 19-01:32:40
Margolin: I just love it.
- 19-01:32:44
Bancroft: Yeah, it was like—
- 19-01:33:43
Wattawa: Do you want me to throw together a contract now, just get it over with?
- 19-01:32:47
Margolin: Yeah.
- 19-01:32:47
Wattawa: All right.
- 19-01:32:48
Bancroft: So I'm going to go interview Vincent. Where is Vincent? Is he in the bowels of the building?
- 19-01:32:51
Margolin: Yeah. You can interview—
- 19-01:32:53
Wattawa: Yes, pretty much.
- 19-01:32:52
Margolin: —him anywhere you want. You can pull him out from the bowels.
- 19-01:32:57
Bancroft: Okay. Well, I'll just go find him but—
- 19-01:33:29
Margolin: Addicting and intoxicating and a seductive power. Freedom from truth. I know this goes against the dictum that truth shall set you free. I know I'm butting heads against foundations of modern therapy and scores of self-help ideologies that teach us to acknowledge our problems and tell us that the road to happiness is through a deep understanding of the truth of our being. But let me at least put forth the notion that for many, especially those with dull lives, the truth is nothing but a set of shackles. It's fantasy and imagination that set us free. [laughter]
- 19-01:33:59
Wattawa: I like that. I really like that.
- 19-01:34:01
Margolin: And the young man from birth took on other identities, embraced other fantasies. And we're filled by the power of the promise and the excitement of being not who they were but who they wanted to be.

19-01:34:16
Wattawa: Oh, wow.

19-01:34:15
Margolin: That was fun.

19-01:34:16
Bancroft: Hey, so we're supposed to meet on Wednesday.

19-01:34:21
Margolin: On Wednesday.

19-01:34:22
Bancroft: My work is cut out for me to redo that. We could hold on to that date just in case there's anything—

19-01:34:18
Margolin: Why don't we hold on to it?

19-01:34:32
Bancroft: Yeah, I have questions.

19-01:34:33
Margolin: I'll just hold on to it in case you need it.

19-01:34:34
Bancroft: And I come through and I say okay. and if not, that will be useful. Okay, cool.

19-01:34:41
Margolin: Oh, let me see.

[End Audio File 19]

Interview 20: August 21, 2013

[Begin Audio File 20]

20-00:00:00

Bancroft: Yeah. Okay. And I'm going to close that window.

20-00:00:20

Margolin: It may be that the Frieda Sands thing is too long.

20-00:00:22

Bancroft: Tell me the story anyhow, and then I can see if it fits. I mean, the other thing is it's—I am in this for the stories so don't deny me. [laughter]

20-00:00:35

Margolin: I forgot half the stories I told you already. I read them, there were things that happened to me a year ago, I forgot about them. And then there are other stories that pop up that I haven't told. The world is just lousy with—

20-00:00:49

Bancroft: That's good. So you said, yeah, something about Frieda Sands in particular, the story of how, "at the end of their lives, my mother felt that Frieda was giving her an evil eye."

20-00:01:02

Margolin: Yeah. So they grew up together. They were the best of friends. And Frieda was the princess. She was beautiful, she was dynamic, she wrote poetry. She was the center of attention. Everybody envied her. She had the most wonderful husband, the most wonderful children. They were wealthy. And she knew it. She was the queen bee of the world and everybody gathered around her. And my mother lived in her glory, my mother was her best friend. This was my mother's identity, as Frieda's best friend, to some extent. And as they grew older, her husband Sam, who worshipped her—I always thought if you talked to Sam, you'd think her name was My Frieda. And Sam absolutely worshipped her. And Sam ended up getting hypertension and heart attack and the fur business—he cleaned fur coats--and the fur business started to deteriorate. And instead of having independent places, department stores took it over, and the business went downhill, and the kids didn't make out as well as anybody thought they should, and her life began to deteriorate. And finally Sam died, and Frieda ended up going into an old age home. And when I went home once, I was talking to my mother and I said, "How's Frieda?" and she says, "I don't know." I said, "What do you mean, you don't know?" And she says, "I don't know." She says, "I can't talk to her." And I says, "Why?" And she says, "I don't want to say." So we ended up talking about it some more, and I ended up probing and finally she said, "Every time I talk to her, something bad happens. She's giving me the evil eye." And it was that sense of envy, the envy of a beautiful woman, the envy of somebody who had to be at the top of her game, and everybody else had to worship her. And that sense of evil eye. And I grew up with that evil eye. It was the constant refrain,

whenever you praised somebody. There was that Yiddish expression *Kein Ayin Hara*, no evil eye, that had to be done in praising children or not calling attention to your good fortune. And she felt that Frieda couldn't stand that her good fortune, that she was living at home. And that was the story. You felt it just underneath the surface of life. There were these things. There were these old world superstitions, there were these old world ghosts, there were these old world forces that were just really running things.

20-00:03:32

Bancroft:

It reminds me that in chapter one you cut out this little piece that was about *bruchas*. You're talking about the man, the Holocaust survivor, and then—

20-00:03:45

Margolin:

I cut that out.

20-00:03:46

Bancroft:

Yeah. Blessed who delights. And one of the *bruchas* was for somebody who was crippled.

20-00:03:57

Margolin:

I was lying about that. I read about it in later life. I grew up with the *bruchas* but that particular one, I was discussing it with someone and somebody mentioned it to me.

20-00:04:10

Bancroft:

Oh, okay. As we say in our family, never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

20-00:04:16

Margolin:

I'm going to let the truth get in the way of a good story.

20-00:04:19

Bancroft:

Okay, that's fine. But it's interesting to hear why you're cutting something out, because I did like that, the connection. I'll let it go. Well, that's interesting, because just this stuff about superstition, especially—

20-00:04:32

Margolin:

Let me take a look at that for a second.

20-00:04:38

Bancroft:

Because it was just a kind of poetic connection to the man—

20-00:04:41

Margolin:

There were hundreds of prayers. My friend Steve Sanfield remembered one in particular. How about that?

20-00:04:47

Bancroft:

That'd work. Friend Steve Sanfield?

20-00:04:55

Margolin:

Yeah.

- 20-00:04:58
Bancroft: Rina was remarking on your amazing memory. Almost like, where do you pull this stuff out? Names of people. You've known so many people. It's phenomenal.
- 20-00:05:09
Margolin: People tell me it is. I'm just aware of what I've forgotten.
- 20-00:05:13
Bancroft: Wow. Okay, well, that's good. You mentioned, "I might also consider adding some memories of the Boston and Taunton Transportation Company, the bookies who used to hang out there." And you mentioned a little bit so I can see right where it would fit.
- 20-00:05:27
Margolin: It was this old Damon Runyon world of people just hanging around. That people would come in, and they would just be there. And the characters that I remember, there was one guy—did I talk about Benny Ford?
- 20-00:05:41
Bancroft: No. You mentioned the story. You want to put in Benny the Camel?
- 20-00:05:43
Margolin: Yeah, Benny the Camel. So one of the bookies was Benny the Camel. His name was Benny Ford. And he must have been about six feet ten inches tall. He must have weighed about 400 pounds. And he had a bald head with two tumorous lumps on his head, which is why he was called Benny the Camel. He looked like a two-humped camel. And he was this big towering guy, and he used to be in numbers. He used to take numbers and bets. I'm going to change—his name was Benny Abrams. And one day he comes in and he says, "I've changed my name to Benny Ford." My father says, "Why did you do that?" He says, "I thought I was too conspicuous." [laughter] And I just thought that was such a lovely story. That was it.
- 20-00:06:28
Bancroft: Okay. Yeah. And you mentioned that it was just this scene of men hanging around all the time. Oh, actually, just another thing. As I was going through the book and cutting things out, I realized how much you swear and it didn't bother me.
- 20-00:06:45
Margolin: It didn't bother me. It bothered me on the reading more than—
- 20-00:06:48
Bancroft: Yeah, yeah. Like I don't even notice it but, yeah, that was interesting. Okay. Another story. Oh, you said, "If there's a zest for adding things, I'd like to include a story of shooting pool with Reuben as an important part of his coming of age, with a flashback to Dorchester in my teenage years shooting pool at Mickey's Pool Hall."

20-00:07:12
Margolin:

After we moved to West Roxbury, I used to go back to that old neighborhood, where all my friends were. The G&G Delicatessen was the center of Blue Hill Avenue, and this was the big hangout: the politicians, the local businessmen, the bookies, everybody would hang out at the G&G. And next to the G&G there was an alley and it led to Mickey's Pool Hall. And you go down this alley and you go to the right, there was a doorway, and you'd enter, and Mickey would be behind the counter. And there were four tables of pocket billiards and there were these huge characters, these wonderful guys that would play. I'm sorry, not pocket billiards. It was the billiard tables without the holes in them. They were just billiard tables. And they would play three cushion billiards. And three cushion billiards is just you hit a ball and then the cue ball has to hit three rails, and then you have to hit another ball. And the intelligence that it takes, the skill that it takes, and these huge guys, big bellies would hang over the table, cigar smoke up there. They'd make shot after shot after shot. They were so good at it. And then all the way down the rest of the pool hall were the pocket tables, where the kids would be there. And we'd turn on records for rock and roll, and we thought we were so hip. Sitting around on the bench were these old Jews in their gabardine and their Yiddish newspapers. It was the men's world. It was the study halls of Poland. They were getting out of the cold. And as hip as we were there was still that feeling of being in that old world, that you could never escape.

When Reuben was a young kid, we'd go out and shoot pool. And every Thursday night for several years we ended up shooting pool and we'd play straight pool for a hundred points, which is a game of skill. There's very little luck in straight pool. It's more a game of skill. It's positioning and stuff. And when he was very young I'd beat him 104 to six and a hundred to six and a hundred to ten. And he got better—

20-00:09:40
Bancroft:

You had no mercy.

20-00:09:41
Margolin:

No, I had no mercy. I had no mercy. But he was struggling, and he was getting better and better and better. And finally, as he got older, there was one game where he was up there and he was ninety-nine and I was ninety-six and he made a shot and he called the three ball. He called the three ball in the corner pocket, and the three ball went and it clicked against another ball and it went in the corner pocket. And I said, "Goddamn it, you finally beat me." It was the first game that he'd ever beat me. And he thought for a minute and he reached in, he pulled the ball out, he spotted and he says, "I want to beat you something awful, but not like that." So, of course, I ran the table and beat him, and it was finally, I think, on his eighteenth birthday, on his eighteenth birthday he beat me. And I was so proud of him. And I was proud of him because I was shooting well. It wasn't a night when I was shooting badly. I was shooting well, and he was shooting better. And he's been just absolutely spectacular ever since. [Interruption. Deleted]

- 20-00:11:35
Bancroft: Oh that's a good process of deduction which I never would have done. That story also connects to Reuben saying in his little interview, so I'm kind of playing in my mind where to fit this stuff in, about when he had gone—this was a year ago when I did the interview with him last fall.
- 20-00:11:57
Margolin: Yeah, we'd just come back.
- 20-00:11:58
Bancroft: And he said, "Yeah, my dad, we still play billiards, and he still beats me." That's an important part of his relationship, too. But the competition is still strong.
- 20-00:12:12
Margolin: The competition is strong, but the affection is strong. The affection is just so great between us.
- 20-00:12:18
Bancroft: Well, I remember you also telling a story about how—and this isn't in the book per se but maybe it might be in your afterword. You talked about how interesting it was to see how people talk about you, including Reuben saying how strong you are and that he's remembering you as that as a young man, and holding onto that, and how people hold onto this image of our loved ones.
- 20-00:12:41
Margolin: He wants me to be strong. He wants to think of me as strong.
- 20-00:12:44
Bancroft: And it's funny that I saw, going through your whole life in photos, these pictures of him rock climbing and then him doing pullups and then Rina was saying—this, I guess, was maybe eighteen or nineteen. He was a really strong young man doing all that work.
- 20-00:13:02
Margolin: Oh, very courageous, very strong.
- 20-00:13:05
Bancroft: Okay. So then on a different topic, yes, we— [interruption; deleted]
- 20-00:13:13
20-00:13:42
Bancroft: Okay, Julian Lang. Oh, wait a second. Wait, I do want to ask one thing about—because it relates to Kashaya. So you wanted to cut out the whole thing about Fort Ross and the history of Kashaya. And I found that very interesting. You were telling that story because you were showing—
- 20-00:14:11
Margolin: I think I had just gotten back from Kashaya, from Fort Ross.

20-00:14:15
Bancroft:

There was a point, you had a point. You were talking about the isolation, that they had been so isolated and why. I don't have a page number for that. But it just seemed like you were giving a whole language lesson there, in effect, but I liked that you were relating it to how people—or had just come back from Saint Petersburg--and how moving it was that they no longer had their things. So you and Lindsie had just gone there and in order to understand why they were so isolated, you had this whole history of the Kashaya civilization, of the community. And I found that interesting. Why did you want to cut it out?

20-00:15:25
Margolin:

I forget now. I think the whole thing was so long. I think the whole thing was, why were we singling out the Kashaya story when I could have told stories about Hoopa and {Ray Baldwin?}, could have told stories about Tolowa and Lauren {Bombolin?}. I could have told stories about Pechanga and my good friend Mark {McCarro?}. I could have told stories about Stan Rodriguez and the Kumeyaay. I could have told stories about Preston Arrow-weed and the Quechan. I could have told stories about—

20-00:15:59
Bancroft:

In chapter four there is quite a bit. Chapter three there's—yeah, I see what you mean.

20-00:16:05
Margolin:

It just seemed that it was just too much. It just seemed that it was too much.

20-00:16:09
Bancroft:

Okay. How about if I—

20-00:16:11
Margolin:

And the other stories were about people. This was a story about a tribe.

20-00:16:13
Bancroft:

True, yeah.

20-00:16:14
Margolin:

And this was more a history lesson.

20-00:16:17
Bancroft:

Yeah, it's true. Okay. That's a good reason. So I'll accept that. Okay. But Julian Lang. So you said you want to include him, most easily with an anecdote about meeting Edgar Mitchell, an astronaut who walked on the moon and a few hours later was with Julian at an ancient ceremony.

20-00:16:37
Margolin:

So Julian Lang was a Karuk Indian and he came down to work at what was then the Lowie Museum, later became the Hearst Museum. And then he left there. And we had a place in the office for him. He had a desk in the office for about a career, which was our Karuk language desk. And he would write and he would do things and he would write for *News* and he would do his own

work. And he was just such a delight to be with. We did talks together. We did a wonderful performance together in Fort Mason. We went down to the Huntington together, to Los Angeles. We just hung around all the time. I think I once introduced him to Crumb, the underground cartoonist, which was just great fun. Once when we were down in Los Angeles {Tanner?} walked into the room and that was great. And I just loved hanging around with him. He was a good friend. He was in love with his language. He was in love with the Karuk language. And William Bright, who was a linguist—it was Susie Bright’s father. William Bright was a linguist and he talked about the Karuk language as sonorous, a language sonorous and rich in combination. And there was something about the cadence of it, the long elongated vowels of it. I kept thinking that when you hear somebody talking in Karuk, this is how Cicero must have sounded in the Roman Senate. That there was just the marvelous big volume. Luxurious sound of language and words and musicality. And I loved to hear Julian talk.

There was one time where there was a conference in Berkeley devoted to urban ecology and it was recreating new cities. It was making the city ecologically sound. It was technological. David Brower was there, various others were there. And I was sitting next to Edgar Mitchell, the astronaut. And he had absolutely no humor whatsoever. This was a guy who’d been on the moon. And I’m sitting here and I say, “Hey, you’ve come a long way to be here.” He says, “Yes, I flew in from Seattle.” I said, “Well, it’s not quite what I meant.” But we ended up talking, and it got to be about 10:30 at night, after dinner, and I said, “I’ve got to leave.” And I came back to the office and Julian was waiting for me. And we drove up to the Klamath River, where there were was a ceremony in the early morning on the Klamath River. And I was thinking, what an amazing world we live in, that in the same ten hours you can be talking to somebody who walked on the moon and you can be down to hearing songs and stories and ceremonies that have existed from the beginning of time in California. This is unique. This time is not going to last forever. This is a unique period in which we live and we have a necessity to take advantage of it.

20-00:19:28
Bancroft:

And you most of all took advantage of it.

20-00:19:30
Margolin:

And I have taken advantage of it. Yeah.

20-00:19:33
Bancroft:

I think that’s one thing that makes your book so wonderful. As my father said, you’re fascinating because you’ve been able to bridge those worlds and you can—

20-00:19:41
Margolin:

I hadn’t quite realized that until I read the book.

- 20-00:19:44
Bancroft: Yeah. That's the thing. Even laughing about the meetings, you just take for granted that this is a meeting, or Modoc, a group of Modoc people walk in. But most of us don't have those experiences at work or—
- 20-00:19:58
Margolin: What I don't talk about is I walk in on people.
- 20-00:20:04
Bancroft: There was once where you mentioned, and then you cut it out, of one day that you just had some free time or you were somewhere and you ended up at the Audubon Society and started talking to them. I think it was that or the Sierra Club folks.
- 20-00:20:20
Margolin: It was the Sierra Club.
- 20-00:20:20
Bancroft: Sierra Club.
- 20-00:20:20
Margolin: Yeah, I knocked that out.
- 20-00:20:22
Bancroft: But you have that experience of dropping in on people.
- 20-00:20:26
Margolin: Yeah. I'll go into museums. I'll go up to the Bancroft and see if Elaine's in, without an appointment. [laughter]
- Well, the worst they can say is no. But you happen to be there and—
- 20-00:20:42
Bancroft: Yes. Yeah, you may as well. Okay. I think that's it. You added a little story that I just cut and pasted in about Dolores Jalbert.
- 20-00:20:54
Margolin: Oh, yes. That was a good one.
- 20-00:20:55
Bancroft: And that was good. So I was going to mention that, again, as we're talking about this book. She says, "If it's wonderful at 700 pages, it will be even more wonderful at 500 pages." So I just cut and pasted that in. So I think that's pretty much it. Is there anything else?
- 20-00:21:13
Margolin: So what are we going to do about photos and stuff?
- 20-00:21:17
Bancroft: Okay. So photos. Oh, actually, yeah, I have a list of other little things here. We did the date. Well, two things that I really need you to do. One is to find something or direct me towards the Linda Yamane piece.

20-00:21:36
Margolin:

Oh, yes.

20-00:21:39
Bancroft:

And then to see if we can find the photos that Bill did because I really think the bar mitzvah photo has to be in the book. And I remember it was a manila envelope that he sent it to me, something like this. But that's not it. And I don't think I have it. No luck?

20-00:22:12
Margolin:

No. I can't imagine that I threw it out.

[interruption; asides deleted]

20-00:24:03
Bancroft:

All right. And then what about the thing about—so for Linda's piece. Something about—

20-00:24:09
Margolin:

Oh, Linda Yamane's piece.

20-00:24:10
Bancroft:

Yeah. Do you have something in mind?

20-00:24:12
Margolin:

Yeah. Why don't you give me about ten minutes?

20-00:24:16
Bancroft:

Okay, that's fine. I'm good.

[End Audio File 20]

Interview 21: October 18, 2013

[Begin Audio File 21]

21-00:00:00

Margolin: There was something about [Hubert Howe] Bancroft's era—when it was over, you still felt it. The tracteries of it were still strong. So it wasn't just a kind of distant past. There's somebody that came to me and wants to do something on the adobe buildings, and I have absolutely no interest in it. I just can't get behind it. I don't care about buildings. I care about stories. And those stories aren't living stories.

21-00:00:29

Bancroft: It reminds me of what Susan [Snyder] said when she came to you with one of the diaries from the Bancroft Library and you said you weren't interested in reprinting it. The diaries brought up into the present was some kind of present day connectedness. That's what interests you.

21-00:00:52

Margolin: Yeah. That's what interests me. That's what interests me.

21-00:00:57

Bancroft: Why do you think that is? You read histories that are just about the past.

21-00:01:25

Margolin: Well, I'll read history if it's a good story. A good story has a different rule. A good story can be anywhere and anything, and I just love a good story. The adobe houses do not make a good story. They're a bunch of mud and bits of straw. We did that book with the California Preservation Foundation on restoration of houses, restoration of buildings and reuse of buildings. And I was at their award ceremony, and there was something about the past buildings being brought up to date, being used in the present that was so exciting. Whereas the freezing of them in the past was less exciting.

21-00:02:19

Bancroft: Yeah. More static.

21-00:02:20

Margolin: Yeah, static. And I think that I believe in change. I believe in the necessity of change. I don't believe in preserving things as they are. I get into trouble with environmentalists because I don't necessarily believe that every native plant has to be saved, and expenditures of time and energy have to be expended to save some species somewhere or other. I can't get excited about that. What has to be preserved is the fecundity of the world, the capacity of beauty, the capacity of diversity, the health of systems, not these kind of little symbols that get saved. I don't like history as an escape from the present. I like history as an exploration of the present. I love that Indian stuff, not because it's gone but because it's still here. That I go up to these places. I was reminiscing the other day that you'd go to these reservations, you'd go up this rutted dirt road,

there were shacks all over the place. There were old cars, there were refrigerators thrown out the door. There was poverty. There were mean dogs that you'd have to get through. You'd sit in somebody's kitchen. They'd give you some food. You'd be afraid to eat the food because you were afraid the kids wouldn't have anything to eat that night. And you ended up having these shattered nations. You ended up having these crushed people. And the ashes, there are these little burning embers of beauty, of courage, of sustenance. And that's what I go for.

21-00:04:11
Bancroft:

And the continuity with the present, yeah.

21-00:04:14
Margolin:

The continuity. And the change of it all. The change of it all. I'd been so aware of handing things over to Lindsay for the California Indian stuff and seeing a new generation of people coming and seeing this new younger generation.

21-00:04:28
Bancroft:

Now they've got blogs and they're blogging about how they're now understanding Indian life in a modern age.

21-00:04:36
Margolin:

Yes, yes. And there's a bunch of PhD candidates, women, Indian women up at Davis who are the smartest people I've ever met, and they don't have the baggage of the past. There's something about them that's so modern. They're living their liveliness. I don't want this place to become a dusty museum of things. I just got a note from somebody that works for East Bay MUD that wants us to run a conference on restoration in the East Bay. And it has to do with their mitigation lands. They have a mitigation bank over in Pinole. And how should they use this mitigation bank? And they wanted me to get together some people and have a conference on it. And I realized that in some ways what we're into is how to adapt the past to the present in the environment, in Indian stuff, in the history publishing that we do. The stuff that we're working with California Preservation Foundation, the stuff that we did at Santa Clara University with all the literature. It's how you use that past. It's not just preserving the past, it's not just looking at it, it's not just freezing it. That's an archivist's job. I'm not an archivist. I don't care about archives. It's how you adapt it to the present is what we're into in all these things.

21-00:06:22
Bancroft:

Well, you could say you did reprint a lot of that for the California Legacy Series, but presumably you chose works that speak to the present still.

21-00:06:31
Margolin:

Yes. That was the attempt. The attempt was to find, in the anthologies that we did, to find what was usable. Hey, listen, so this book of ours, did Rina discuss the ending with you?

21-00:06:44
Bancroft:

Yes. I just met with her. She said that I had given you the two versions, the way it was originally and when it was cut into chapter ten and eleven. And she said she still liked the first version better than having the two chapters but also thought that—she had a whole description of how to cut it so that there's more view towards the end, and that you liked that idea. And she had other ideas about what to cut, too.

21-00:07:23
Margolin:

What I had felt was that the second two chapters—

21-00:07:32
Bancroft:

The second version one. Yeah.

21-00:07:33
Margolin:

The second version. That there was way too much of this future of Heyday, what's going to happen when the charismatic leader is no longer charismatic and how tough it is to replace a founder. And I just got sick of it real fast. So my first thought was to just throw it all out. And I was ready to throw it all out. But then she thought that there was some really good stuff in there and that maybe if it's trimmed down and maybe if it's—and what she also felt was moving everybody else together and then me separately, that it needed my voice throughout this whole thing. This improved everybody's, whether it served as mortar or whether it was more of a conversation, something like that. So I thought the solution that she came to was arguable. I was having trouble seeing it in the way she presented it, with just stuff chopped up. It would have to be reformatted. But I think it might work.

21-00:08:42
Bancroft:

Yeah. What I might do is, since she just gave this to me now, and then I've been writing to Gayle and so Gayle's kind of moving her way through it. And Gayle didn't want me to make any changes to stuff that she's already read until I can look at both of them. But maybe if I can suggest what Rina did and get it to Gayle before Gayle reads chapter ten, then she can have that.

21-00:09:08
Margolin:

Yeah, Gayle doesn't want to go through a whole editing process on something that's going to change.

21-00:09:11
Bancroft:

No. No, no. But I could, if she hasn't gotten to chapter ten yet, which I don't think she has--

21-00:09:16
Margolin:

No, she hasn't. I think she stopped at chapter three.

21-00:09:19
Bancroft:

Okay, great. So I can work on this. And I emailed her yesterday about this, too. I think I sent you a copy. But yeah. So it sounds like she'll be ready by early November and that's time for me to do all her edits and incorporate

Rina's, as well. But I can try to play with chapter ten according to Rina's ideas and I'll send you and Gayle a copy and see how that looks.

21-00:09:45

Margolin: Yeah. How's your life?

21-00:09:47

Bancroft: My life is good. It's busy as ever.

[portion deleted]

21-00:20:13

Bancroft: Well, I was presuming between *Literary Industries* and the *Heyday of Malcolm Margolin* and these other little projects I feel like I need to do, that's going to kind of take me up through the end of the year and then I'm going to get ready to do something new.

21-00:21:05

Margolin: I heard from Miriam Doriarte, who was head of the Mexican Museum for a while, as was every other Chicano that I've ever met. Is an aristocratic Mexican from Mexico City originally. She was Reuben's art teacher and she had a studio next to Elmer Bischoff, and this is where Reuben became an artist, was working with her in her art studio. And she's been living in Guanajuato, and she's going to visit next week. Terry was over in Mexico and wanted to put some money into cultural exchanges between Indians and Mexico and the United States, and she wants to get us involved in it.

21-00:22:04

Bancroft: Wow. Very interesting.

21-00:22:05

Margolin: And what I was thinking about was where the United States is heads and shoulders ahead of Mexico, who's in cultural deterioration, and consequently the means of cultural restoration have been more highly developed. Language programs. This kind of emergency salvation. There's a term for it. Salvaging. How you take languages that are down to their last few speakers, how you take customs that are down to their last practitioners, how you end up creating some kind of a cultural context around which they can be used. So this is what people of California know. Because of the deterioration of these people around here. Mexico doesn't have that so much yet. There are still these intact cultures. But in another fifty years it will have this. And it can learn right now from us how you can take and put into place some of these programs that can preserve, and what the Indians here can get from them is some kind of a sense of an intact culture, of what it means when culture is not just public performance but is something that you live. And California Indian culture has become public in a sense. You become an Indian when you're going out at a pow-wow, at a big time, at a dance, at a festival, when you go home, you're watching TV and you're on your computer and you're eating spaghetti, and

what it means to have a living culture. So she's going to come down and I hope I can get a trip to Guanajuato out of it. I think that would be just lovely.

21-00:24:00

Bancroft: That would be great.

21-00:27:21

Margolin: There is more money available in Mexico.

21-00:27:23

Bancroft: These efforts to do cultural changes.

21-00:27:24

Margolin: When I was down there in Baja there were some spectacular sums of money and I don't think it was drug money. I think that it was some other sources of money.

21-00:27:32

Bancroft: The drugs. The narco-trafficos are paying some taxes or something.

21-00:27:59

Margolin: I love saying Guanajuato. It rolls off the tongue and in the back of the throat. So satisfying.

21-00:28:07

Bancroft: When I used to take buses, I always loved—because that was really the way to get around back then. A bus from Mexico City to Guanajuato. They'd sing out, "Guanajuato, Guanajuato." [laughter]

21-00:28:22

Margolin: That's so beautiful. That was so beautiful. So there was some thought about pictures, about how to use photographs for the book and there was some discussion about it that was interesting.

21-00:28:48

Bancroft: Yes. So Gayle said that she thought that it would be maybe sixteen pages, but that doesn't mean each page is its own image. It could be like a quarter, half of it. So I could come up with about thirty images. So I wanted to ask you about that. Because the last time we met we started doing the—and also the subtitle. I'm going back to her thing here about it. The new title.

21-00:29:37

Margolin: Do you hate it?

21-00:29:39

Bancroft: No.

21-00:29:40

Margolin: I think it's pretty good.

21-00:29:41

Bancroft: I love it.

- 21-00:29:41
Margolin: I think it's pretty good. I was so surprised to see in the transcripts how often I use the word damn.
- 21-00:29:50
Bancroft: Yeah, I said, "The damn good times of a fiercely independent publisher." Like how many times did I have to cut out damn and fuck.
- 21-00:30:00
Margolin: And hell.
- 21-00:30:01
Bancroft: And goddamn and all of that kind of language.
- 21-00:30:03
Margolin: Yeah. No, and there were still so many of them there that I cut them out. It was such a surprise to hear myself.
- 21-00:30:07
Bancroft: Yeah. So I like that. And I like the good times. The fiercely independent. That completely makes sense. Let's see. Oh, okay.
- 21-00:30:52
Margolin: I'm going to see if Gayle's here. There's a BART strike today.
- 21-00:30:54
Bancroft: Oh, I know.
- 21-00:30:55
Margolin: We may not have anybody.
- 21-00:31:22
Bancroft: Okay. [portion deleted]
- 21-00:33:41
Margolin: Having fun is good. Because actually they have two sons and the younger one, he did a juggling act for us that he's planning as this kind of mixture of typical circus juggling with hip-hop moves and he's planning to get into like a circus school. So my good friend Ed Bernbaum, he wrote a book on sacred mountains of the world. He's the Sacred Mountain Foundation and stuff like that. Climbs in the Himalayas. So he came and I was boasting about Reuben. I said, "What's your son doing?" And he said, "He's the ringmaster of a Mumbai circus." So I went back and I beat up Reuben. Said, "You didn't amount to shit." He says, "It's your fault." [laughter]
- 21-00:34:28
Bancroft: Yeah, right. Right. I like that. Well, speaking of Reuben for a moment, of all of our interweaving conversations, Rina said that she was adamant that we make sure that this picture that Reuben did of you, which sounded like an amazing story in and of itself. And I thought I had seen it somewhere. That

that should be in the book. She really wanted this charcoal sketch and she thinks that either Reuben has it or I think I saw it somewhere.

21-00:36:05

Margolin: Maybe Reuben has it.

21-00:35:08

Bancroft: Okay. How do you feel about that?

21-00:35:09

Margolin: That's okay.

21-00:35:10

Bancroft: Yeah. She said it was just amazing. That he had just come back from this art school and she had shown me his work. He went from doing this pretty simple picture and then two years later he was doing these amazing portraits and that he had done this in like three hours, of you sitting up like on a chair under the light. So going back to that. How should we choose these? I could make an initial cut. I have a ton of stuff.

21-00:35:43

Margolin: Yeah, that would be great. I'm incapable of sorting this stuff out.

21-00:35:49

Bancroft: Yeah.

21-00:35:51

Margolin: I'm just incapable of it. I just get stuck on these things.

21-00:35:54

Bancroft: Okay. Well, once she gave me a number, then I think that made more sense. If we can only have thirty images, I'll pick maybe fifty out of the hundred that I have and see what we can do. And when I come back in November--I already have a date with you that you're probably aware of.

21-00:36:19

Margolin: Yes, it was in the calendar.

21-00:36:22

Bancroft: Yeah. So we can use that to go back through pictures, whatever.

21-00:36:28

Margolin: Hey, listen, it's been lovely dealing with you on this. It'll be even better when we do something that's not me, that's from the outside world. It'll be so much better. But this has been good. This has been really great.

I have this interesting correspondence with Gary Snyder. We were talking about things. And we were talking about a particular artist that he thought was too fussy. And I said something about, "I agree that he's fussy, but I'm going to publish it anyway, because if I published only the things that I thoroughly and totally liked, we wouldn't have anything except the things that I'd

written.” And that his way of understanding the world has been a whole lot through meditation. My way has been to look outside. Not to look inside but to look outside and see what reflects back at me. And it’s through that reflection of the world around me that I’ve come to know myself. Not from looking inward but from looking outward. And it has something to do with that refrain that I’ve had, that I’m not very introspective and I don’t think too much about it. Although maybe I do more than I think. But for me working with you on something outside ourselves would be so much fun.

21-00:37:49
Bancroft:

Yeah, that would be.

21-00:37:50
Margolin:

It would put us almost in a companionable, collegial—and it’s not that this has been adversarial or anything like that but there’s been something about my self-consciousness of being the subject of it. It’d be really great to shape something.

21-00:38:04
Bancroft:

Yeah, I agree. That would be wonderful. Since I have my very own deep shy side, it’s been great to be able to focus on you, and then it would be nice if we were doing something else that we’ll both be able to focus on something over here so that you can feel that that’s the focus, that you’re removed. So with that book, who is it that you’re going to be in touch with? I don’t know how you call it, the Berkeley environmental—

21-00:38:38
Margolin:

I thought that what I would do would be to get in touch with the dean of the environmental studies. There’s somebody over there that just came in and we’re doing this book on urban bees with Gordon Frankie. And he said he would introduce me to this guy. And I want to work with this guy and see if I can get a chancellor’s grant. And the chancellor’s grant is funding that UC Berkeley has for people in the university to work with people in the community on something. And we could supply research and scholarship and writing and interviewing. They could supply some of the archives. Grinnell was so astonishingly important to the history of this sort of thing and LeConte and all of these people that created the Sierra Club, that created the environmental consciousness, that created the sense of what a habitat is. We’re the first people to understand that if you want a healthy environment you don’t kill all the mountain lions. It increases the deer population, but you got other problems. That those predators are necessary. And there was stuff that came out of there and somehow or other I think I can pull something together from that. And I would love to get a chancellor’s grant. I love the sound of it.

21-00:40:10
Bancroft:

Yes, right.

21-00:40:12
Margolin:

The chancellor's grant.

21-00:40:13
Bancroft:

Yes. Well, if anybody is deserving of one, you would be. Well, if there's something I can do in that process, you will let me know.

So to go back to two other conversations, one about last night. I just wanted to hear about it since I really wanted to go. What were your impressions?

21-00:41:15
Margolin:

It was at Z Space over in the Mission District and it was an old public school and it looked like it was the gymnasium that had been built up with tiers of seats that you could go underneath and get in trouble when you were a kid. But like bleachers, that you were sitting up there. And then there was a stage and it was Litquake. Do you know about Litquake? So it was one of the main features of Litquake, and we had the organizer there who was supposed to do the introductions. I was supposed to greet people and run the panel discussion. She was supposed to do the introductions but at the last minute she asked me to introduce everybody. So I had to scramble a little bit to introduce people but it was fun. And there were such amazingly wondrous people. Did you read *Bad Indians* at all?

21-00:42:28
Bancroft:

Yes. I know, she was there, wasn't she?

21-00:42:30
Margolin:

She was there and she read the novena for *Bad Indians*. This was extraordinarily powerful. Natalie Diaz couldn't make it because she had to work, so we had her on Skype with this big face up there. And she read her poetry and that was just profoundly moving. Greg Sarris, who's opening a casino in Rohnert Park that is—\$850 million went into opening this casino. And the scale of it. There's a party November 2nd that I think I'll go to. The scale of it is just utterly monumental.

21-00:43:18
Bancroft:

And it's on Indian land there? Yes or no? Because they don't even have that much land.

21-00:43:29
Margolin:

They don't have any land. I think it has to be on Indian land. But it might be land that they bought. It can be land that's owned by the tribe.

21-00:43:42
Bancroft:

Talk about bringing the past up to the modern age!

21-00:43:47
Margolin:

Yeah. So Greg read a piece. And Greg Sarris, when I first met him he was this skinny guy from Stanford who was studying critical thinking and getting a PhD in critical thinking. And he then discovered his Indian roots. He had been

adopted, and he discovered that he was descended from Tom Smith and Bodega Miwok, who was part of David Peri's family. And it is said that Tom Smith caused the earthquake of 1906 in a contest with other shamans to show their power. And Tom Smith was feared and Tom Smith was a brujo and Tom Smith was remembered in ways that were—there were sexual curses that were put on people, overly sexed. And what Greg has managed to do is preserve a sense of the undercurrent of witching, the undercurrent of poisonings, the undercurrent of black magic, the undercurrent of curses, and the stuff that everybody is trying to whitewash out. Everybody's trying to get rid of this stuff. Indians have become pure and spiritual, and they thank mother earth and they live in harmony. He's got his finger on that other part of the Indian world. And there was something about it that is so damned healthy, that this culture doesn't understand that corresponds to something in the human soul, that if we don't let it out, it poisons us even worse than the poisonings that it expresses. There was something about that depth of humanity. There was something about the way it kept balance between people. It kept respect for people. It kept separation. It kept hierarchy. The uses of these things. You can't understand this world without understanding what that part was all about. And he's kept it alive in his writing. And he ended up reading something about this woman, and it was a question as to whether she changed into a bear or not and I'm not sure whether she did. But women can do this.

21-00:46:23
Bancroft:

That's very powerful.

21-00:46:27
Margolin:

Women can do this. They can turn into grizzly bears and they can wreak terrible damage.

21-00:46:35
Bancroft:

Especially if they're premenstrual.

21-00:46:38
Margolin:

Yes. That's another whole other magnitude of terror.

21-00:46:44
Bancroft:

That's why they turn into grizzly bears.

21-00:46:48
Margolin:

Joy Harjo was there. There's a depth to her. There's a fullness. There's quietude. On one hand, with all those tattoos and her singing and her music. On stage there's a wildness. In person there's a kind of—I think she must be sixty by now and there's something in her fullness that was just a pleasure to be around. And Gordon Johnson. So Gordon, you read that wonderful piece that he wrote for *News* on Indian women that hung around the reservation. Did you read that?

21-00:47:36
Bancroft:

Un-unh.

21-00:47:36
Margolin:

Oh, it was so funny. It was the funniest piece. It was memories of the seventies when all these hippie women began to show up on the reservations. Whereas Indian women, you'd have to buy them something, you'd have to meet their brothers, you'd have to do something. These women came and they were beautiful and they were dressing provocatively and they wanted to learn about Indian spirituality. And some of them left with a little Indian in them. [laughter]

21-00:48:09
Bancroft:

I guess in more ways than—

21-00:48:12
Margolin:

And it was this funny story. He's a big guy. He had a football shirt on. He had a hat with a visor turned backwards. He looked like a truck driver. There was a roughness to him. He went to UC Santa Cruz to study literature. He studied literature at Antioch. He studied literature at the University of Vermont. The tales that he tells are these bawdy tales of characters on the reservation. That skill is a learned skill. That skill is so impeccable, and yet he comes across as this kind of rough alcoholic wise guy. I just really love him. He's a good friend, and I'll be drop down to Pala and see him again soon. He lives on Pala Reservation and he's part Kaweya and part Cupeño. And the Cupeños lived in Warner Hot Springs, and in 1902 there was that expulsion from Warner Hot Springs, when it got bought up and there was these amazing photos of these caravans of Indians being expelled and being sent over to Pala to live among the Luiseño. And they still have, within the Luiseño world, there's still a Cupeño faction that has its distinctness and it comes from that distinct faction. And who else was there? I think that may have been it.

21-00:49:59
Bancroft:

Reminds me of when I was working in Richmond High School, that they were planning to combine two high schools together and bring the North Richmond and Central Richmond kids into one high school without realizing that these were actually two factions of gangs, two gangs that had ritualistically and longtime been at war with each other. But from the outside world, "Well, just put them together in this high school. What does it matter?" Not that those two tribes had been at odds with each other. But, again, the outside perspective. "Well, just put them all on this reservation. What does it matter? They're all Indians." When in fact there were probably some underlying currents at odds with each other.

21-00:50:45
Margolin:

I introduced Deborah Miranda. She's Ohlone Costanoan Esalen and in 1922 when Kroeber published the handbook of California Indians the Esalens were a totally extinct people and the Rumsey and Ohlone, which is her branch, was culturally extinct. There was nobody that remembered anything. So these people were out of the running in 1902. They were just erased. Today there are four factions of Eselans that hate each other. [laughter]

- 21-00:51:22
Bancroft: There's progress. We'll take it in whatever form it comes.
- 21-00:51:26
Margolin: And I just pointed this out as one of the great glories of our age, is that these extinct people have come back so much there's now four factions that hate each other.
- 21-00:051036
Bancroft: So a friend wrote to me that she saw, I think from the California Historical Society, that you are giving a talk about the Hetch Hetchy.
- 21-00:51:48
Margolin: Yeah, we have a Hetch Hetchy thing coming up. We had the most amazing meeting here about Hetch Hetchy. It was so provocative.
- 21-00:52:00
Bancroft: Oh, I guess it's Wednesday. Is it Wednesday the 13th?
- 21-00:52:02
Margolin: Yeah, yeah.
- 21-00:52:05
Bancroft: Or maybe it's Thursday the 14th.
- 21-00:52:07
Margolin: No, it's Wednesday night.
- 21-00:52:08
Bancroft: Oh, okay. So I might try to get that. Is it going to be at the California Historical Society?
- 21-00:52:14
Margolin: Yeah, I'll be at the California Historical. We had a group of people come up to discuss Hetch Hetchy, and what I wanted from it all was to get it out of the win/lose category and really think about it. Really think about some of those objections that people had to it. And it's not just the water for San Francisco. There are other really interesting objections. And one of them is that that lake that's out there, that pond that's out there discourages—that if it were a valley, people would be all up and down the hills and those trails. The way it is now, so few people want to go there, that the land around it is protected, almost as a wilderness area. And once that valley gets developed, that wilderness area becomes overwhelmed with people and it becomes trashed. So in a way the reservoir is keeping the valley.
- 21-00:05:12
Bancroft: Oh, interesting.
- 21-00:53:13
Margolin: The other thing that people are concerned with is the tremendous expense of doing this. And is this what we want? And it's not just money expense. It's

organization and energy. Is this where we want to put our efforts? It's safe over there. The Park Service is so damned stupid and you're going to wreck the valley. If you're going to bring it out they're going to probably wreck it. Let's leave it under water until better times. Nothing's going to happen to it. Let's get on with some other more urgent priorities. And I just wanted to discuss all these things, not from the point of view of refuting them but to make certain that, if what we want is the restoration of it, that the argument is big enough to embrace all of those valid objections. And I wanted to make certain. There was something about that campaign that just tried to invalidate anybody that had any counterargument, and I wanted to include it. I wanted to make certain that we included it and that we had a big enough vision of this. And what I talked about at the end of it, I wrote a letter to people at the end, thanking them for coming and saying something like, "It's not just the valley that we have to save; it's our integrity and the human imagination and our way of approaching things. And to sacrifice one for the other is not a game. That we end up having to approach these things honestly." And I quoted that wonderful line that I'm sure I've quoted to you many times by Lars Eric Nelson. That the enemy is not conservatism, the enemy is liberalism. The enemy is bullshit. And let's not engage in bullshit. Let's look at these things and let's make certain that we have an approach to it that's big enough, even if it's not strategic. Even if you end up having to narrow your focus in order to win. That we just are honest among ourselves. And it was just a great meeting.

21-00:55:18
Bancroft:

Oh, good. Well, what is it with the central issue being--if it is--water, San Francisco getting its water, hat is the alternative to Hetch Hetchy?

21-00:55:28
Margolin:

I'm not an engineer. That the water comes from Hetch Hetchy down into another reservoir and there's a possibility of building up that reservoir or bringing the water down and having it seep into the groundwater and getting the groundwater out. That people feel it's a feasible alternative. And you don't have to store the water up in Hetch Hetchy. You can store it in less valuable land down below. And there are other people that say it won't work and people that insist it will work. I just have no capacity of judging the—

21-00:56:07
Bancroft:

Right. Well, this became the big issue with the bypass in Willits because people were saying, "Well, we didn't need to have to have the bypass go through this valuable forest and wetland. It could have gone and cut through along an alternate truck route along the railroad. And there were some people who said, "Well, the railroad won't ever give us that land," but as long as the railroad thought that CalTrans was going to take the other land they didn't—we didn't ever have to have a serious discussion with the railroad about giving up the right of way. We had an unused railroad a hundred feet wide that we could have used. But, again, we can't consider seriously those alternatives until somebody decides to take them seriously and we have that conversation,

face each other. Well, cool. Well, I'll look forward to—I hope I can come to that event.

21-00:57:07

Margolin: Well, that would be good. Do we have any other events? I think we do. I think we have nothing but events.

21-00:57:14

Bancroft: Well, of course. You have a ton of events. Probably Lillian didn't make it in today either.

21-00:57:19

Margolin: Lillian is off.

21-00:57:26

Bancroft: Do you have in your calendar, do you have a 2014 calendar yet?

21-00:57:40

Margolin: What do I have?

21-00:57:43

Bancroft: You must have the *Literary Industries* event Wednesday, February 12th. That was decided. They had wanted, I thought, to do it in January. My father conveniently forgot that and made alternative plans, but he will be there in February.

21-00:58:12

Margolin: Oh, that's good. That's so good. It was odd how much I liked him. It was just so odd. It was so inexplicable. I wrote him a letter that said, "You're not exactly my type." [laughter]

21-00:58:30

Bancroft: Not at all.

21-00:58:35

Margolin: But it surprised me how affectionate I feel toward him. I guess in response to his affection toward me. I guess that there's something in there. And there's people that praise me from my own world that I can expect. He comes from another world, and it's a different value system. And I think there was something in that difference that created a kind of bond or a kind of edge or a kind of—there was something in it that was very poignant.

21-00:59:10

Bancroft: I think he's always been attracted to people who kind of live on the edge because he hasn't let himself, and so he admires gumption and he admires intellectual acumen more than anything.

21-00:59:22

Margolin: Yes, he does. He really does. I read some of this at our benefit. I read some stuff from the book and I read some passages. And the passage that I keep reading is Jake's passage about growing up with beauty. And it's funny. I

want to change it. I want to do something that'll make it better but I don't know that I have—Rina feels I can't do that kind of thing. Rina has—

21-01:00:02

Bancroft:

Well, she actually said she wanted to change his words, too, because there was a place where he says about the friends.

21-01:00:08

Margolin:

Oh, I should have. There was that shit about the Easter eggs. There was that shit about the Easter eggs in the cars. And I never had anything to do with that. That was their stuff. I had nothing to do with this shit.

21-01:00:19

Bancroft:

No, but she said he said that Rina said, "Take care, be good to your friends, they are all you have." And Rina said, "I didn't say 'They're all you have.' All I said was 'Be good to your friends.'" He added his own memory, right? It was the same thing about what you talked about how Reuben remembered certain things about growing up. That we all have memory that places words in people's mouths and stuff. What was it that you wanted? So she said she actually in that part moved the quotation marks over so that—

21-01:00:54

Margolin:

Yeah, she moved the quotation.

21-01:00:55

Bancroft:

He's not quoting her incorrectly. What was it that you wanted to change?

21-01:01:00

Margolin:

There was something that he was saying about how, when he grew up, the highest praise you could have for something was to say it was beautiful. That's all there was, was beauty. And that the goal of life was to get it and to appreciate it and I wanted to add to pass it on to others. Because I think that really works well.

21-01:01:29

Bancroft:

I think that you can do that.

21-01:01:31

Margolin:

Yeah, I think I'd like to do it. Now that it's out from under Rina I can go back to—she was so scrupulous about stuff. And one thing that I continually do--I don't want to change but very often some of these stories about what other people have said, they're actually things that I had said that I put into other people's mouths to make it a better story.

21-01:02:50

Bancroft:

To be honest, there were times I did that with you. That I didn't change what you said, but I had to like cut out my voice, and if I asked a question, you might have said, "Yes, that's true," but I'd have to ask, "Well, what was true?" So I would take what I said and put it in your mouth or that I was cutting something out and so I would add a different word. And I did that with

everybody. You have to in order to create conciseness and flow. But without trying to change people's words. So I'm wondering if at some point somebody—oh, that was another question I had. So you had mentioned a while back about sending to everybody the sections of the book.

21-01:02:53
Margolin:

Oh fuck that.

21-01:02:52
Bancroft:

What?

21-01:02:54
Margolin:

Fuck that.

21-01:54:54
Bancroft:

Thank you. Yeah, I already sent them the transcript. I'm hoping that—

21-01:53:00
Margolin:

Oh, no, no.

21-01:03:01
Bancroft:

Okay, good. That's all later, I mean.

21-01:03:03
Margolin:

Oh, God, no. Oh, God. That's completely stupid.

21-01:03:06
Bancroft:

I think that there's something about—it's creative storytelling that people understand. It's like if I had been a journalist who was just saying—before there were even tape recorders, right, that you're writing the words down and you really have a little bit more liberty to change people's words around as long as you're getting the essence of what they said, and I think I pretty much stuck to that.

21-01:03:34
Margolin:

You know what? I've been thinking about it at the edge of my mind, and I'm not sure whether I'll do this or not. And it had to do with people that were completely left out of the book, that had been really important. And good friends. And Alan Rosenus is one. And he's completely gone from there, and I think maybe when I go over it with Gayle, maybe I'll just add an anecdote and stick it in somewhere.

21-01:04:01
Bancroft:

Well, I can still do that. The tape recorder's going. Who is he and what would you—if you want to do that, tell me a story and I can make sure it gets in there, too. Because I don't remember his name coming up.

21-01:04:19
Margolin:

No, his name hadn't come up. I'm not sure of the context that it would be in. I think what I might say about Alan is that one of the—did you ever read that introduction that I did to *Life Amongst the Modocs*?

21-01:05:17
Bancroft:

Mm-hmm.

21-01:05:19
Margolin:

And there was something about Joaquin Miller as a poet, as a theatrical person, as a cultural icon, as a liar, as a showman that I've always related to. And that wondrous opening for *Life Amongst the Modocs*, "lonely as God and white as a winter moon, Mount Shasta starts up sudden and solitary from the great dark forests of Northern California." Just grand sweep of rhetoric. Just an openness to the sounds that are in there, to the bigness of the world. And there's something in that, putting on airs. There's something in that pretending that he's somebody else that I can relate to, and I think very often you discover truth not by being yourself but by lying, by putting yourself out into the person you would like to be and fitting into that image of something in there. I'm not sure the truth sets you free. I think imagination sets you free. I think the truth imprisons you. And that there was something in Joaquin Miller, that there was a freedom, there was an openness. And my friendship with Alan was based on a mutual love of Joaquin Miller. We worked with him to publish that book, *Life Amongst the Modocs*. We'd get together and talk. We'd get together and talk to somebody. We published his book on General Vallejo and there were so few people that are into that era, that early California history, that have a sense of keen intellectual inquiry, that play with ideas, that are not academics, that are outside the academic world. He did some publishing for a while. We'd get together. We went up to Joaquin Miller's house on the 100th anniversary of Joaquin Miller's death to just walk around and look at it and talk about it. That there's something about that triggering of a friendship. And I'm not sure where this goes, and I'm not sure it's a good story. I'm not sure that it's a good story. You having Heyday's list, the fragments of another couple of presses. So Orion Press was his press, and we ended up taking *Life Amongst the Modoc* from there and putting it into ours. Chick Callenbach's Banyon Tree Press, we ended up taking that over and putting that into ours. City Minor Books had *Fop* on its list and we ended up redoing *Fop*. We've ended up taking in some ways and embracing the flotsam from various presses that hadn't made out too well. Did I talk about Joaquin Miller and the book at all?

21-01:08:57
Bancroft:

Un-unh.

21-01:08:59
Margolin:

So Joaquin Miller, it was coming into a literary voice that saw Indians before anthropologists had developed a language in which to describe them. Before political correctness told you what to think, what to say. And there's passages in there where he's talking about how he saw the Indians as they were before they were ruined by white civilization. He saw them in their nobility, he saw them in their gentleness, he saw them in their kindness and he saw them in their tremendous violence, and he has no idea how that violence and that nobility can exist in the same person. He's just telling you what he saw. And

there was something about that wonderful freshness of puzzlement that I really liked. There was something about the fact that it didn't slide into the slick language that we've got for things today, the slick formulations. He could say that he didn't understand something and that was so beautiful. And I don't understand it. It gives you permission not to understand. It gives you permission to have another kind of relationship to the world, where you're not the explainer. That you can bring things to bear that are contradictory and you can admit your—that Hetch Hetchy thing that we did. That attitude comes from people like Joaquin Miller. It comes from people like Ramchandra Gandhi and that sense that the world isn't clear in its oppositions, it isn't clear in its solutions. That there's some other way of seeing things. That the human mind is limited in its capacities to understand, but that you have an obligation to just kind of embrace those contradictions.

That event last night. So I was told an hour before the event, could I introduce everybody. This has all the makings of complete chaos. I love chaos. I function so well in chaos. I have trouble with order, but I love that kind of chaos. And I love that chaos of lots of thoughts. I love getting people in a room that were so—that Hetch Hetchy thing, there were undercurrents of that thing that were so complicated. There was a failed political campaign. There was a tarnished icon. There was a wounded cause, and there were people in there that were accusing one another of having bad strategy, like the Republicans with the shutdown. And it was this sense of having screwed something up. And to get them all around there and to find something that embraces all of these kinds of things and everybody could walk out with some sense that they'd been heard, that their view of something was part of a whole. I guess I really love that kind of stuff.

21-01:12:27
Bancroft:

So it's interesting. If I were in that situation, especially as a teacher dealing with a whole bunch of very diverse students talking about tough issues like race or gender or class, as I often have, there's this kind of pressure to make sure that everybody—maybe it's an internalized pressure--o make sure everybody sort of gets along. Or if something's going to erupt, which it inevitably will, that still there is an opportunity for people to calm down, come back together, see some common point, see each other's side. And that's hard work. So if you're in that position, say like with the Hetch Hetchy and all of the different positions that people take and the potentially underlying tensions, how do you deal with that?

21-01:13:27
Margolin:

I don't have a world of certainties.

21-01:13:31
Bancroft:

So there doesn't have to be a certain outcome. What arises is here, and we get to be with it?

21-01:13:40
Margolin:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And you'll hear somebody speak. Hey, listen, the Tea Party is not all that crazy. There are some elements in there. There are some elements in there that we have to listen to. There's a valid critique in there. I think what got lost in Obama's backing down from things, what got lost with this, is the feeling that we can change things. And what we've now got is a government that nobody believes in, that they feel can't be changed. And in a way the Koch brothers won. They destroyed our faith in government. They've made government powerless. And this polarization, this polarizing thing between this Tea Party and these others—I mean, I listen to some of that Tea Party stuff. Government sucks. The capacity of people to run national parks, the interference that people have in each other's lives.

21-01:14:44
Bancroft:

Right. The scamming. Like building a \$300 million freeway that's not necessary or a war that we don't need to do.

21-01:14:50
Margolin:

Yes, yes, yes. This is all a valid critique and the frustration. And instead of demonizing these people as idiots, there's something that we need to listen to. I think it's the same thing around here, where everybody has their own skills and talents, and you just let them do it, whatever they do, and accept their quirks and figure out how the whole thing works.

I don't want an index. I don't want an index. What Rina had suggested was that the end be reconstructed and that it end with Diane's comments on Heyday. And I thought that was pretty good. I thought that was—

21-01:15:55
Bancroft:

Yeah. And then you would be several pages just before that, so there's still a sense of ending with you.

21-01:16:01
Margolin:

Yeah, that's good. Yeah, but what Diane says, it ends it on the right note. And for a while I thought ending it with that anecdote about, that your father liked—I think maybe that can fit back into Mike's thing and nestle in over there.

21-01:16:25
Bancroft:

Okay. I think I have all of that. Rina wrote all of that down. Wait, let me go back to Alan for a moment. What's Alan's last name?

21-01:16:38
Margolin:

Rosenus. R-O-S-E-N-U-S. And then I think that I would also—I have to talk about the board a little bit, about Marty Krasney and Guy Lampard and people like that. At least make certain that they're mentioned in there. And this is going to be political.

21-01:17:04
Bancroft:

Well, what would you like to say? I mean, say it.

21-01:17:28
Margolin:

Let me talk and maintain the right to erase. So when I first met Guy Lampard, he's now our president of the board. Mike McCone brought him in. And Guy, he's into wealth management. He plays golf. He's rich. He's associated with other people. That I couldn't imagine anybody that I had less in common with. But Mike brought him in, and he had some money and he came around and he ended up joining the board and he's brought to the board—and there's something about—I'm not sure I understand him. I'm not sure that I understand him. He gives us large sums of money, and every time I thank him, he says he gets much more than he gives and I'm not sure what he's getting. I'm having trouble with this. I'm having trouble with this. He plays golf.

21-01:19:17
Bancroft:

Well, what would you say are some of the things that he's done or a particular story that you might have about how he's contributed to the board or had an interaction with him that was illuminating?

21-01:19:34
Margolin:

Let me do it this way. Why don't I do it this way? That we've got a board of directors that, while we've been interviewing a lot of staff and a lot of authors, we haven't interviewed too many board members. We interviewed Lee, we had something by Theresa Harlan, we had Mike in there. And anybody else?

21-01:20:08
Bancroft:

George? Is George on the board?

21-01:20:10
Margolin:

No, George wasn't on the board. But that the board is this essential part. And originally I brought it in as a legal necessity. I thought that if you have a 501(c)(3) you need a board. And gradually over the years the board has taken on another function of support and guidance. And I talked about how at first I was so paranoid about the board. That the current board that we have is the most skilled and talented people you could ask for. There's people like Guy Lampard, who's a financial advisor. There's Marty Krasney, who's a wonderment. Marty is simply a wonderment. He's one of the smartest people that I've ever met. He runs the Dalai Lama fellows. He's been active. He knows everybody in the Bay Area. He's at ease with money. He works hard. He's funny as hell. He's so funny. And there's something about Marty where he says things that are either totally off the wall or totally brilliant and there's no gray area. There's no gray area. And if he says something totally off the wall and you reject it, he's fine with it. He just kind of goes on. There's a freshness of insight. He looks odd. He's almost albino and he can't see. He has to hold things up close to his eyes, and there's something about that oddness of his that allows him to see the world differently than anybody I've ever met and he's a complete delight.

Rick Baum is on the board. And Guy brought Rick onto the board. And Rick was assistant insurance commissioner under Garamendi for the state. And he does something or other that has something to do with money and knows money and loves poetry and is into poetry. And there's a group of people that know how things work, that know how big structures work. Mike Traynor is a lawyer and he was, I think, active in the bar. He's been active in civil liberties. His father was a supreme court justice in California. There's Lisa Van Cleef on the board, who's a marketing person with Nature Conservancy. And there's Patricia Wakida, who is a phenomenon. There's Sonia Torres, who's into fundraising and development. There's this group of people. There's Nick Dehasia, who works for the Oakland Zoo. And there's this group of people that come from a whole other place and they cast a fresh eye on it all. And it was Guy that has pulled this together into something of a strong force. We met yesterday.

Within that group there's a core of expertise, there's a respect for me as a person, there's a respect for what we're doing. There's a tenderness to it all.

Barbara Bookey was head of the fundraising effort for the De Young Museum when they did their expansion, and I met her on the Yosemite Association Board. I feel toward them that I'm bringing in the car for a tune-up and every so often for an overhaul, and they don't go out riding in the car. But every so often I bring it back to the garage, and they tune it up and they overhaul it.

21-01:25:30

Bancroft: And they appreciate the car. Beautiful car.

21-01:25:31

Margolin: And they appreciate and they really like the car. They really like the car. And so maybe this is the metaphor to carry us through this damn thing.

21-01:25:38

Bancroft: Yes, I think so. And they like the stories of where you've gone with that car.

21-01:25:42

Margolin: And they love the car is going on such interesting trips and they live on it mostly vicariously. But that they're the most wonderful—

21-01:25:54

Bancroft: Well, that's good. I think that's a good tribute to them. I think that's part of a tribute.

21-01:25:58

Margolin: Yeah, I think really what I want is I don't want to exclude them entirely. I want to make sure that they're in there.

21-01:26:04

Bancroft: Right. Just going back to Alan a moment. So I don't yet have a sense of kind of who he is. He had common interests with you with Joaquin.

21-01:26:17
Margolin:

He's a writer. I think he has independent means. We have dinner once every three months or so. That is a strong opening up of our lives. There's something in that Jewish background of his that's similar to mine. There's something in our age that's similar, our interest in early California.

21-01:26:44
Bancroft:

And you said he had his own publishing company for a while, a little one?

21-01:26:49
Margolin:

Yeah, he was publishing some Joaquin Miller stuff under Orion Press and a few other things. I've talked about Ed Robin. I don't know whether this is in the book or not, but at Ed's funeral I was talking to his brother and the brother said that we need a witness in our lives. In some ways Alan is my witness. And we meet periodically, we check in on each other. That we dip the dipstick into the motor to see how much oil is there, and we find that there's still oil in each other's. And you know, what Alan represents for me is he doesn't have much to do with the rest of Heyday. He's an individual and there's something about this one-to-one older man deep friendship that is so necessary, that is so removed from the communal operation that's in here, from all the people I know from the board. There's something about that one-to-one. That this is the longest stranger on a train conversation in the entire world. That when we get together, there's this sense that we don't have anything to do with one another's lives. We don't see each other socially. We just get together in isolated ways and in a way it's like confession. It's a peculiar function. It's a peculiar function that he serves. And it's that function of long dinners maybe four times a year. I've had various strong male friends. I just want to make sure that Alan is in there. I want to make sure that Alan is in there.

21-01:29:19
Bancroft:

Okay, that's good.

21-01:29:21
Margolin:

And I'm not sure who else there is. Thank you so much for keeping this thing open.

21-01:29:33
Bancroft:

Squishing them in at the last moment. Yeah. I think it can be done. Yeah. Think about where it goes. So let me ask you about going to next year, going back to your thinking, since the launch meeting was yesterday. What are you thinking about in terms of when the book is coming out? Because I remember different things about July, August. That's the actual fortieth. Do you have something in mind?

21-01:30:07
Margolin:

I think that the idea was we would have it out in August. The conversation came up. When do I remember that the fortieth anniversary was? I said, "I can remember any month you want." But August was the month. But if they need the books delivered in September/October I can—

21-01:30:33
Bancroft: Did Rina have a specific date in mind? Did you ask her?

21-01:30:38
Margolin: No. God, no. She would.

21-01:30:40
Bancroft: Not that it matters so much. But remember it was the summer.

21-01:30:46
Margolin: It was the end of summer. It was the end of August.

21-01:30:59
Bancroft: Well, I think it will be fine. You said that you had envisioned having the truck pull up and the books, just a sort of celebratory moment of having all of the boxes carried up and maybe you can have all of your friends show up and we can each take a box.

21-01:31:15
Margolin: Yeah, maybe.

21-01:31:16
Bancroft: But they usually go to the warehouse but hey, no.

21-01:31:18
Margolin: But we can have them delivered here.

21-01:31:19
Bancroft: Yeah, have them delivered here.

21-01:31:21
Margolin: We were thinking of doing a special edition hardcover that would go out to particular friends and people that were in the book. That might be good. I'm going to see if Gayle is here. Let me see if she's going to come in. I've got Shelly Winton who's going to come in. You know Shelly Winton?

21-01:31:57
Bancroft: No.

21-01:31:58
Margolin: Started at PGW.

[End audio file 21]

Interview 22: December 10, 2013

[Begin audio file 22]

[preliminaries deleted]

22-01:00:13

Margolin: We're at the end of this project and we know it. [laughter]

22-01:00:17

Bancroft: We know it. We've lost the days. We don't even know who we are anymore. No. Okay. This is Kim and Malcolm.

22-01:00:26

Margolin: And it's December 10th.

22-01:00:28

Bancroft: And it's December 10th and we're in Berkeley. It's 2013. I'm very happy. I'm very happy. So I have a few questions to ask you. One is to have you tell me about Graham Chisholm and his role here because I did get to interview him, but I want to get a sense from your perspective of who he is and what he's doing here. Or how you know him.

22-01:00:58

Margolin: I just always feel that I swim through a sea of friends, and this is what sustains us. And Graham has just been such an extraordinary friend. When I met him he was head of California's Nature Conservancy and he would invite me out to different places. I had him write an introduction to one of our books. That was Roman Lawrence's photographs of the Central Valley, of the Cosumnes Conservancy. Is that what they call it? No, it's the Cosumnes River something or other.

22-01:01:47

Bancroft: Yeah, nature reserve or something. Yeah.

22-01:01:49

Margolin: Nature preserve or something like that. And there was something about Graham, with an intelligence and a social grace and a playfulness. I really understood Graham. There was a sense of companionship. And at the same time he would be playful down on the ground. He knew everybody in California that had power and money. When we did that book, he arranged an event over at John Gallo's ranch in Modesto. We went down together and did something for a conservancy down in Tulare County. I spoke at this gathering of Nature Conservancy people that they had. I think it was at Asilomar. And I would end up speaking to them, and they would end up doing things with us, and we ended up applying for grants together. And he went from Nature Conservancy to California Audubon. And then when he left California Audubon, he was out in the world, and I just suggested that he have a desk here at Heyday. Just have a desk. You need a desk, you need somebody. You need a phone, you need people to be around. Just take a desk. So he took a desk. And then he ended up giving us some advice and then he ended up

going with some of his foundation contacts. When Baechtel wanted to give us a large grant, they knew that Graham was here and they suggested that Graham help us with the strategic plan. And there's something about the fact that this was unplotted. When I introduce Graham, he has no job description. He doesn't work here. He's not on the payroll. He uses a desk. He's a friend. We work together as collegial. It's completely undefined. It's friendship.

22-01:03:49
Bancroft:

I remember my first few months being here, and I see this guy sitting in there. And you'd told me about all the other people who were Heyday employees and I finally said, "Well, who are you? What are you doing here?" But he has helped in consulting with the Baechtel grant?

22-01:04:07
Margolin:

He's taken over our strategic planning stuff. He sits in on our executive committee meetings because he ran a couple of large organizations, and he has a sense of how organizations run. He talks to the board. He attends our finance committee meeting because he understands finance. He understands a lot of things that I don't understand. And there's never been a contract. There's never been even a conversation about what he would do and how we would use him and what the exchange would be. It's just been kind of floating along. Things got mixed up, and he's part of it all. And I think he's happy.

22-01:04:48
Bancroft:

He seemed to be. Yes.

22-01:04:49
Margolin:

I think he likes it here.

22-01:04:50
Bancroft:

Yeah. Yeah. What would you say about his character that was attractive to you in terms of somebody to work with?

22-01:05:03
Margolin:

In Graham there's a generosity. There's a sense of the beauty of the world. He loves birds. He loves the outdoors. There's a sense of just tremendous playfulness. There's a lightness of being that he has. There's not an ounce of phoniness about him. There's a kind of ease about him. I think in some way I feel if I could be more like Graham I might be a better person. That he dresses better than I do. He's younger than I am. He's more handsome than I am. He mixes with people very well. He's not anywhere near as egotistical. He doesn't take up much psychological space. He gets a lot of work done. He understands the mechanics of operations. But there's also a charm and a goodwill. There's a goodwill to him. There's a goodwill to him. I genuinely like him and I think he genuinely likes me. And he's a friend. I think we try to take and give these relationships some sense of definition and importance and profundity. He's like George. He's just kind of here.

- 22-01:06:26
Bancroft: Is there something about Heyday in particular or your leadership, perhaps, that has allowed these kinds of relationships to flourish here, where people just kind of find a home?
- 22-01:06:39
Margolin: You're here.
- 22-01:06:41
Bancroft: That's true. Here I am. I'm another one.
- 22-01:06:43
Margolin: What the hell are you doing here?
- 22-01:06:45
Bancroft: Yes. One finds a kinship of spirit in nature, in literature, in history and inquiry. A sense of humor. It draws us here. There's an easygoing quality. You become accepted and you're part of the little tribe that's here, part of the roundhouse community. So you keep coming back.
- 22-01:07:19
Margolin: And let's not make this any more complicated. Let's finish it off. But I've been having these wonderful conversations. I had Mark Dubois come by. Do you know Mark Dubois?
- 22-01:07:30
Bancroft: Un-unh.
- 22-01:07:31
Margolin: He was the guy that chained himself to the Stanislaus. He was the head of Friends of the River. He formed the International River Network. He ran Earth Bay for the year 2000. He's kind of an environmental hero. He's growing older. There was a kind of wonderful quietude and depth to him. We had this wonderful long conversation. The next night I went off and I talked to Bob Hass for the night. We had a drink with Bob Hass. I was over at Peter Washaw's memorial service. Peter was a wonderful friend. And I had a long talk with Stewart Brand. And there are these people around that I talk to, that we grew up at the same time, we have certain things in common, we were influenced by certain things. We came from certain backgrounds. Hippies and environment and music and drugs and various things came to us at certain times in our lives, and there's a wonderful sense of kinship. I'm going to get together a whole bunch of these people and we're going to do a joint autobiography. We're going to do a generational autobiography, talk about how we grew up and our parents. It's something what you're doing for me. I would love to expand this to my whole generation. And I'm going to get some people together. And there's something about Graham. He's a different character. He grew up in Nebraska. He's more institutional and more organized than I am. There's something recognizable in there of my kind. I have the most wonderful correspondence with Dan Gerber. Did I talk about Dan Gerber?

22-01:09:27

Bancroft: No. Tell that story.

22-01:09:29

Margolin: The poet. And he wrote to me and he said that—and every time he writes to me he has this line, "When two thieves meet, they recognize each other." That's his. So when two themes meet they recognize each other. And I wrote back to him and I said, "Dan, you're absolutely right. We're thieves and we pulled off the biggest heist of all time. We've stolen our lives. We've stolen our lives from people that would have made us accountants in a button factory. We've stolen our lives from people who would make us watchmen in the Potemkin village. We've stolen our lives from people that would make us toll takers on bridges to nowhere. We've stolen our lives. We've done beautiful work and let's celebrate." With Graham, there's also a sense—he works hard. He's connected to senators and to big conservation movements and to big money, but there's a sense of someone that's stolen his life from it all. He's here at Heyday. He's not under anybody's thumb. And there's a joy in this. There's an absolute joy in people that have stolen their lives. So this is a kind of den of thieves.

22-01:10:42

Bancroft: Very nice. Okay. So how about tell me about Anthea and the California Historical Society Connection. There was a little bit about that from Mike but—

22-01:10:57

Margolin: So I had this longstanding association with the California Historical Society and I knew it back when it was on Jackson Street in this gloomy house that looked like it had come from the Adams family. And it was this haunted miserable wreck of a house. And Jim Holliday was head of the California Historical Society. He was a wild man. He was a complete playboy. Did I ever tell you about Jim?

22-01:11:22

Bancroft: No, no. I want to hear this. I know of him through the Bancroft Library connections.

22-01:11:27

Margolin: Oh, Jim was wonderful. But one of my favorite stories about Jim was, he comes by one day to the office and he comes up and he's outrageously flirting with every woman that's here. So there was only one thing that he loved better than woman and that was alcohol. So I figured I'd better get him the hell out of here or I'm going to get hit by a suit. This was embarrassing me. So I said, "Come, let's have a drink, Jim." He says, "Okay." So he says, "Let's go to the Santa Fe Bar and Grill." So the Santa Fe Bar and Grill was over on University Avenue at the old Santa Fe railroad station. And we go to the Santa Fe Bar and Grill and by this time it was three o'clock in the afternoon and it's closed. It's open from lunch, like 11:00 to 2:30 and dinner from 5:00 to 10:00 but this was closed. So he bangs at the door and finally somebody opens the door and

says, "What do you want?" And he says, "We'd like to come in and have a drink." And the guy says, "We're closed." And Jim says, "We'll just sit at the bar and have a drink." And the guy says, "But we're closed." And he goes, "Hey, listen, the bar is over there, the drinks are over there. We'll sit in the bar, we'll give you some money." So the guy says, "Okay, come on in." So we come on in and the guy says, "What'll you have?" And Jim says, "A gin and tonic." So the guy says, "Okay." Reaches—and Jim says, "Not that glass. I want it in a tall glass." So the guy gets a tall—"Not that gin. I wanted another gin. Don't put so much ice in it." Then he fills it up. But the final thing was there were these Chicanos that were mopping the floor and they had the chairs up on the tables and they had a little bit of some music playing in the distance. And he gets up, he says, "Could you turn that music off?" [laughter]

22-01:13:06
Bancroft:

Sort of running the show.

22-01:13:07
Margolin:

He was just great. He was just great. He was so outrageous. He was so outrageous. So I knew Jim when he was head of the Historical Society. And there was a revolution on the board. Jeff Lustig had just got on the board and Chuck Wallenberg had just got on the board and they tried to get me on the board, but they couldn't. And the people are trying to turn it from something that had been stuffy and staid and safe into something that—it was that whole movement to stop talking about the Gold Rush as a great adventure of young men, to talk about women, to talk about Chicanos, to talk about the Chinese, to talk about the Indians, to talk about the environment. To talk about California's dark side and just stop talking about the wonderful Forty-Niners and the great democratic institutions that were created around their arrival here. So I knew them back then. And then I ended up doing some publishing with them when Mike came on board at the California Historical Society, and they moved and that was great fun. And then I went through three directors after Mike that were flawed in various ways. I got along with them all, I did some work with them all, but they were all flawed. And there was something about the California Historical Society that was a shell. It had a name, it had an archive. It wasn't doing anything. There wasn't any soul there. Its membership had dropped. The Humboldt Historical Society had about 8,000 members. California Historical Society had about 3,000. And it just wasn't doing anything.

And then they finally got Anthea Hartig in. And Anthea Hartig, I knew her when she was with the—what the hell is it called? The Architectural Trust.

22-01:15:26
Bancroft:

Architectural Heritage?

22-01:15:27
Margolin:

No, it's not Architectural Heritage. It's the Trust for Historic Preservation. I think that's what it is. And she was their director for California, the west,

Hawaii, Guam. She had a scam going. She was just great. And she's sexy and she's alive and she's bright and she's fun to be with. And she took over the Historical Society and the thing has just been a party. The thing has just been great. And the thing has got a kind of lightness to it. We took over their store. We have regular events over there. We're cooperating on books over there. And in some ways it's something between her and me. There's a friendship in there. We just hit it off. And it's such a wonderful thing in this world to say something and instead of your statement being halved and come back at you without arms and legs, it now comes back with so many arms and legs it looks like a Hindu divinity. She adds arms and legs to things and things just get amplified and things just get wonderful.

So we have a contest now. We have the California Historical Society prize for the best book that we published together. And this is all your fault. That because of Hubert Howard Bancroft, I've considered myself Hubert's heir, and I want to start a history press, and they're talking about starting it with them and seeing if we can get some funding for thing and do a series. There's nobody else doing good publishing in California history. You see presses folding up. They're not going broke, but they're just getting out of doing good books. And there's nobody else doing anything. And that contest, that we had uncovered some really great manuscripts. Hey, we got to talk. We're looking for somebody that will run that contest and somebody that will—we got to talk.

22-01:17:54

Bancroft:

Right. Well, we already have another project. I have about three projects. But we'll talk about that.

22-01:17:59

Margolin:

Why don't we talk about that? That would be really fun. That would be really fun. But there's something about the partnership that is based on mutual interest, on mutual aid. That they've got a place in San Francisco, they've got a store. We've got programs, we've got books that we can put into their space. We've got tremendous connections and imagination. Between the two of us our rolodexes cover all of California. That there's something about this one, it's for me the perfect partnership. And the partnership with the Bancroft was a wonderful partnership. It flourished with Charles [Faulhaber]. Charles and I understood each other. Elaine [Tennant] is more cautious and maybe more protective of the resources of the Bancroft than Charles was.

22-01:18:55

Bancroft:

Well, she's definitely coming in at a time of—

22-01:18:59

Margolin:

Of scarcity. Of shrinkage.

22-01:19:01

Bancroft:

Yes.

- 22-01:19:05
Margolin: So that was California Historical Society.
- 22-01:19:06
Bancroft: Okay, that's great. That's great. I wanted to ask about David Brower. Because having just really read *The Wildness Within* and loved it—
- 22-01:19:16
Margolin: Isn't that great?
- 22-01:19:17
Bancroft: —I realized that he never came up in our discussions. You must have known him.
- 22-01:19:25
Margolin: Of course I knew him.
- 22-01:19:27
Bancroft: So do you have any stories? Plus, he had his own publishing gig with the Sierra Club. I don't know if there were ever projects that came your way that the Sierra Club rejected or how did all of that work? And stories about him and how you knew him.
- 22-01:19:49
Margolin: I did know him, and I didn't know him as well as I would have liked to have known him, but I did know him. And I was up to his house several times for Sunday morning breakfast. He had these waffle breakfasts where he'd invite some people. And you'd walk in and you'd have some waffles and you'd walk out not only having eaten some waffles but just having said yes to more things than a human being could possibly ever do to save the earth. There was something about David that was—he was brilliant. He was utterly brilliant. It was a use of vocabulary, a use of language that he had. He was the most articulate person around. He was funny beyond belief. I loved that line of his when he got kicked out of the Sierra Club. Do you know that line?
- 22-01:20:42
Bancroft: Un-unh.
- 22-01:20:43
Margolin: Oh, it's just a great line. So he came into the Sierra Club when it had one other employee. It was a secretary that kind of took care of the membership and scheduled the trips and stuff like that. And he came in and he converted it into this national organization.
- 22-01:21:01
Bancroft: Right. Went from 7,000 to 700,000.
- 22-01:21:04
Margolin: Yeah, from 7,000 to 700,000. He converted it to this major national organization. But he got into publishing and he got into publishing these great books. And at first they were just transformative, but after a while they began

to just be costly and they weren't producing income or getting anything but he couldn't stop. This was what he did, was he published these books. And he got into these big adventures and fights. And there was a passion to him. There was an anger to him. He was angry at the destruction of the world. He was so appalled by it. And he would make you angry at it. He wasn't like the people that are heads of conservation organizations today, where they have meetings with fundraisers and executive committees and finance committees and they're businessmen. He was an orator. He was a rabble rouser. And he would lecture to a crowd, and he would fill you with rage at what was being destroyed and the necessity that you go out and do something about it. There was that kind of charismatic passion that he had. But when he got kicked out of the Sierra Club, his great line was, "I left the Sierra Club the way I came in; fired with enthusiasm." [laughter]

22-01:22:26
Bancroft:

That's very good.

22-01:22:28
Margolin:

That was just so brilliant. That was just so brilliant. And the kinds of books that he did, the use of these books became a model for how we do books in some way. George Young worked with him when George was with Ballantine Books and worked with him on publishing a whole lot of those—Ian Ballantine published a whole lot of those books of his. And his presence in Berkeley was just a stunning presence. The last dinner that I had, his last trip to Yosemite, it was a couple of weeks before he died, I had dinner with him in Yosemite. He was on a wheelchair, and it was the end of his life. And I sat there and I said, "How is it?" And he says, "You know," he says, "I finally have come to understand what Ansel Adams meant when he said, 'Since you've got to get old, you may as well get as old as you can get.'" And he was just fighting for those last days. He was fighting. He was staying alive to get something else done. And he lived in the doing of it. When I read that book, I felt a kinship with him. I felt that his throwing young people out into the world and giving them a chance to fail or to succeed, his risk-taking, his lack of bean counting--there was something in that style of his that I recognized more in reading Ken's book than I did when I knew David. But with David there was a sense that you could do things. There was a sense of abundance of energy, abundance of need, abundance of power. That you could do things. There are some people you get around and everything seems difficult. That to do something you need to form a 501(c)(3) organization and have meetings and there are questions. With David there was this sense that you could just get out and roar like a lion and do stuff. Was it Dave Phillips?

22-01:24:40
Bancroft:

I'm just going to open the windows.

22-01:24:40
Margolin:

I think it was Dave Phillips that talks about—I'm not sure who it was—I guess it was in the book--meeting David Brower at a conference and he told him

what his thesis was and David said, "We need somebody like you. Come to work." So he packs everything up and he comes in, and there was no job, there was no desk. [laughter] I haven't thought of this. And then he finally, "Sit over there and do something." And it's a little bit like with Graham. You don't need an institutional relationship. You don't need a payroll. You can just get stuff done. And it's force of human will. And he had tremendous force of will. I remember there was one meeting that we had. There was this group. And I learned so much from him. It was a conference in Berkeley and he was the keynote speaker and he was starting something that I think he was calling the Green Cross. And the Green Cross would be the equivalent of the Red Cross but it would be for ecology and it would be when there was an emergency, a spill or a nuclear disruption or something would happen, you would have people that could rush in, like the Red Cross rushes in, and do something. He was recruiting members for this Green Cross. And it was a hall in Berkeley and he talked about it. And then he says, "And how many people are going to join?" And a few hands raise. And he says, "Is that it? Is that it? In Berkeley we're talking about saving the earth, we're talking about getting out and doing something. You're needed. Is that all? Come on. Who else is going to do this?" So a few more hands raise. He says, "Is that it? What are you doing with your lives that is so important? What the hell else are you doing with it?" A few more. "Hey, listen, I was off in Kansas City, Missouri, I got half the room to join, and this is Berkeley, California." And he worked them up and he worked them up until he finally had hundreds of hands up there, and then came the thing that I learned from him. On the way out there's a table where you sign up. [laughter]

22-01:27:03
Bancroft:

"Take that hand and sign it to the paper." That's great.

22-01:27:09
Margolin:

He had tremendous power that he shared with you. And I'm not sure how he did this. There are some people that have power, and you feel it's their power and you live in this reflection. When you're with him, you felt that his power was your power. And I'm not sure how he did that. I'm not sure how he did that. And there was something in his intensity and there was a courage to the man. He was a great mountain climber. There was a nobility to him. He never made ad hominin attacks. He never attacked his enemies as people. He attacked their ideas. There was a dignified quality of restraint. And he was a wonderful drinker. Oh, God, was he a wonderful drinker.

22-01:28:05
Bancroft:

That comes through in the book. That comes out.

22-01:28:08
Margolin:

Oh, my God, he was just great.

- 22-01:28:11
Bancroft: What do you mean by wonderful? The character that comes out of him once he started—
- 22-01:28:17
Margolin: Oh, he would just belt them down. He would just be over there and it was utterly marvelous, it was utterly alarming and it was utterly magnificent. And he would drink young guys under the table. Nobody could ever keep up with him. Nobody could ever keep up with him.
- 22-01:28:33
Bancroft: There are great stories in there of people saying, "Well, I'm pretty abstemious so I had a couple of drinks with David and, boy, was I wasted. But we had a great time talking."
- 22-01:28:43
Margolin: And he also had a democratic quality to him, where he would talk to some young intern with the same intensity that he would talk to the secretary of the interior.
- 22-01:28:56
Bancroft: And I appreciated some of the stories of people saying at the end that he always enjoyed young people. It wasn't that he got old.
- 22-01:29:04
Margolin: He enjoyed young people.
- 22-01:29:04
Bancroft: Yeah. I actually wrote down several things. I said, "Malcolm is similar to David in some ways." Tom Turner's statement. "It was David coming out of left field again. I'd hardly ever written anything except for school papers and letters," and that sense of giving, like you said, somebody a chance. And Turner added, "It was a real 'toss you into the deep end' sort of experience because I didn't know what I was doing. David did have a habit of impulsively looking for talent that often worked out well but sometimes not."
- 22-01:29:41
Margolin: It sounds arrogant, but I felt myself to be a real kin to David.
- 22-01:29:47
Bancroft: Oh, yeah. There were several things here. His style about finding people who have an idea and giving them a place to try and make that idea into something that really works for the planet. Also he didn't glad-hand with the corporate guy. This is Phillips saying he didn't glad-hand with the corporate guys at all. He didn't want to feel like he was getting close to the seats of power. That sense of staying real with people. I think you talked, and people have said, you could work a room and you're as comfortable with the academics and the politicians as you are with the folks who come in out of the roundhouse. But there's also that sense, the idea about how—oh, he said, "He just didn't care about money. And he was right but he was also wrong."

22-01:30:38
Margolin:

Yeah, his irresponsibility around money was where—

22-01:30:41
Bancroft:

Yeah. I think you can take enormous risks but those risks are better taken when you have a sense of where the spongy terrain is. Yeah. And also Lovins talked about his aesthetics and aikido politics. "That sense of duty to aesthetic standards is one of Dave's greatest gifts to me." So there's all of the similarity with talking about beauty. "I started to learn from him what I would now call aikido politics because, although on the one hand he was utterly uncompromising in the pursuit of his high purpose, on the other he was never rigid or disrespectful in how he dealt with adversaries."

22-01:31:19
Margolin:

That aikido politics is using other people's strength. For me it's getting something big enough to use their strength rather than just exclude their strength. Get something big enough to absorb it. And I think about that a lot. I'm not sure what aikido is, but I think about it a lot.

22-01:31:47
Bancroft:

Well, I did just a little bit of aikido and the essence, one of the main thoughts about this—this is a little tangential. Let's say you're attacking me. Just grab my hand. Okay. Wait, do it with this hand because I want to show you. Just grab it. Instead of me trying to struggle with you I simply—

22-01:32:09
Margolin:

Oh.

22-01:32:10
Bancroft:

—step out of the way, you are forced to break your hold, and I'm not engaging the enemy. You're grabbing and you keep going that way, and I step out of the force of your attack.

22-01:32:25
Margolin:

Oh, that's pretty interesting.

22-01:32:27
Bancroft:

That's a nice way of thinking about it, too. You let somebody carry their energy forward if it's negative, and you move out of the way. So anyhow, I thought there were lots of wonderful ways. But one of the things I thought was different about him was where Turner said, "He wasn't very good with people he disagreed with. He wasn't a good politician. It got him in trouble at the Sierra Club and at the Friends of the Earth. He wasn't interested in compromises. He defied the board and he didn't ask for permission." And so it seemed—

22-01:33:06
Margolin:

No, I'm not that way.

22-01:33:08

Bancroft:

—that you've been much more politic about—

22-01:33:09

Margolin:

Yeah, I've been much more politic.

22-01:33:13

Bancroft:

And why would you say that is? You have similar goals about helping save cultures through books and save environmental ecological treasures. You've got that same commitment, a lot of those other similarities.

22-01:33:31

Margolin:

Well, I'm not sure that I'm right about things. I don't have that sense that I've got the truth and other people are wrong. I suppose part of it is strategy. It was interesting that I had last night at this event with Ken the same kind of conversation about Hetch Hetchy. And what I had talked about was that Ken's argument in that book was an argument for beauty and beauty was put forth as something major. To some extent maybe it trumps other arguments. And this guy got up and he said, "Beauty does not trump other arguments. There's a need for water. And we need water more than we need beauty." And what I said was, "That's a wonderful point. That's an ugly wonderful point. We live on water. We need it biologically. We need beautiful water." And I kind of took his point and I merged it with my point and I created something bigger. Ken attacked him. "We need beauty." And there was something about it that was calculating. It was how to involve him. It was how to see his point and include it.

But I think it's that same kind of thing that we talk about in editing. You look for the good in something rather than correct the bad. I just don't care. Errors get made. They just get made. You look for the good in something. And somebody comes to you with opposition. There's some good in all of this stuff. There's a need to absorb it. There's a need to listen to it. What I was talking about last night was that the issue of Hetch Hetchy is a complex issue, and how do we deal with complexity. Have we lost the capacity to deal with complexity? Does everything get reduced to sound bites? People yelling at each other, exaggerating and lying, or can we actually sit here and look at some of these things and discuss them and move them around? Maybe it's cowardice. Maybe it was talking my way out of fights. Maybe I've never liked fights. I wasn't very good at it as a kid. I'd get beaten up. So maybe it was avoiding that kind of conflict. I don't get into conflicts very much.

I got angry last week. I got angry at somebody in a way that I haven't been angry for a long time. And I very seldom get angry. And I was wrong on it. I think I was wrong on it. But the anger had to do with a sense of betrayal. It was somebody that I trusted, and I found out that something had happened in there and that they had presented us with this book and they had talked about how well this book would sell and what was going to be in there. And then after we had signed the contract with them, another book came out on the

same subject that they must have known about. And they didn't tell me that that other book was coming out, and I was furious at them. I was just furious at them. That they withheld information that we needed to know, and they withheld it intentionally. And I wrote tremendously angry letters and I let them have it. And at the end Gayle said that they probably had told us. [laughter] I may have missed the beat on that. But the anger was one of betrayal.

22-01:37:40

Bancroft: Being taken advantage of, in a sense.

22-01:37:41

Margolin: I was lied to. That I was being viewed as a mark. And that was intolerable to me.

22-01:37:53

Bancroft: Okay. Well, those are the stories that we talked about trying to get on tape. And I don't know if, in even talking about any of this this afternoon, if there are any other stories. I can't believe you were holding out on me on David Brower. After I read the book, I was thinking, "I didn't even ask Malcolm." I thought you must have known him. Maybe there are other people. There are so many stories lurking in you. Is there anything that comes to mind at this moment? Because otherwise I'll take this. We're going off to dinner.

22-01:38:41

Margolin: Let's go off to dinner.

22-01:38:42

Bancroft: I'll hang onto this.

[End of Interview]