

Oral History Committee
Mill Valley Historical Society

Mill Valley Public Library
Mill Valley, California

EDWARD M. and KATHARINE S. MILLS

An Interview Conducted By

Carl Mosher

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Mr. Edward M. Mills

Born November 8, 1915 in Los Angeles.

Mrs. Edward M. Mills (née Katharine Sherwood)

Born April 7, 1918 in Omaha, Nebraska.

Mr. and Mrs. Mills have been residents of Mill Valley since 1963.

Interviewed August 1978 at the Mill Valley Public Library.

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EDWARD AND KATHARINE MILLS

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EDWARD M. and KATHARINE S. MILLS

Carl Mosher

This is August 3, 1978. I'm Carl Mosher, and I'm talking with Edward M. Mills and Katharine S. Mills, long-time owners and operators of the Mill Valley Record. How long, actually, have you been here?

Edward Mills

We're in our sixteenth year, Carl. We took over the paper legally and officially on February 5, 1963.

Mr. Mosher

You bought the paper from whom, Katharine?

Katharine Mills

We actually bought it from Harold Smith, but he had only owned it for a short time, six or eight months. He bought it from Tom Collison, and Tom still carried the paper on it.

Mr. Mills

That's right; Tom still held the payment paper. It was a payout of about eleven years.

Mr. Mosher

I wouldn't be surprised if you weren't some of the longest owners in residence we've had on the Record.

Mr. Mills

We think we're the longest except for the Douglas sisters.¹ Probably no one in Mill Valley now remembers them personally, but they did own the paper for many years and managed it very rigidly.

¹Newell French Douglas, who bought the Mill Valley Record in 1916, lived only a few days after the purchase. The paper was taken over by his wife, Elizabeth, and his sister, Winona Douglas, who owned it until 1935.

Mrs. Mills

I think they had it in the twenties and thirties. The Drexlers had it in the forties, didn't they?

Mr. Mosher

I happen to know about the Drexlers. They came here in 1935 and sold out, I think, in '42.

Mr. Mills

I think they sold to Stan Wilson,¹ who sold to Collison.

Mr. Mosher

He was here a number of years but nothing like sixteen.

Mr. Mills

There was an interim owner, a very colorful man that I knew in New York, Louis Ruppel. Did you know him?

Mr. Mosher

Yes. He was a slightly controversial person, if I remember correctly.

Mr. Mills

That's true. He was wherever he went, but he was a brilliant man. Mill Valley wasn't his bag at all; he was a big-town man.

Mr. Mosher

He had a different feeling about Mill Valley. I remember there was some criticism because he didn't even live here.

Mrs. Mills

That's right. He lived in Greenbrae, I think.

Mr. Mills

I enjoyed him as a man, and he was a hell of a newspaperman.

¹A complete list of Record owners is attached to this interview.

Mr. Mosher

He came from big papers in the East?

Mr. Mills

Yes, and he handled public relations for CBS for years, which was a big job in those days. He was also editor of Collier's.

Mr. Mosher

Wasn't Tom Collison also involved with a national magazine?

Mr. Mills

He was in advertising.

Mrs. Mills

Yes, he was with J. Walter Thompson. Actually I had met Tom in New York before we ran into each other again out here.

Mr. Mosher

When was the Record founded?

Mr. Mills

Right at the turn of the century. Some records show '99, and some show 1900. It was some time in there.

Mrs. Mills

There was a paper here before 1900 but under another name. The Mill Valley Record per se was about 1900.

I had occasion to look this up just the other day. It was adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation in 1951, because of new laws. In the early part of the century you didn't have to be adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation, so no one got around to it until 1951. We have bound volumes going back to--well, I think our earliest ones are around 1910 or 1914. They're in very fragile condition, but the library has them all on microfilm, which is a marvelous service for everybody.

Mr. Mosher

I know that people come in and use it, and I think they will a lot more in the future. It's a great thing to have.

Mrs. Mills

I think the library is indexing it, too.

Mr. Mosher

I know they had that project going at one time.

Mr. Mills

That's tough work.

Mr. Mosher

Let's talk about each of you individually for a little bit. "Katharine S." What does the "S" stand for?

Mrs. Mills

Sherwood. My maiden name was Katharine Sherwood.

Mr. Mosher

Where were you born and raised?

Mrs. Mills

I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, but that was just because the hospital was there. I grew up in Beatrice, Nebraska. My great-grandfather homesteaded Nebraska. We grew up in the small town of Beatrice, and I went to Scripps College in Claremont. My mother had met Ellen Browning Scripps, who told her about her plans for a woman's college. She said, "I don't know whether anybody's going to come." Mother said, "Well, I have two daughters, and they'll come." So that's where I went, and I had a very happy four years there. From there I went back to Beatrice and worked on the Beatrice Times.

Mr. Mosher

How do you spell that?

Mrs. Mills

It's B-e-a-t-r-i-c-e, and usually it's pronounced "bee-a-tris," but the woman for whom the town was named called herself "bee-at-tris," so that's how the town pronounces it. Beatrice McKinney was the daughter of one of the early governors.

Mr. Mosher

What class were you in at Scripps?

Mrs. Mills

I was a member of the class of 1939.

Mr. Mosher

You graduated in '39, and then what happened?

Mrs. Mills

I went back to Beatrice and spent one year, 1940, with my father, who was not too well. My mother had died in 1934, and my father had a heart condition, so I stayed there for a year. I was looking for a job, too. Jobs for women in those days in a small town were pretty limited, especially since I didn't want to go into secretarial work. Then they started a new paper there, a daily called the Beatrice Times, and they asked me if I'd take over the women's department. I knew nothing about it, but the editor said, "That doesn't make any difference. I can tell you what to do, but you know everybody in town." So I went to work there. Dad died in '44, and I stayed on at the paper till '45.

Mr. Mosher

What was his occupation?

Mrs. Mills

He was a banker. We had relatives in the East, in Southport, Connecticut, and after his death my younger sister and I went East. She is ten years younger than I.

I started looking for a job in New York just before the war ended. Through a series of lucky breaks I got a job with Newspaper Enterprise Association. Their women's editor was going to the hospital for an appendix operation, and they asked me if I could put out the Christmas section. I said certainly, not knowing a thing about it. Anyhow, that started a long, happy relationship with NEA. When I was married and our children started coming I retired from full-time but continued to write a column for them till 1965, when that and the pressures of the Record were too contrasting. A national column and a weekly newspaper don't fit.

Mr. Mosher

Under what circumstances did you meet your estimable husband, sitting here on my left?

Mrs. Mills

That was an office romance. He came in after World War II to NEA, Newspaper Enterprise Association. (There are several NEAs in this country; that's why I designate our NEA as Newspaper Enterprise Association.) He started out on the sports desk, and I was still on the women's desk. Our desks were just across the room, so that's how we got acquainted.

Mr. Mills

Mostly at the cocktail hour in the afternoon!

Mrs. Mills

Everybody went across the street to the Fishbowl. When was that? 1947?

Mr. Mills

I went with NEA in 1946.

Mrs. Mills

Yes, that was when we met.

Mr. Mills

I had just come out of the service. I was supposed to get out in '45, but they kept me in for an operation so I didn't get out until April '46. I went with NEA in July of '46.

Mrs. Mills

We were married in '47. We have three children. Our first child, a daughter, Meredith, was born in 1949. Ned, meanwhile, had shifted into business. He'll explain this to you, but we were transferred to Chicago in 1952, and our son Charles was born there. Our third child, a daughter, Tyler, was born in Illinois. We actually were in Illinois from 1952 to 1962 and moved out here in 1963.

Mr. Mesher

Where were you born, Ned?

Mr. Mills

I'm a native Californian, born in Los Angeles. I did all my public school work there, and then my folks

sent me to the University of Richmond in Virginia. My brother and I, up to that time, were the only ones on either side of the family who had been born outside of Virginia--which didn't set too well with a lot of the family.

Mr. Mosher

Does your family go back to the Civil War?

Mr. Mills

And before. The Virginians are proud of being Virginians. They have what they call the FFV, the First Families of Virginia. My aunt and my uncles have always claimed they were a part of that. My grandfather's last name was Tyler. That's our younger daughter's middle name, and we call her Tyler. She's actually Katharine Tyler, but she likes Tyler.

Mr. Mosher

It's distinctive.

Mr. Mills

Yes, and it's confusing. No one without seeing her knows whether she's a boy or a girl. As a matter of fact one of her boy cousins is named Tyler.

Mrs. Mills

She was a very rambunctious little girl, and it was very easy to call her Terrible Tyler.

Mr. Mosher

I knew her around town for a number of years.

Mr. Mills

Yes, she used to come in and buy her shoes from you.

Mr. Mosher

I found her to be an extraordinarily engaging young lady.

Mr. Mills

She's the same as a young woman.

To carry on, I finished the university in '37 and went right to work with the newspaper there, the Richmond

News-Leader. Before I went into the service they bought the morning paper, and it's now the News-Leader and the Times-Dispatch, owned by the Bryant family.

Mr. Mosher

Wasn't there a famous Richmond editor by the name of Freeman?

Mr. Mills

Yes. His name was Douglas Southall Freeman. Our family is related to his wife, Inez, who died two or three years ago. We were very close to the Freeman family but not to Douglas Southall; he was a loner, all the way. He did the Robert E. Lee volumes. I think there were five volumes.

Mr. Mosher

I think that's right. A monumental, classic work, no question about it.

Mr. Mills

He was about to complete a volume on Washington when he died very suddenly of a heart attack.

Mr. Mosher

I can believe he was a loner when you consider the amount of work he did.

Mr. Mills

He was also the editor of the News-Leader until Jack Kilpatrick¹ succeeded him.

I stayed with them five years, almost to the day, and then went into the service. The war was on. I didn't want to be drafted so I volunteered. This gave me a different serial number, which I always held with pride.

Mr. Mosher

What were you in? Army? Navy?

Mr. Mills

Air. It was the Army Air Corps then. It's now called

¹James L. (Jack) Kilpatrick is also a syndicated newspaper columnist and TV-radio commentator.

the Air Force. They changed the name when it was made a separate entity of its own. Before that it was under the Army. It wasn't a happy situation. Lots of the old Army hands figured the Air Corps as fly boys and not very disciplined. Well, maybe you were. . . .

Mr. Mosher

No, I wasn't in the Air Corps. It was always considered an elite group. The others, I think, were envious.

Mr. Mills

I would accept that.

Mr. Mosher

Were you in the U.S., or did you. . . ?

Mr. Mills

Katharine laughs at this, but I spent the tough duty of three and a half years in Trinidad as a first sergeant.

Mr. Mosher

Is that right? You got used to the climate, I guess.

Mr. Mills

I certainly did. It was a completely black island, with the exception of some of the Britons who ruled it. It was laborious duty to a lot of guys. All we did was service airplanes. Everybody in the outfit was a mechanic, with the exception of the housekeeping, clerks, and that kind of staff.

Mr. Mosher

This gave you a lot of time to pick up some of the music. Trinidad is famous for what?

Mr. Mills

Calypso. Belafonte was there when he did "Rum and Coca Cola." He was a young man then. Calypso music was just beginning to take over. Of course now it's very big.

I did my duty in the service and then came to NEA. I switched from sports to the business side about '49 or '50, wasn't it?

Mrs. Mills

I think it was earlier than that.

Mr. Mills

We had counterpart jobs. Katharine was assistant to the women's editor, and I was assistant to the sports editor. In New York (this was before TV took hold) the press was in very high esteem. We were invited to lots and lots of functions--cocktail parties, plays, shows--and we decided to take advantage of them. We got invitations to all of them, and we decided to take advantage of that for at least the first year of our marriage. We planned on kids, but we decided to have a lot of fun for a year and then have kids come on after that. And that's what happened.

Mr. Mosher

That's an experience that no longer exists, I would think.

Mrs. Mills

No, it doesn't. In those days you had no qualms about accepting "freebies." Now that really is out.

Mr. Mills

Some of it goes on, but they've cut it way back.

Mrs. Mills

I think it probably goes on in New York all the time, because it's a pattern every time something's introduced. But in those days it was much more relaxed and easygoing. I think today it's probably more frenetic and high-keyed.

Mr. Mosher

Have you been to New York recently enough to know how the atmosphere has changed?

Mrs. Mills

No, I haven't.

Mr. Mills

I haven't either. We've had no reason to go quite that far east. We have a son who graduated just a year ago from law in Georgetown. We went back there for the graduation and took that opportunity to travel down to Virginia and see some of our relatives and old friends.

Mrs. Mills

I'd like to go back to New York again just to see how it's changed. We lived in Brooklyn Heights when we were there, and I loved that section. It has done nothing but go up, up, up in price--and in esteem, I gather.

Mr. Mills

It's just across the East River. . . .

Mrs. Mills

But it's a beautiful. . . . You've been there, haven't you, Carl?

Mr. Mosher

I've been in New York, but I'm not familiar with that particular section.

Mrs. Mills

Brooklyn Heights is right across the Brooklyn Bridge. It was a wonderful Sunday walk across the bridge and down through lower Manhattan. Our friends who've been there tell us you wouldn't do that now. We used the subways all the time, and they're not clean anymore; they've kind of gone down at the heels.

Mr. Mills

San Francisco's having the same experience. Years ago we used to walk from the Press Club, which we liked very much and used very much (well, pretty much). . . . We'd walk over to Fisherman's Wharf or North Beach at night and think nothing of it. We wouldn't do that now.

Mr. Mosher

I'm afraid not, at least not at night. The same is true in most metropolitan areas--though it may be more exaggerated here and in New York than in some places.

Mr. Mills

It's a sad commentary on our culture; it really is.

Mr. Mosher

A minute ago we were talking about your getting into business. How did that occur?

Mr. Mills

In the beginning the business side is mostly sales--selling the service to newspapers. I traveled all of New England, all the East Coast, down as far as South Carolina. I sold from North Carolina all the way to Massachusetts.

Mr. Mosher

Were you servicing old accounts or getting new ones?

Mr. Mills

Both. I was keeping the association going, the relationship between the client and the corporation, and I was getting new clients. New clients, of course, is where the salesman makes his money. I had a degree of success in it. Because of that I was the No. 2 man in the New York area; there was a man over me. Then they gave me the Midwest section, which I ran myself for ten years before we bought the paper here.

Mrs. Mills

It might be worth a footnote that Newspaper Enterprise Association is a member of the Scripps-Howard group. It's a feature service, and it has hundreds of clients around the country. You don't see it here very much. The Independent-Journal used to take it, but I don't know whether they do any more. You're not aware of it here as much as you are in other parts of the country.

Mr. Mills

One of the hurdles of Newspaper Enterprise was their policy of selling their features as a package. You couldn't buy a hot item out of it; you had to take everything.

Mr. Mosher

That didn't mean you had to print it?

Mr. Mills

It didn't mean you had to print it, but you had to buy it. There was no à la carte buying or à la carte selling. This wasn't a happy situation for a lot of editors or publishers. They have relaxed that some since I left. They haven't done it complete, but a big paper can buy certain things out of the package now. I notice every once in a while there'll be an NEA feature in the Chronicle.

Mr. Mosher

You mean a publisher might say, "We can use sports, but we don't want foreign affairs."

Mr. Mills

Exactly. Same thing with comics. We had a big stable of comics, good ones, too, but you couldn't buy one.

Mr. Mosher

Where was your headquarters?

Mr. Mills

The headquarters was a dual proposition. The president for years was in Cleveland. At one time the president was in New York and the first vice-president was in Cleveland. Cleveland did most of the printing, the physical work of the syndicate. In those days there were mats. Now everything is cold type, which is a photo operation--what they call slicks. Then the headquarters bounced back and forth. Wherever the president wanted to be (they've gone through two or three presidents) is where the headquarters was. It's gone between Cleveland and New York; it's now in New York again. There was a man who was president for many, many years. How long was Fergie¹ president? About thirty years? Possibly more. A dynamic man--the tallest five-foot-six man I ever knew! He ran it, and he's the one who put me on the business side. He liked the way I operated, I guess, because we got along very well.

Mr. Mosher

Did you move directly from that to the Mill Valley Record?

Mr. Mills

Yes, we did. Actually, I was out of work for about six months. There was a power struggle within the NEA. I was shooting for the presidency, and I lost. They paid me off quite handsomely, but the way things were at the end, one of us had to go. If I had won, it would have been the other man.

Mr. Mosher

That sounds a little like advertising agencies.

¹Fred Ferguson.

Mrs. Mills

They have the same ferocity, yes.

Mr. Mills

Almost the same. As a matter of fact, most of the fellows on the business side could have handled advertising very easily. They just happened to be selling a different art.

Mr. Mosher

Who first had the idea of getting a small-town newspaper?

Mr. Mills

We had played with it for several years.

Mrs. Mills

Actually for many years. Ned had been on the road, and that gets to be a wearisome thing. We had talked for a long time about trying to find a paper. The problem at that time was that many of the small papers in the Midwest (if you could find one that you could afford) were being grabbed up by large publishers for their sons, to get them indoctrinated into the business on a lower level. We actually came very close to getting the paper in Gallipolis, Ohio. That's right on the Ohio River. We were right in the midst of negotiations with Mr. Dear when he died, and his sons decided they didn't want to sell. Then we started going further afield. Ned came out to California.

Mr. Mills

The way you usually buy a paper is through a broker, unless you have contact with some of the associations like California Newspaper Association. You meet guys at their meetings, and they'll say. . . .

Mr. Mosher

"I've got a hot one for you"?

Mr. Mills

Yes, that kind of thing. But for most people who aren't in an association (which we are now, of course, though we weren't at that time) you go through a broker. I had answered an advertisement for a paper in Soledad,

California. I flew out, and a broker named Joe showed me the paper. I stayed another day and looked over the town. Then I said, "Joe, maybe I could hack it out here, but I don't think Katharine would like Soledad." Have you ever been in Soledad?

Mr. Mosher

I was just trying to think, when you asked that question. The name is so familiar.

Mrs. Mills

It's a prison town close to Salinas. You go right by it on the way south on 101, on the way to San Luis Obispo. The problem with it was. . . . Today we could probably handle it, but in those days we had three young children, all in school. Soledad is primarily a Mexican town. That's not bad, you know, but it does mean that the schools may not be as good as you'd like for your children.

Mr. Mills

The kids were all growing up then. That goes back sixteen years.

Mrs. Mills

It's a bleak town.

Mr. Mosher

That's the perfect word. As I recall, it is indeed very bleak.

Mr. Mills

I told Joe that wasn't for me. I said, "I'll catch the airplane back, and maybe you'll run into something else." He said, "Well, I've got one that's in flux. I don't know whether it's really for sale. I just sold it about eight months ago, and the new owner is not happy with the situation." He said, "Do you want to go up and look at it?" I said, "Where?" and he said, "Mill Valley."

I'd never been in Mill Valley, ever. He brought me up. We got here about three o'clock in the afternoon, and he took me all over the area. It doesn't take a salesman to sell Mill Valley's beauty!

Mr. Mosher

Particularly if you've just been in Soledad.

Mrs. Mills

That's right. There is a difference.

Mr. Mills

So I said, "See if it's for sale." Generally if a paper is for sale it's not in the black very far and mostly in the red. What you try to do is figure what the potential is, and that's what we did. I got on the phone to Katharine, and she flew right out. We looked at the paper, which at that time was right across from the City Hall, next to what is now the post office annex.

Mrs. Mills

At 21 Corte Madera, where the Pacific Sun is now.

Mr. Mills

We came to some terms, and we thought we could hack it. So that's what we did.

Mr. Mosher

You obviously have.

There's a belief around town that when Stan Wilson sold the Record he jacked the price up so high that every owner after that had a terrible time trying to stay in the black. In other words they were paying too much for it.

Mr. Mills

I think that's true. We tried to get the price down, naturally, and were not successful. I told the family this story: When I was on the road for NEA I went to Honolulu. This was in 1960. Our client was a big paper there. I said to the editor, "It looks like the Chinese and Japanese own a lot of things over here." He said, "You know why that is, don't you? Right after the war the Chinese started buying up Honolulu, particularly when it became a part of the States." He said, "An American would come over and say, 'What do you want for this property? What do you want for this store?' The owner would tell him, and he'd say, 'Well, I'll be back; I've got to talk to my people in the States.' He'd come back,

and it was sold. A Chinaman had bought it." This is what Howard Chapin told me. He said, "With a Chinaman, if he thinks he can make it he doesn't care what the price is. He's not going to bargain." Our son said to me, "Are you going to buy it like the Chinaman buys it?" and I said, "Yes, that's what we're going to do."

Mrs. Mills

It was inflated, there's no question about it. But if you can hang in there long enough. . . . Of course Ned is a salesman and does understand sales, and he was able to build up the business side of it. That's one place where some of the former owners were a little weak. They may have been strong editorially, but they didn't have the know-how to get advertising. Ned got all the grocery markets, for one thing. But it did take time and a lot of hard work.

Mr. Mills

I think a factor that should not be overlooked is that the editorial product, over which Katharine has complete control, has been good. If you have that. . . .

Mr. Mosher

It's improved a lot in the last few years, no question about it.

Mr. Mills

We think so, and I'm glad you think so, too. If you have that kind of product, the other things fit in. You can't sell a bad product.

Mrs. Mills

Circulation is a factor too, Ned.

Mr. Mills

But you have the circulation if you have the product.

Mrs. Mills

Not only with the Record but with the Shopper. It helps when you can tell an advertiser he's going to get saturation coverage in Southern Marin. People fool around with their circulation figures, as I'm sure you're aware, but the one thing we've been able to do, because we do mail the paper, is to show them the postal statements.

Mr. Mills

Our combined circulation is about 20,000, plus.

Mr. Mosher

It sounds very impressive--to someone who doesn't know anything about it.

Mrs. Mills

It is!

Mr. Mills

And somebody has to pick it up, because it's in the mailbox.

Mr. Mosher

I should think that would tie the figures down.

Mrs. Mills

Yes, it does tie them down, and now we're audited, too. I think it's a combination: the circulation is certainly an appealing pitch to the advertiser.

Mr. Mosher

What do you think about the new approach of newspapers consolidating? I know there's a lot of concern about it, and I'd like to hear what you both have to say.

Mr. Mills

I think it's inevitable, Carl. I don't particularly like it, but what has happened in the consolidations that I've been familiar with is that the corporation, the owner, has really left editorial control to the local managers. When a corporation buys a paper it's not all that philanthropic. They're out to make money, and they don't really care who wins an election or how the school board operates. A local paper does, you see. We cover almost every little thing that happens in this town, because we care about it. That's the way most small papers do, and some larger ones, too, that are members of corporations. Whether that policy's violated occasionally, I don't know.

Mrs. Mills

I feel somewhat differently than Ned about that. I

think consolidation of some functions is probably okay, particularly on small papers where your production costs are so high now. We use a central printing plant for instance. It's not owned by a newspaper, but you take your paper there to be printed.

I think it's inevitable that if you have consolidations, with large conglomerates taking over newspapers, you're going to get less of an editorial product. I think there is a corporate point of view that's not going to be gung ho about investigative journalism on a small-town paper like the Mill Valley Record. There isn't a lot of investigative journalism available here, because we run a pretty open, clean town. In fact, several years ago a young reporter came in and wanted to do some investigative journalism for us. We said, "All right, what do you want to investigate?" There really wasn't very much. He thought about health food stores, but he couldn't even find out much to investigate about health food stores!

A small paper has a different problem than a metropolitan, so I see consolidation of production facilities as feasible, but I would be opposed to editorial consolidation.

Mr. Mills

We cover and watch the city government and all its functions just as closely as we possibly can, and we have seen no evidence of graft or corruption or any of the things that turn up in a big city.

Mr. Mosher

The possibilities are relatively limited, I suppose.

Mr. Mills

Well, everybody's looking at you!

Mr. Mosher

Right. They may be guilty of atrocious judgment, but there's nothing crooked about it. I suppose it's the lumping of editorial ideas without any opposition that worries people.

Mrs. Mills

I think that's true, and I think there's reason to be worried.

Mr. Mosher

It can be very debilitating, I would think.

I notice something unique happens with you two: You often have different points of view. One will say, "We disagree; here's what I think." The other one will say, "This is what I think." I've never seen that before, really, in this type of joint operation.

Mr. Mills

That observation's been made by others. It's just the way we've always been.

Mrs. Mills

Why should you back off on ideas for the sake of unanimity?

Mr. Mosher

Family unanimity for the public is a recognized phenomenon, but I guess anyone who knows you two knows that it's an intellectual exercise and you're not fighting.

Mr. Mills

Not at all. Mostly where we disagree is on candidates or issues. Mostly candidates. The selection is hard to make. Sometimes it's hard to disagree because all the candidates are good. I think we have some very fine candidates in the whole spectrum, both local and state. National is a different thing, although we do take a position on all elections.

Mr. Mosher

Have you been pressured by politicians at any time?

Mr. Mills

I don't know how to interpret that.

Mrs. Mills

Not pressured.

Mr. Mosher

When they run advertisements at election time. . . .

Mrs. Mills

That does not affect our position.

Mr. Mills

No, not at all. We don't handle it; we let the advertising manager handle it, or the girls in the front office.

Mr. Mosher

There's no effort to try to coerce you into editorializing for a person?

Mr. Mills

No. What they may do is call on you and ask for your support.

Mr. Mosher

That's fair enough.

Mr. Mills

Then we ask why they're running, their qualifications and background. Most of them we know already. I would guess that the editorial support of a paper doesn't mean a whole lot to the average voter, and I guess this is not surprising. A man can make up his own mind.

Mr. Mosher

It's obviously very different than it used to be. We're all bombarded with information now. We used to be relatively dependent on papers; all three of us are old enough to remember that. Katharine, you don't feel, as editor of the paper, that you're being pressured at any time?

Mrs. Mills

No. Maybe if I were twenty or thirty years younger I would feel pressured, but I don't feel pressured now. When you've been through it time after time after time you can almost tell who's going to come on strong. There was one city council candidate who did win without our support and who did do a lot of pressuring. We just didn't think he was a good candidate and weren't going to support him. He ran, and he won.

Mr. Mosher

Did you actually oppose him, or did you just keep quiet?

Mr. Mills

No, no, we don't slug anybody. You can tell who we're against by who we're for. Talking about pressure, the longer you're in this business and the older you get, the thicker your skin gets. It's not a "so what" thing, but you don't go home and bite your nails or stay awake at night.

Mr. Mosher

It finally reaches the "so what else is new" area.

Mrs. Mills

The hard thing is when you have three candidates running for two seats, and you know that all three of them are good people. Then it becomes a hard decision to make. We've had that situation a couple of times.

Mr. Mosher

The business of papers supporting a certain slate has a long tradition in this country.

Mrs. Mills

It has, and it may be a faulty tradition. Maybe none of the three candidates. . . . But you have to fill two seats, you know, so you have to make some kind of a decision. As I say, it doesn't always mean much.

Mr. Mills

Up until now the big issue in city council elections has not been the candidate himself but the city manager. Almcrantz was controversial, Balmer was controversial, Cunningham was controversial--Usher left. Hazen came in and seems to be very popular.

Mr. Mosher

He's also controversial--and getting increasingly so, I think. How do you account for that? Is that commonplace in small towns?

Mr. Mills

It's been commonplace here; I don't know about other towns. City managers bounce around, but they always land on their feet pretty much.

Mr. Mosher

That's true. I remember Bert Balmer very well. Was he here when you bought the paper?

Mrs. Mills

No, Almcrantz was city manager.

Mr. Mills

Almerantz was controversial. I happen to think the current city manager is doing a pretty good job. He's just been here two years, but they don't last too much longer than that.

Mr. Mosher

No, that's about par, I think. (Laughter)

Mr. Mills

We thought Bert Balmer did a lot for the town ecologically. The Parks and Rec Department became a big thing under Balmer, which this town needed. It continues to be a good department. Our own feeling is that the others were...well...so-so.

Mr. Mosher

They're all good people for the most part. It's a position where their personalities and their views on every subject are exposed constantly.

Mrs. Mills

Constantly.

Mr. Mosher

Speaking of controversial, did either of you see the Marin County television feature last week?¹

Mr. Mills

I saw it in Salina, Kansas. I was taking our daughter to Memphis; she's moving there to live and work. She wanted somebody with her on the drive--and so did we. She and I were very disappointed in the show.

¹On July 20, 1978, NBC-TV presented an hour-long "documentary" on Marin County's lifestyle. It was entitled "I Want It All Now" and was received by many Marin County residents with less than enthusiasm.

Mr. Mosher

Did you pick up any comments on it in Kansas?

Mr. Mills

I did, from the hotel owner in the morning when I was checking out. She said, "Is that the way the place is?" I said, "There might be about eight percent of it, but that would be a high count. They took all the negative things."

Our daughter, Tyler, who's now finishing Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, just loves Mill Valley. She grew up on horses in this beautiful country. As she said, they didn't even mention Mount Tam or any of the nice things. I know how these guys operate. They don't care how controversial it is; they want the numbers, the rating. I'm sure it got high rating.

Mr. Mosher

Of course it was a feature article, and it just picked out the most sensational area and focused on it.

Mr. Mills

That kind of thing wouldn't even make a story in our paper. It's a "so what" thing, again.

Mr. Mosher

That may be partly due to familiarity. (Laughter)

Mr. Mills

We know it goes on, sure, but not to that extent.

Mr. Mosher

You said maybe eight percent; I've heard estimates running from that up to fifteen as absolute tops. Beyond that, the society they're talking about is relatively unknown. What's your view of it, Katherine?

Mrs. Mills

I felt they were deliberately looking for something sensational. Marin County, rightly or wrongly, has a certain reputation that has built up around the country since the sixties. They came in looking for something to substantiate "The Serial," Cyra McFadden's book. The thing

that's too bad is that she wrote a satire, and they gave it the leaden treatment of absolute fact. It isn't fact, and I felt the show was very distorted. They missed so many positive things about Marin, things that make it a beautiful place where everybody wants to come.

Mr. Mills

I wonder if the peacock ever thought his feathers were going to be this popular? Or exploitable? What was your reaction to it, Carl?

Mr. Mosher

It relates to what you were saying a while ago, Ned. I've lived a long time, and I've seen things like this come and go so many times that I just laugh at them. I was downtown on the square for almost thirty years, so I was familiar, starting maybe ten or twelve years ago, with this general scene that they're talking about. It's here all right, but it does represent a small percentage, as you say.

To me, one of the things most notable about it is the fact that this whole subculture is, on the whole, humorless. They're deadly serious and have very little sense of fun.

Mrs. Mills

That's true. That came out in Cyra McFadden's book.

Mr. Mosher

We're also getting a totally humorless response from a lot of people--which tells us a lot about them!

There's something else about it that I'd like to have you comment on. I know drug activity in Marin County has been extraordinarily large. I know it's prominent all over the country but very noticeable here, in many different ways. The television show didn't touch on that except for one little shot and a few words. Did that strike you at all, that omission?

Mr. Mills

No, it didn't. For some reason I'm not conscious of the drug scene. I don't know why this is, whether it's because we isolate ourselves in our work or what. Our kids never experienced it, thank God. I'm knocking on all the wood I have.

Mrs. Mills

We certainly were well aware of the drug activity in the sixties, but I think today it's kind of gone underground. I imagine one reason they didn't cover it is because they probably couldn't get a drug dealer to come forward and say, "This is the life."

Mr. Mills

They did mention that something was going on at MacDonald's here.

Mr. Mosher

Yes, they alluded to it.

Mrs. Mills

That is something that could be done in much more detail. My understanding is that the drug dealing is tremendous here.

Mr. Mosher

We have quite a reputation in that regard. I don't know whether it's deserved or not.

Mr. Mills

The suspicion is that a lot of these Mercedes are not the product of legitimate businesses.

Mr. Mosher

I daresay that's true.

You must have had some interesting high spots in these sixteen years. People on a paper of this sort in a town this size are themselves exposed quite a good deal. I'd like to hear each of you comment on something that comes to mind that's interesting.

Mrs. Mills

One of the things that was exciting to us personally is the change in our production methods. When we bought the paper in 1963 it was in the building at 21 Corte Madera, and the Masonic Hall had grown up around it. The press was an old flatbed (I think it had an eight-page capacity) and was forever breaking down. You'd call the welder in the middle of the night to weld it together again. Then we began to grow, and in 1966 we moved to 78 East Blithedale.

We had to break up the old flatbed, and we bought a rotary press in Sacramento.

It was a marvelous sight (we had a picture of it in the paper) when they pulled out the old linotypes and mounted them on a big truck in front of the Mill Valley Market. To see them going down the street--they looked exactly like dowagers going to the opera. Great bosomed linotypes sailing down the street.

We stayed in the hot-type method of printing, the molten lead, until it gradually became obsolete. Since a year ago last March we have farmed out our production. It's a cold-type operation now.

Mr. Mosher

The readability has improved a thousand percent.

Mrs. Mills

The reason we couldn't do it sooner is that we inherited a union shop. If we had changed from hot type to cold type we still would have had to maintain a union shop. Whether you argue the pros or the cons of unionism, it's very difficult for a small paper to meet the demands of a metropolitan union, particularly in a county where no one else is union. You see, we were the last of the union shops.

Mr. Mills

No, next to the last. Novato was still union at that time. They're out now.

Mrs. Mills

The Marin Suburban Newspapers then got some big equipment and could handle more production than they were doing. By farming out our production to them we were able to part amicably from the union. So we're now cold type. We've seen the shift from the old primitive flatbed to offset.

Mr. Mosher

Were you able to sell the flatbed?

Mrs. Mills

The flatbed was junk. The big rotary press is still in position at our old printshop at 78 East Blithedale, in

the back there. The artist who took over what had been our printshop fell in love with the press, so we left it there as an artifact, which was fine.

Mr. Mills

It was unsalable, except for junk. It's strictly a museum item.

Mrs. Mills

They've cleaned up the brass, and it's a beautiful piece of equipment.

Mr. Mills

It worked like a sewing machine.

Mrs. Mills

They also kept one of the linotypes as an artifact.

Mr. Mills

There's a little background on why the press was left there. It's true they did want it, but with that kind of press (this is not true with an offset press) you have to have a pit. It's over six feet deep. A man can stand in there and lubricate and fix the gears and that kind of thing from underneath. If we had taken that press out of there, there was some discussion with the landlord as to who was going to fill the pit. Do you know what it cost to fill? Ten thousand dollars.

Mr. Mosher

Oh, you jest!

Mrs. Mills

It's about ten feet deep and eighteen feet long.

Mr. Mosher

I would have filled it for much less than that.
(Laughter)

Mr. Mills

It's a lot of pit, a lot of hole. We resolved it with the landlord, who was a woman, for a dollar paper exchange.

Katharine did gloss over, I think, the severance

with the union. This happened after hours and hours of dreary negotiation. I don't happen to be antiunion, but we're glad things turned out the way they have. You probably recall, Carl, the I-J situation and the desperate strike they had, very violent. We in the business use the phrase "breaking the union," which is a bad phrase and shouldn't be used, but that's what they did. They relieved themselves of the union; we're not kidding ourselves. If that hadn't happened, we probably would still be union. But with that terrible experience. . . . A man was murdered, you know, and lots of other unpleasant things happened. The union didn't want any more trouble in Marin, so they let us out.

Actually, they didn't want us to leave the union. When we were getting down to the nitty-gritty they sent the head man from New York out here, even though we only had three men. Their demands were really pretty heavy for our paper, and we wouldn't give in to them.

Mr. Mosher

You're talking about just three men in little Mill Valley?

Mr. Mills

The union wanted us to keep those three men. They did a slowdown, which you can't prove but can see. Finally we had a meeting at the Press Club in the city--three union leaders and the two of us. Katharine was in on all the negotiations; she's a very good negotiator. Finally she said to the man from New York, "Mr. Boros,¹ do you know how many men we're talking about?" He said, "No." She said, "Three."

Mrs. Mills

He looked at the president of the Local, he looked this way, he looked that way, and finally he said, "Three?" Then he said, "Well, I didn't come out here just to see the Mill Valley Record. I'm also out here to see the San Jose Mercury-News."

Mr. Mosher

That was a face-saver!

¹International Typographical Union negotiator from New York.

Mr. Mills

It was at that point that we made a settlement. They were happy with it, and we were happy with it. We shook hands and walked out.

We're very happy with our present arrangement, particularly the product. You know, Carl, it got to a point where if I knew a guy's picture was going to be in the paper and I saw him coming down the street I'd duck! I knew it was going to look too black. It was terrible.

Mrs. Mills

One of the most interesting times was the late sixties, no matter where you lived. On the paper it was very interesting--the parade of people that came in before my startled midwestern gaze! Leonard Anderson was with us at that time, and he had quite good rapport with most of the subculture in Mill Valley, so we saw people I had never seen the likes of before. Lots of the young people were very pathetic, and they touched me deeply. They just didn't seem to know where they were going or what they were going to do. We were active in the community and in the Episcopal Church, working on housing and food-gathering for these young people. There was a sort of halfway house at the Methodist Church, and each church had one night a week to bring food.

Mr. Mosher

They were sleepy young people. It was sort of a broken-down youth hostel.

Mrs. Mills

All of us, with the best will in the world, were taking large pots of food down there. It worked all right for a while. Then the "van people" got wind of it. They just pulled their vans in there with whole families: "Here's a free meal and a place to sleep overnight." That robbed it of its meaning; we weren't there to serve families. Anyhow, those were exciting times.

Mr. Mills

During that same era, you may recall, the Sun Dancer store was up over our building at 78 East Blithedale. They sold beads and other little trinkets to kids--

and older kids. We also suspected there was dope being sold. People would come in there by the drove.

Mrs. Mills

Cars from out of state would stop there, and ten minutes later they'd be off again.

Mr. Mills

Big cars. So I went to Dan Terzich¹ and said, "Dan, you've got to find out something for us. I don't want a big scandal to break right over our heads without the paper even knowing about it." He put undercover men on it, and they couldn't find a thing. O'Connor was head of the state investigation, an Irishman over in the city, a good investigator. Dan brought him over with his undercover men, and they never did find anything. Then, of course, the sixties faded away, and nothing happened. But I was always apprehensive that the Chronicle might come over here--or, even worse, one of the television media--and break the whole story literally right over our heads.

Mrs. Mills

The most logical suspicion we heard was that they weren't dealing in dope there but had information as to where you could go. There was just too much running up and down those stairs. Hordes of people. They couldn't all be buying beads--although a lot of them were.

Mr. Mills

Well, Carl, does that touch all the bases?

Mr. Mosher

I'd love to hear some more stories like that.

Mrs. Mills

I'll tell you one that happened in our own little office. Leonard Anderson was our managing editor in the late sixties. He's kind of a reddish blond, and he started letting his hair and beard grow. He's the kind who really shouldn't have a mustache or beard because it's not heavy enough, but these sparse hairs began to appear.

Our advertising manager said, "Katharine, when are you going to tell him to cut his hair?" Ned would say,

¹Mill Valley Chief of Police 1961-1972.

"When are you going to tell him to cut his hair?" I said, "I'm never going to tell him to cut his hair. I don't care if it grows down to his knees! He's doing a good job, and that's all I care about."

This went on for months. His hair was getting longer and longer. It got shaggier and more ghastly looking. Then one day he came in and nobody said anything. Finally he said, "Jesus Christ, isn't anybody going to say anything?" Ned kind of looked at him, and Bob kind of looked at him, and he said, "I had my hair cut." Nobody had noticed!

Mr. Mosher

Maybe he'd been testing you right along, thinking, "How much can these old squares take?"

Mrs. Mills

I never could understand the preoccupation with how long a person's hair was. What difference does it make?

Mr. Mills

It did affect our relationship with some members of the city council during that time. I think all city councils are pretty straight, but we had two very straight councilmen, George Wickham and Bob Andresen. They could not stand Anderson, and they were fairly vocal about it. One of the wives would get me on the phone and raise hell about Anderson. I do think it made a little difference in our relationship with council members at that time.

Mrs. Mills

They didn't like Leonard at all because he was a good reporter and would take down their quotes verbatim. They didn't like to see the paper print what they actually said, and they'd always accuse him of misquoting them. He really didn't.

Mr. Mills

They'd come up to me in Rotary, one particularly, and say, "Misquoted again." I'd come back and tell Anderson. Finally he said, "I'll take it verbatim if that's what they want."

Mr. Mosher

Did he do shorthand?

Mrs. Mills

He did his own shorthand. Most newspaper people do. Bruce Coleman always took notes in shorthand. I think Leonard had his own.

Mr. Mills

At one time, when Joe Sheeks was mayor, they started taping the whole thing, so you could go back and get a direct quote. But some of the fellows were--well, it wasn't that they were inarticulate, but when you're thinking fast, what you say isn't exactly what you had in mind! So they took the tape out of there.

Mr. Mosher

As newspaper people, you know that one of the problems is getting things out of context. Very seldom does one sentence stand on its own.

Mr. Mills

We've been very fortunate in our editorial staff. Katharine is a marvelous recruiter. She goes pretty much through the state journalism schools, and Stanford.

Mrs. Mills

It depends. Randy Wilson is our fifth managing editor since we've been here, and I'm happy to say that each one of his predecessors has gone on to bigger and better jobs.

Mr. Mills

We lost two to the I-J.

Mrs. Mills

Leonard Anderson is now head of the Wall Street Journal wire in Canada.

Mr. Mills

We don't try to keep them, Carl. It would be a disservice to them. We can't pay them enough. If we did pay enough to satisfy them temporarily, we'd be cutting off their potential for the future.

Mr. Mosher

Yes, it's better to have a bright young person for three years than a hack for fifteen.

Mrs. Mills

That's right, although of course I don't feel we've had any hacks! I would love to see Randy stay here for the rest of my life, but you do want to see a young person succeed. He's just been marvelous. He's a conscientious reporter, and he's a fine editor. I know he can't stay, but as long as we've got him I'm grateful.

Mr. Mills

He has a fine educational background--Stanford journalism.

Mrs. Mills

The thing about Marin County that wasn't touched on by the television special is that it's a desirable place; a lot of talented people live here and want to live here. It's not hard to recruit for a paper here, because you have dozens of willing applicants. It's not as though you're off in the boondocks somewhere; you've got a lot of riches to choose from. I just wish we could give more of them jobs.

Mr. Mills

Where we have a tough time recruiting is in the advertising department. The reason for this is that the field can't supply enough talent. The kid coming out of college with any kind of an advertising or business degree can go to the mets¹ right away, with substantial money. The small town paper can't match this.

I don't know whether the NOW² people would appreciate this, but we have more success with women. They are willing to work for less money, and they like a town like Mill Valley. I think that's true with lots of the small papers, and we have several now in Marin County. They're having lots of success with women. Their salaries are up now, too--pretty good, but not like the mets.

Mr. Mosher

It's different being in a metropolitan area like this. I suppose many of your subscribers take two or three or four papers. It's different than if you were in Green River, Wyoming.

¹Metropolitan newspapers.

²National Organization of Women.

Mrs. Mills

That's very true. Also, for the record, I feel that the paper has been part of the community. We've been pleased to support some very important projects. The library is one which we supported thoroughly. Middle School is another. There's been a lot of controversy about that school, but the original concept is still an important one, the joint development of that property down there--if the city and the school can ever get their acts together. Neither one of them can really afford it, and everybody uses it, so why shouldn't they jointly develop it?

Mr. Mosher

Will you give us a little background on that?

Mrs. Mills

There's an area around the Middle School that used to be called Project 17. It covers seventeen acres. It was owned by the city. The school district needed to build a new middle school, so they bought three or four acres or something like that on the corner of Camino Alto and Sycamore. The idea was that the playing fields and the outdoor area would be jointly developed by the city and the school district, in terms of building it, grassing it, maintaining it, and so on. There would be a division of responsibility so the city could use it and the school district could use it.

It has now come down to a point where they have four hundred kids signed up for a soccer team. They were to re-turf the ball field and have it ready by fall, but the negotiations between the city manager and the school superintendent have dragged out for so long that it's now too late to do the seeding and turfing. They might deny this, but it appears to be a conflict of personalities as much as a conflict of financial problems. Now the field won't go forward till next year--if then. It was a good concept, but it was back several city councils ago.

Another example is the Public Safety Building, across the marshland from the Middle School. In order to finance it, in order to pass the bond issue to build it, it had to be built on city-owned property, and that was the only property that the city owned that was big enough to take the building.

I think it was Ed Boessenecker, who was then a city councilman, who kept saying, "You'd better get the Sycamore extension in first, before you build the building." Everybody went on the assumption (and it seemed a logical one at the time) that of course the Sycamore extension would be built; it was engineered to be built across that marshland. Well, we know what happened to that; it still isn't built. So the Public Safety Building sits out there without an access road.

Mr. Mills

There was a referendum on it, and it lost.

Mrs. Mills

Actually the property changed ownership. The school district owned that property over there, and they traded with the city so the city would have it and the school district would have all the land of Project 17. The question I have (and I don't think there's an answer) is how can one city council, making decisions, bind a future city council to carry those decisions out. I guess there is no way.

Mr. Mills

That's a grey area. The courts have considered that one for years. You don't know whether they're binding or not.

Mr. Mosher

It concerns so many things. People who are putting up a building often get a building permit and then discover there's another agency which should have been in on it. All of a sudden they stop and don't know where to go. It's a continuing bureaucratic problem.

Mrs. Mills

But to get back to my original statement, the paper did support the school and the library.

Mr. Mills

And the Public Safety Building. These are issues that we were part of. They selected me to head up the tax increase election for Middle School. It was the last tax increase bond that was successful in the county. You couldn't pass a tax bond issue today for anything. Free ice cream would lose!

Mr. Mosher

Well, that's a momentary thing. We'll gradually get over it.

Mr. Mills

Once in a while I get a little needling because we supported the Public Safety Building. There's some criticism about the size of the building. Some people think the results are overambitious. I've asked Walsh¹ about that. The reason he requested a building so big is that he made a study of other towns that had gone through this. Almost everyone said, "Our building is obsolete now. We should have made it bigger." He didn't want to go through that experience.

Mr. Mosher

Our own city hall would be an example. In the mid-thirties everybody cried their eyes out because it was such an elaborate, huge building, totally beyond any conceivable need. As you know, they're just adding a half-million-dollar extension, and that barely takes care of it now.

Mr. Mills

I was looking at the building yesterday, going around the back from the Mill Valley Market, and it's remarkable how they've made that addition look like it's been there for years.

Mrs. Mills

One of the things I remember, speaking of newspaper happenings, is that we used to have school tours at the plant on East Blithedale, when we had all our production self-contained in the old hot-type plant. Teachers would bring the school children, and they'd go through the plant. They'd get their names typed out on little lead slugs, and so on. This went on for years--little Girl Scouts, little Boy Scouts, little kindergarteners--everybody was just fine. Then came the looser life of the late sixties and early seventies, and school tours began to get bigger and less organized.

One day the fourth or fifth grade from Old Mill came down. There were about thirty-five kids with two teachers.

¹William Walsh, Mill Valley Chief of Police 1972 to present.

Our plant couldn't handle that many at a time, so I asked if we could take them through in groups of ten, which was manageable. The kids were all out in the front office, milling around and being like little children are (the teachers had absolutely no control over them), and they just broke loose and went right out into the plant. I was stunned; I didn't know what to do! I went out to look over the plant, and I saw just a sea of little children running around, into the press pit and everywhere. I asked the teachers to round them up and get them out of there because that machinery was really dangerous. They had no control. I've never been so scared. We were casting metal; there was molten lead everywhere, and saws-- and these little wild Indians running around all over the plant. So I brought my scream out!

I talked to the school superintendent after that and said, "Send out a directive. We're happy to have groups, but no more than ten going through at a time." That did help, but I'll never forget that experience.

Mr. Mills

You'd call that a human interest story, showing the relationship between a paper and its clients and readers. For years, until Anderson came, our deadlines were almost nil. If somebody came in late we'd say, "Sure, we'll get it in for you." We could stop the press and do that. After Anderson had been there about six months he'd had enough of that, and he put down the deadlines. People would come in and we'd say, "Well," and then they'd go directly to him, and he'd say, "Not a chance. You missed the deadline." These people were horrified; they hadn't been treated like that for years. But now they're used to it. We don't have to say anything. They just take the listed deadline.

Mr. Mosher

That would be hard to have to start all over after you'd begun printing.

Mrs. Mills

Today you can't do it at all. With the old flatbed, the forms were flat on the press. You could actually take a piece of copy out and stick something else in, but today you can't do that.

Mr. Mills

The sophisticated equipment won't tolerate it.

Mr. Mosher

You set things up now and send them away to be done? Where do you send them?

Mr. Mills

We have two operations that we send to. Our paste-up and makeup, what they call "production," is done in San Rafael at the Northgate Industrial Park.

Mrs. Mills

Raw copy goes up there and they typeset it. Randy goes up there each Monday to supervise it. We see all the proofs; it's still totally under our control, but they do the actual typesetting.

Mr. Mills

The printing is done in Healdsburg.

Mr. Mosher

When you say "raw" material goes to San Rafael, does that mean things go up there in longhand?

Mr. Mills

No, no, everything's typed. The only thing we have at 438 Miller are people and typewriters. And a Xerox.

Mr. Mosher

It's a lot more efficient in a way, and a lot easier to handle.

Mr. Mills

This is a pattern all over the country. We're a little different in farming out our production. Most shops do their own production and then send what we call a paste-up to the printer.

Mr. Mosher

That's the production you talk about?

Mrs. Mills

Yes, the typesetting and the pasting-up.

Mr. Mills

We don't do that ourselves, but in a sense we're there.

Two or three of our people are there during the production, and they supervise it and okay every page.

Mrs. Mills

One reason for doing it this way is that typesetting equipment is getting larger and more complex and more expensive. A paper our size could certainly have its own equipment and do its own production, but you'd have a lot of excess capacity. It's done so quickly that your temptation is to do job printing, and we don't want to go back into that. Marin Suburban does a lot of job printing. They do our typesetting, they do their own paper's typesetting, but they've got all the equipment, too. If we were younger we probably would do it ourselves.

Mr. Mills

An interesting point in our negotiations when we terminated our contract with the union was the flexibility that we asked for and, after further negotiations, got. Six months after termination of the contract we could go back to our own production without union help. Everybody in the business was awed at that. They said, "How did you get that?" and of course the answer was "Just luck." We don't know why they agreed to it.

Mr. Mosher

They were obviously stunned during the negotiations when they discovered there were only three people involved.

Mr. Mills

That could have been a factor, yes. Six months is long past, but if we ever do decide to do our own production we'd have no problem. As I said earlier, with this happy relationship we're not toying with that idea at the present.

Mr. Mosher

I used to hear people complain about the Record, but I don't any more. I've been here during, I think, five ownerships, and you people obviously are doing the best job by far. You fit into the community; you're sort of mutually complementary.

Mr. Mills

It's nice of you to say that, Carl.

Mr. Mosher

You never hear anything really negative any more. The paper looks good, and it reads well.

Mr. Mills

Thank you, Carl. I might mention one other significant thing that the Record did. Within six months after we took over we persuaded the Mill Valley City Council to change its meeting night from Wednesday to Monday. It was clear right from the outset that the Wednesday night meeting after our Wednesday morning publication was not conducive to a good reporting job of city council proceedings. The council did this with almost no opposition and with no reluctance. They realized, as we did, that the more immediate exposure they could get, the better both the council and the paper could serve the community. We've been grateful ever since. Some of the members of that council don't live in Mill Valley anymore. Joe Sheeks was mayor at that time. The other councilmen were Bill Secor, Michael Wornum, George Blackwell, and George Monardo. Since that time no one has ever suggested that the date be changed back to Wednesday.

Another significant thing that the paper did, a little over ten years ago, was in a campaign for circulation. Instead of doing it just for the paper we did a combination. We offered a subscription for one year with the net proceeds of all subscriptions going to Marin General Hospital for a use of their designation. This proved very successful both to the paper, which increased its circulation, and to the hospital, which increased its revenue for equipment, mostly in the heart and respiratory areas. We have completed ten years of this campaign and are now entering our eleventh year. The hospital's been happy with it, and we of course have been very happy with it.

And on that note I guess we can probably end.

Mr. Mosher

Thanks so much, both of you.

Mr. and Mrs. Mills

Thank you, Carl.

Transcribed by Helen Dreyfus
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From the Sixtieth Anniversary Edition of
the Mill Valley Record - Sept. 21, 1960

MILL VALLEY RECORD

May 1901	<u>Mill Valley Record</u> founded by Mill Valley Publishing Company; ¹ soon purchased by J. Fred Schlingman
1904	Paper merged with <u>Marin County Enterprise</u> ; ² known until 1917 as the <u>Record-Enterprise</u>
<u>Date</u>	<u>Publisher</u>
1901	J. Fred Schlingman
1910	Westley W. Hicks
1912	George E. Garrett
1913	C. E. Esselstyne
Jan. 1, 1916	George W. Gildersleeve
Jan. 8, 1916	E. H. Hostetler
Aug. 1916	Mrs. Elizabeth Douglas, who took over the paper upon the death of her husband, Newell French Douglas
(In 1917 the name of the paper again became the <u>Mill Valley Record</u>)	
July 1935	Fred I. Drexler
July 1942	Roy A. Read
June 1945	Stanley T. Wilson
1952	Louis Ruppel
Oct. 1954	Thomas Collison
1962	Harold Smith for a few months only
Feb. 1963	Edward M. and Katherine S. Mills

¹J. Fred Schlingman, James J. Newlands, Jr., Alonzo Coffin, Hamilton Barnard, Arthur McLeod, John R. Wood, William Gray, Harvey Klyce.

²The Marin County Enterprise was established in 1899 by Thomas Fottre and purchased a year later by Fred A. Savery.

Note: The earliest Mill Valley paper noted in the above story is the Mill Valley Times, published in 1893 by Frederick F. Runyon. See attached clipping.