

Mill Valley Oral History Program
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BARRY SPITZ

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Debra Schwartz in 2015**

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In this oral history, author, outdoorsman and running enthusiast Barry Spitz recounts his adventures, encounters, and investigations over the course of more than 40 years of living in Marin County. Born in Brooklyn in 1948, Barry moved to California at the age of 22 after completing an MBA at Columbia University. He settled initially in San Francisco where he worked in the banking industry for a few years before buying a house in San Anselmo and leaving the corporate world behind for good. Barry describes how in 1973 he discovered a passion for running, which set him on the path to his future work as a race announcer and author. He discusses the many books he has written, beginning with *Best Running Trails of the San Francisco Bay Area* (1978), his seminal *Dipsea: the Greatest Race* (1993), and the wonderful works of local history, including *Mill Valley: the Early Years* (1996), *Marin: a History* (2006), and *To Save a Mountain: A 100-Year Battle for Mount Tamalpais* (2012) that have established him as the great chronicler of the life, times, and personalities of Marin. Throughout this oral history Barry expresses his love of nature, devotion to preservation, and his passion for running along with the intimate joys provided by friendship and family.

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Oral History of Barry Spitz
October 22nd, 2015

0:00:00 Debra Schwartz: Okay, today is October 22nd, 2015, and my name is Debra Schwartz. I'm sitting here with author, naturalist, hiker, runner, historian, longtime resident of Marin County, Barry Spitz. And I'm sitting here with you Barry on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society, and the Mill Valley Library. Thank you so much for taking the time to tell us your story, and the many stories I foresee in this conversation.

0:00:44: Let us begin with just a little background information about you. Can you tell me a little bit about your family?

0:00:51 Barry Spitz: Okay. You said to go back to the grandparents. So, my father's parents came from what is now Belarus. I believe Minsk was the town my father's father was born in. I never met my father's mother. I did meet my father's father. He came over probably around 1900. My father was born in Brooklyn in 1910. My mother was born in the borderlands that's been part of many, many countries. I think it's part of Ukraine now. She always said she was born in Poland. Her whole family came over in around — when she was about five — in 1918, or so. And she also came to Brooklyn and then met — my parents met there. They got married in 1936, and they had my sister Sydelle in 1941, two days before — two days after — Pearl Harbor. And then I was born November 16th, 1948, two days after Prince Charles.

0:02:18: My father mostly worked in the grocery business. My mother didn't work after she was married. We lived in an apartment building on 376 East 94th Street in Brooklyn, which is where I was born, and then we moved to 396 Rockaway Parkway, few blocks away. I went to P.S. 219 in junior high school, 252 which was right across the street from where we lived, and then Tilden High School, which was a few blocks away. And I did meet my mother's mother. I never met my mother's father, he died fairly early after coming over. So I knew two of the grandparents. My sister had two children, two sons — my sister Sydelle — David and Craig. And she died of breast cancer when she was 40, and that was the saddest thing that's ever happened to me. I'm still close to her two children. Well, now, each of them have five children together, total, and so, I try to take care of them.

0:04:02 Debra Schwartz: Do they live nearby?

0:04:04 Barry Spitz: They live in New York.

0:04:05 Debra Schwartz: And can you tell me the names of your parents?

0:04:09 Barry Spitz: My father was named Hyman Louis Spitz, my mother is named Rose Spitz. The name may have been Spitalowitz, we always thought, and it got changed at Ellis Island, but I've since heard that the story's more complicated and I don't even know it. I should, but I don't.

0:04:33 Debra Schwartz: So you're still close to your sister's family?

0:04:37 Barry Spitz: Yes, we just went back actually for a family gathering last month. My sister was seven years older, and she got married young. She met her husband when she was 14, and got married at 21, so we didn't have all that many years together. But she was a wonderful person.

0:05:05 Debra Schwartz: So you are on the opposite side of the continent now. How did you come to California?

0:05:13 Barry Spitz: Well, I always tell two stories; one, watching *Leave it to Beaver* somehow, and some other shows always — I don't even know if that was filmed in California, I assumed it was. It just looked really neat compared to where we were. So that put California in my mind. My mother's sister lived in Los Angeles, and we did visit her when I was very young, seven. I actually sang in Disneyland a few weeks after it opened in Frontierland and I had my Davy Crockett [chuckle] coonskin hat on. It wasn't so slick as it is now, and they called me up. So that visit to California must've been on my mind. But the immediate thing that finally got me to come — I was going to Columbia University Graduate School of Business, and I was driving a cab part-time. There was a side street in the east 60s or 70s, and I was blocked, and like any good cabbie, I just leaned my elbow on the horn. And I saw this disabled guy get out, and I realized, "I gotta get outta here." I didn't like what was happening. And I left very soon after that.

0:06:50 Debra Schwartz: After you finished school?

0:06:51 Barry Spitz: I left literally the day after I graduated. I drove out in my father's old Rambler, which did not make it. It started spewing fumes in Tennessee. I didn't know anyone, but I had a former girlfriend whose parents — and I'd never met the parents — lived in Little Rock, and on a whim I just called them, and they said, "Sure, come on over." She wasn't there. The car just barely made it there, and they put me up. I sold it to their garbage man, and I took a bus to Santa Fe, which was actually my original destination. It wasn't discovered then — I had just looked in the encyclopedia — it looked really neat. So I went to Santa Fe. And with a Columbia MBA, in undiscovered Santa Fe, I was a bit of a sensation there. The bank put me in this program to become president in a few years. But I still had California in my mind, so after a few months there, I bought a Volkswagen. I had a friend in San Francisco, a high school friend — if he had lived in Los Angeles I may well have gone to Los Angeles — so I came to San Francisco.

0:08:17 Debra Schwartz: This is what year exactly?

0:08:17 Barry Spitz: 1970. I was very young. I got my degrees very young. I skipped a year, as many New Yorkers do. There's a program — and then I went through college in three years, and I went through Columbia in four consecutive terms. So I was very young — too young for the Columbia part — and so I was still 21 when I came here.

0:08:45 Debra Schwartz: Wow. So you bolted, it sounded like. You kind of bolted right out of the eastern part of the US.

0:08:57 Barry Spitz: Yeah, I would go back a lot. I remember. I definitely flew back two, three, four times a year. So I didn't abandon my family at all. And my sister came out a few times, and my parents came out a few times, so it was not — it sounds bad.

0:09:17 Debra Schwartz: You didn't sever ties, you just bolted.

0:09:19 Barry Spitz: Right. It wasn't to get away from them. It was to get away from New York, I guess, or to go to a place that sounded really special.

0:09:28 Debra Schwartz: And so you're living in San Francisco then?

0:09:30 Barry Spitz: Right. I lived five years in San Francisco, right on Nob Hill, a pretty neat spot. And I had a tough time the first few months. There was bit of an economic downturn right then. I didn't get a job for a few months. I think I'm getting way off track here. I'm telling a lot of personal stuff.

0:10:00 Debra Schwartz: It's always good to talk about the world as you knew it, at that time, for us to understand what San Francisco and the Bay Area was like.

0:10:07 Barry Spitz: I didn't have much money to begin with — and so I wasn't getting a job right away — and was really down to almost nothing. I remember, at the bottom of the barrel, I decided I was gonna go pick grapes in the Napa Valley. And before I went up that night I went to Berkeley to see my very favorite movie, which I'd already seen before, *Elvira Madigan*, and it's still my favorite movie. I said, "I can't pay," and they let me in for free, which I still have a good feeling about Berkeley. I drove up there and I slept in my car, and I was gonna go apply for picking jobs in the morning, and I just didn't do it. I came back and ended up working temporary. And then I began my corporate — my short — corporate career using my MBA degree.

0:11:05 Debra Schwartz: In San Francisco?

0:11:06 Barry Spitz: Yeah.

0:11:07 Debra Schwartz: Who did you work with?

0:11:08 Barry Spitz: My first job was with a division of — it was called Cal Ink. It was the largest ink manufacturer in California. It was bought up by Tenneco Chemicals, so it was a division of this giant conglomerate. And I did meet someone there who — and that remains the most — a very emotional attachment with this older woman who worked there, too. She was of Irish descent, and suddenly I got in my mind that I was gonna go to Ireland. So, after a year-and-a-half or so, I did go to Ireland with the idea of living there for a year and writing a novel. And that did not work out because she was still on my

mind very much. She came, but she came to Paris, so I totally blew my budget and met her in Paris. And I just didn't have the money to continue, so I came back and got another job with Dutch Boy Paints, and then I got a really good job, the most — the highest I went in the corporate world. I was the manager of the Treasury Department of the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, which regulated and lent money to the savings and loans, which were way bigger in the '70s. You don't hear much about them now, but they were big then.

0:13:05: I signed checks for literally a billion dollars, when a billion dollars meant something, and moved a lot of money around. I was very responsible, and had a lot of trips to New York, a lot of private dining rooms at the big banks there. The big good that came out of it was I was able to buy — I always looked over and seen that it was sunny in Marin while it was foggy in San Francisco. So I had this idea of moving to Marin. So with this job I was able to buy a house in San Anselmo, which had a hot market at that time, too. You had to make up your mind within an hour or two. I saw this house, 155 Los Angeles Blvd, San Anselmo, and it looked nice. I only had to put \$5,600 down — 10 percent — and I have lived there 40 years now. And no regrets about it, it's been a wonderful house, and it's enabled pretty much a lot of what happened after to happen.

0:14:20 Debra Schwartz: I have to say that in listening to you talk about your corporate life, it's very hard to visualize you as a suit — sitting before me in your cargo hiking pants and your outdoor clothing, very much the picture of the outdoor man — it's very hard to imagine you being anything else. So what's the transition from corporate suit to author and runner? And your books: let's talk about your books.

0:14:53 Barry Spitz: Right, right. Well, it was a different world. I drank, not to excess but as one normally does and those things. I have a picture of myself weighing about 190. I weigh about 150 now, which is a little less than I would like, but it was different. What was happening is I started to get involved with running and nature. Two things happened: I met a lady named Marie Mans, while I was on the Dutch Boy Paint job. This was around 1973 — '72 or '73 — and she is the most remarkable naturalist I have ever met. There's no one like her. She's deceased now. But she was an older German lady. I had just bought a pair of binoculars and a bird book, and was just beginning birding. I was out at Bolinas Lagoon on a date and looking at a great blue heron, but not knowing it was a great blue heron. I was just a beginner. And this lady comes to a screeching halt, and in her German accent says, "Have you spotted the yellow-billed loon?" Which was the second sighting in the history of California. It was known to be out there at Bolinas Lagoon. I didn't know what she was talking about, but we became friends — and we became very good friends.

0:16:34: She was many years older, and she took me on her Christmas bird counts where she set national records for Hutton's vireo a couple years in a row. She was a pioneer in bird song, either the first or worked with the first people who understood that white-crowned sparrows had dialects based on where they come from. There was no one with an ear like her. And no one could tell the weather like her. She would bird without binoculars. So she got me into nature, and I had with her the most remarkable natural

experience I've ever had. We were sitting at Limantour Beach — this was in the mid '70s — birding, and we were breaking for lunch. We were sitting on the bluff by the parking lot looking out over the lagoon — crystal clear day — and all of a sudden there was thunder. That was our reaction, and we didn't know what it was. And then we realized a peregrine falcon had swooped within feet of us. It created thunder. And it was going down for the thousands — tens of thousands — of dunlin down there. So two remarkable things: one that it passed within a few feet of our head, near 200 miles an hour, and that it didn't get any of the dunlin. They did their amazing flights, and he didn't get any of them.

0:18:10: She took me to Yosemite many times — Sierra, other parts of the Sierras. She'd camp out all over the place, and I owe a lot of what follows to her. She moved to Oregon and a couple of years ago, only like two years ago, we stayed in touch. She got a brain tumor, she was probably 93 or so, and she took the Oregon assisted suicide. We drove up — we were gonna go anyhow — and I think she waited for us, me and my wife, and my daughter was there, one of my daughters. I think she waited, and I got to see her, literally the day before she took her life.

0:19:00: So, she had a huge influence on what happened. The other thing that was happening, and it may have been related, I started running, I got really into running. The running boom was taking off — this was 1973 — and I have a log now. I have every run recorded since 1975, I think, every day's run. I really got into the running world. It just became my passion, and I realized that the outdoors and running were my passions, and that's what I'll talk to people about, but not about my Home Loan Bank job. And so I thought, "Well, maybe I should follow my passion," so I quit.

0:19:46: I tried one more job with Wells Fargo Bank, and I met a lady who, a friend — anyhow, I met a good friend there, but we both couldn't handle the place. There was smoking, I remember that. They allowed smoking in those days, and the guy next to me in my little — I just could not stand it there. And then, this friend — I started writing a book about running. I was involved with *City Sports Magazine* somehow, and they were gonna publish a book about where to run. Or I started it before I met them, I don't remember. So I started writing this book about where to run, which — running was a boom, a couldn't-miss book, and they published it.

0:20:38 Debra Schwartz: What's the name of the book?

0:20:39 Barry Spitz: It's called *Best Running Trails of the San Francisco Bay Area*. Unfortunately, another book, of virtually the same title, came out like two weeks earlier, so we split the market. So I quit Wells Fargo after maybe three or four months, and went to manage a running store.

0:21:02 Debra Schwartz: Which store?

0:21:03 Barry Spitz: It was in the brand new Larkspur Landing — just opened, and we were the original tenants — what's now called Marin Country Mart. And I crazily stayed

there eight years. It was an easy job, but that was ridiculous to stay eight years, but I did.

0:21:28 Debra Schwartz: Ridiculous, because?

0:21:29 Barry Spitz: That was too long for that particular job. But during that time I began writing. I was running on Mt. Tam — a lot. My peak year I ran 2,500 miles, and we would run — me and my buddies would run almost every day, long runs on Mt. Tam. I remember when David Carpenter was active. At first we didn't worry because he only killed women. Then he killed a man, and we were worried, but we figured, "Well, what the heck, two of us." And I remember one day, there was no one there, there was me and him running, and whenever we —

0:22:19 Debra Schwartz: Where were you running?

0:22:20 Barry Spitz: It was on the east side of the mountain above Corte Madera, high up, and I remember, we would see somebody way, way — and get spooky. Happily they caught him very soon after. I joined the Tamalpa Runners in 1978, one of the earliest members, and I was just totally into the running world. I got very involved with announcing races, through *City Sports*. They were the co-founders of a race called Bridge to Bridge, which is still on, and draws many, many thousands, and that was the first race I ever announced, as a finish-line announcer. Somehow people liked me, and that led to a career as a race announcer, while I still had the Good Sport job.

0:23:18: But I got to announce Bay to Breakers, San Francisco Marathon. I announced the first ever Women's World Road Championship, an IAAF event, which is really big time. I announced The Avon Marathon in Paris, even though I didn't speak French. I announced the Women's Marathon they held on the old 1984 Olympic course, as a test run. It was a full marathon where the American record was set in the marathon, the women's record. This continued even after I got married. This went on for years, and we got to go to Hawaii a couple of times and —

0:24:02 Debra Schwartz: The Iron Man?

0:24:03 Barry Spitz: No. Honolulu Marathon. I was writing for *Running Times* — first *Runner's World*, a magazine I wrote for, and then *Running Times* — lasted many years, I was their race reporter. So I would get trips all over —

0:24:21 Debra Schwartz: Nice. [chuckles]

0:24:21 Barry Spitz: — paid for, wonderful trips, staying in incredible hotels. And, as I said, even after I got married, I brought my wife and we had family vacations. So I was very associated with running, but not the Dipsea yet, that took a while. We'll get to that. I guess I'm rambling a little bit, but while I was at the Good Sport I was out on Mt. Tam a lot, running mostly, and I thought there should be a guidebook to the trails. I kinda knew them well and there wasn't the guidebook, so I said I'm gonna do that. And while I was kinda dawdling about it, thinking about it, maybe even researching it, one came out,

written by people who live two blocks from me, the Martins, a book called — I think it was called *Mt. Tamalpais*, and no offense intended, but I didn't think that was the right book.

0:25:28 Debra Schwartz: It's the thin book?

0:25:29 Barry Spitz: It was called *Mt. Tamalpais*. They've since written another one called *Hiking Marin*, but this was their first one. And I thought, "Wow, we could do better." It was the earliest days of when self-publishing was possible. They'd just come out with some programs — not everyone even had a computer — and a guy named Mike Hoy who lived in Sausalito agreed to learn while he was doing it. He took my text, and it was a laborious project 'cause he was learning while he was doing it, but turned it into a camera-ready manuscript. Dewey Livingston was an old dear friend, drew the maps, and *Tamalpais Trails* came out in 1989. There was a glitch. I got sued by a Mill Valley lady to keep the trail out that was near her house. I had just gotten married, and we had this letter from a lawyer come. It was very unsettling. But we reached an agreement. I took the trail out, she gave me some compensation for the —

0:26:53 Debra Schwartz: What trail was it?

0:26:54 Barry Spitz: I can't say.

0:26:55 Debra Schwartz: Can't say? Okay.

0:26:57 Barry Spitz: I've kept my end of it, and she compensated me for having to redo some things. That was a fair ending. And it took off. The response for that was incredible, and I remembered bringing — going to the Depot in Mill Valley, the bookstore, and I think they took three or four or five. Then they called me back, and they wanted 25 I think, and then they wanted 100, and then they wanted 200, for that little store. All of my books have had a very good relation with the Depot, and I would be very, very surprised, if any author, including the most famous ones, have had more sales of their books than I did.

0:27:52 Debra Schwartz: Well, you have a wonderful advertisement for your books right outside. [chuckle] With beautiful Mt. Tam just taunting, inviting, and "come hike, come run."

0:28:05 Barry Spitz: Right.

0:28:06 Debra Schwartz: Yes. Well — how many —

0:28:09 Barry Spitz: So then I quit the Good Sport and became a full-time writer, race announcer and — so that takes us to about 1989.

0:28:23 Debra Schwartz: Okay. And all the while — may I ask you about the — did you do the foot research for the — you yourself hiked every trail, every —

0:28:34 Barry Spitz: I hiked every trail with a wheel, and that got to be very interesting. I started enjoying the wheel — measuring wheel — it measures every foot, it clicks every foot. And then I started not liking the wheel so much, and it — it was hard work, because you do most of the trails and then you have to pick up one more and then measure it, so you're carrying it a long way, just to measure one trail, and you have to carry it back.

0:29:05 Debra Schwartz: How many trails are in the book?

0:29:08 Barry Spitz: There were 160, I think in the first one.

0:29:10 Debra Schwartz: 160, yes.

0:29:11 Barry Spitz: And it's had six editions, some go in and some go out, depending on — I followed earlier maps. The wonderful Olmsted Brothers map had just come out, and Jerry Olmsted was a great guy. He'd just come out with the best map in a long while, and I kinda followed his work. And Dewey Livingston did the maps, as I said, my map, but we kinda followed that. So not all the trails were authorized. I did historic trails that had appeared on maps in the past. Over the years I've weaned them out, and this new edition that's about to come out, published by the Golden Gate Conservancy — which may have a new name, *Mt. Tamalpais Trails* — will only be officially designated trails. So, there were 160 originally, probably 190 or so have appeared in and out over the various editions.

0:30:20: But yes, I did all the work, and every one was visited several times — looking at the flowers over different seasons — with all the intersections and the distances. It was called — *Via* magazine, AAA magazine called it — “The Bible of the Mountains.” *Sunset* gave it a very high praise, and Tom Stienstra wrote good things about it. I'm very proud of it, the definitive work I think on the trails of Mt. Tam. I don't think anybody else has tried to venture there. There's been some new maps that have been excellent using the GPS. I'm very proud of that.

0:31:12: So that was my first book, and since we sold it ourselves, published it ourselves — it was printed in Michigan — it was a pretty good additional source of income. As I said, I got married in 1989 to Pamela Spitz, Pamela Neill, and we had Sally in 1990, and Lily in 1992. So she wasn't working in the early years, but she did go back to being a teacher soon after. So, this became our primary source of income, publishing.

0:31:52 Debra Schwartz: I guess you put that suit right back in the closet?

0:31:56 Barry Spitz: Well, I do not own a suit now. [chuckle]

0:32:00: We just went back for a big event, and I bought a really nice blazer at — Barney's has an outlet store in Napa, really sharp. So that served me, but I do not own a suit. I'm not proud of that, but I just don't. So, go on.

0:32:26 Debra Schwartz: You went on to write other books as well? That started you on another trend.

0:32:32 Barry Spitz: Right. So the next one — this looked like a nice “business model” to use the current lingo.

0:32:39 Debra Schwartz: Get to do what you wanna do and research what you like —

0:32:43 Barry Spitz: Right. The Dipsea, of course, is the race of Mill Valley and Marin — the Bay Area, along with the Bay to Breakers. But I had not been that involved with it. I don’t know why, I’ve been trying to figure that out, ’cause I got involved in running in ’73 or ’74, as I said. I ran my first race in ’74. But I don’t know why it took me so long to get involved with the Dipsea. But in 1981, a guy named Keith Hastings, a Marin guy, asked me to help him bring water to — there was no official water station yet at Cardiac like they have now at the highest point. He had a friend running, so I helped him take water from the Lone Tree Fountain, which was working then, and I saw the race.

0:33:41 Debra Schwartz: All this running and you’d never thought to join the Dipsea race?

0:33:46 Barry Spitz: I’m sure I saw it or reported on it, but I don’t have any memories of it. That’s my first vivid memory. I might even have run some practice — I don’t know. But that’s my vivid memory. His friend Florianne Harp had this huge lead and went on to win the race. And the next year I was asked to announce the race ’cause I already had a reputation as a race announcer. In the running world I was known, and the announcer died, a guy named James Farrin. He was a young man, and they’ve named a stretch from Cardiac to Lone Tree, “Farrin’s Rest,” because they scattered his ashes there. He died of cancer. So I was now the announcer of the Dipsea, and there had been a book written about the Dipsea called *The Dipsea Race* by a guy called Mark Reese that came out in 1978.

0:34:44: So where am I getting my years wrong? Alright. Right, so I had been involved with the Dipsea — I became the announcer. I founded the dinner they had. The first dinner was held at the Mill Valley Community Church, right near Old Mill Park, and then we moved it to the Dipsea Cafe, and then I turned it over to the Dipsea committee. But I also founded The Dipsea Hall of Fame in 1993 and named the first five inductees. I finally got in in 2015, which I thought was a little long of a wait [chuckle] but we’ll talk about that —

0:35:27 Debra Schwartz: Did you announce it?

0:35:31 Barry Spitz: Anyhow, this fellow Mark Reese had written a book in 1978. So in 1990 — early ’90s — I had started to think maybe it was time to update that, and what finally got me going on that was the death of Paul Chirone, who happened to live in San

Anselmo. He won the race in 1937, but I never talked to him. I planned to, and he died. I went to his funeral and I said, “I gotta — before more of these pass away — I wanna do this.” And Mark Reese was terrific. He’s a lawyer, so he kept meticulous files. He gave me all his files, no questions asked, no restrictions, made my life way easy.

0:36:22: He had clippings from every single Dipsea — newspaper clippings of every year — made the work so much easier. And I went and interviewed every living Dipsea winner, which was a joy to do that, and widows of others. My second book, *Dipsea: The Greatest Race*, came out in 1993. Again, it was a huge success, sold out in no time. And I got to meet some wonderful, wonderful people, two of the most famous being, Jack Kirk, who was the “Dipsea Demon.” He ran his first Dipsea in 1930 and never missed another one.

0:37:07 Debra Schwartz: The guy who ran in the house slippers, later on?

0:37:10 Barry Spitz: He ran in little sneakers, and then pants. He was a real character. He owned 400 acres in Mariposa. I got to interview him in 1992. His mind was as sharp as can be, even though he was about — well, he died at 100 — he was pushing 90 then, or 90. And I remember we went up with Sally and my wife. Sally was like two, and his 400 acres were completely wild. He lived in a Volkswagen with no buildings.

0:37:48 Debra Schwartz: He lived in his car?

0:37:51 Barry Spitz: He lived in his car and he loved flowers. He kept it wild. It was a real sanctuary. His memory was sharp. I wanted to talk about the old Dipsea. He would remember every race, and who passed, and who he passed, and every little quote.

0:38:10 Debra Schwartz: Really? Wow!

0:38:11 Barry Spitz: But all he wanted to do was show two-year-old Sally the wild flowers, so it was a real — a little frustrating, but we became friends. And then the other one was Norman Bright. He was one of the nation’s best runners in the ’30s. He went to Stanford. He beat Glenn Cunningham who was considered America’s Greatest Miler of the Year a couple of times. He went blind. I met him when he was blind. I went to visit him — he was living in a home in Seattle — to research the book. I didn’t know how he would greet me, and I went in and he just embraced me. All of his trophies had been stolen ’cause he’s blind, but he just — we became very good friends. He called me all the time. And the Tamalpa Runners brought him out, one of the most beautiful things, to one of the dinners. He was an old man, and they walked him over to the trail, and he was blind, and he was old —

0:39:18 Debra Schwartz: They walked him over the whole Dipsea?

0:39:20 Barry Spitz: They walked him. It took like six hours. Russ Kiernan, a saint, a Mill Valley guy.

0:39:25 Debra Schwartz: I see his name on the Dipsea stairs.

0:39:27 Barry Spitz: Right, he's a saint. I did not walk with him, but others did. It took six hours. Anyhow, we became good friends. And the little wrinkle to the Norman Bright story just came out. He was in the same 1936 Olympic trials, 5,000-meter race, as Louis Zamperini, the star of the movie — the book and movie — *Unbroken*, which is a big hit now. Apparently Norman helped Louis, and Norman is in that book, *Unbroken*, in the index and in the book. Louis made the team, Norman did not. He had blisters and did not make the team. He should have, but he didn't.

0:40:13: Norman Bright's sister, 94 years old, called me when the movie *Unbroken* was gonna come out, and said, "Can you do me this favor of trying to get me to go to the premiere?" So I didn't have any Hollywood contacts, but I called Angelina Jolie's agent, and I called United Artists — I forget the studio, I think that was it, that put it out. I didn't get her in, and it showed me that — she just wanted to see that they got Norman Bright's red hair right. Turns out he wasn't in the movie at all, so it didn't — no harm done. But I met some wonderful, wonderful people who became good friends. I could go on the whole two hours of our interview talking about the wonderful old Dipsea characters that I met and stay in touch. And I put on a reunion every five years of the winners. We just had one. And Donna Andrews was the first adult woman to win in 1980, lived in Stinson Beach, came to the one in 2015, and died 10 days later. But she wanted to be there.

0:41:34 Debra Schwartz: But you yourself have had quite a career with the Dipsea, haven't you?

0:41:38 Barry Spitz: I've now been the announcer 34 consecutive years, and the official race historian. Dipsea's had a second edition for the 100th running in 2010, called the Centennial Edition. And, as I said, I founded the dinner in the Hall of Fame, and now I'm in the Hall of Fame.

0:41:57 Debra Schwartz: Have you run it? How many times?

0:42:00 Barry Spitz: I've never run it, the race. I'm a very good uphill runner, and then we could talk about the Mt. Tam hill climb and other things I've done, but I'm a very terrible downhill runner. And the Dipsea really does have a very, very hairy downhill, and it even favors the people that are fearless on the downhill. So I've had no particular desire to race the Dipsea. They do have what's called a "Practice Dipsea," the "Double Dipsea" and the "Quadruple Dipsea." And I have run all of those. I've run three Quadruple Dipseas, which is four crossings. Those are the longest races I've ever done, by far. I once broke 61 minutes in the Practice Dipsea. They don't have that anymore, but it's a regular Dipsea.

0:42:48: And then I've done, maybe 10 Double Dipseas, and I've run the course a million times, but I've never run the race. People always ask me that, but I've never run the race. I don't think I want to, even though I'm getting a lot of minutes now. I'm happy

doing what I do. I announce the finishers and then I give out the awards, and that award ceremony is definitely the highlight of the year for me and for a lot of other people. We give out these 35 black shirts, and it's really, really special.

0:43:24: I see the amount of injuries. I'm right on the finish line. The amount of injuries in the Dipsea is not well-known. Everybody knows it's dangerous, but the amount of injuries is staggering. There's no other race like it, nothing among popular events. I sometimes think maybe a quarter of the people have had some kind of trauma, falling or bleeding. You just clearly see the dirt on them. And when it's hot, it's carnage. They've run out of ambulances, I remember not too many years ago —

0:44:06 Debra Schwartz: From hyper —

0:44:07 Barry Spitz: From people passing — they just didn't have enough ambulances, they had to bring in helicopters. It is a very, very dangerous race because it's on a very narrow trail, and very steep and narrow trail with rocks and roots, but added to that is the handicaps, where the faster runners, the younger runners start after the older runners, so in every other normal race, the young fast guys are in front, and there's very little passing, but the Dipsea, passing all the time, and including going down Steep Ravine, which is dangerous to walk down, much less having somebody flying by you trying to pass you. So there's a lot of injuries in that race, but that's what makes it a great race.

0:45:00 Debra Schwartz: So we've got the book on the running, we've got the book on the Dipsea —

0:45:04 Barry Spitz: Then we come to *Mill Valley*.

0:45:07 Debra Schwartz: Our beautiful Mill Valley.

0:45:09 Barry Spitz: Right. So I'm on a roll here, written two successful books, and there was a great guy, he was the president of the Mill Valley Historical Society, named Ron Olson. He was a really great man, a wise man. The Dipsea had a similar wise man — who a park in Mill Valley's named after, Hauke Park — Jerry Hauke. They were kinda similar, they even looked similar.

0:45:32 Debra Schwartz: I had no idea there was an association between the Dipsea and Hauke Park.

0:45:35 Barry Spitz: Yes, he was the race director for 33 years. Ron Olson and Jerry Hauke, kind of the same age and kinda looked like one — wise old men with beards and white hair, that you just trust, and they're good people. They have no agendas, just they wanna do the right thing. And I happen to be friends with Ron Olson through hiking. I was on the Board of the Tamalpais Conservation Club in 19 — oh my, it may have been the late '70s, or it may have been the early '80s. Time of turmoil, which that organization now has nothing but turmoil. And I got to know Ron Olson, he was on the board. And I

got to ride to meetings. The meetings used to be in San Francisco, their headquarters, with Salem Rice, who's the great geologist of Mt. Tamalpais. So those were good guys. Ron Olson suggested that maybe I should write a history of Mill Valley. There had not been one. And he was the president, as I said, of the Historical Society, and I got to meet —

0:46:57 Debra Schwartz: You're talking about Ron Olson here.

0:47:00 Barry Spitz: Right. He led me into the Mill Valley Historical Society, and they were magnificent. I am not saying this to you guys 'cause you're doing the interview. I was treated so well. Any help I would need was offered to me, research-wise. And Joyce Crews, I spent a lot of time with her in that History Room¹. People like — most of them deceased now. I remember meeting Dory Bassett. She was incredible. I'm forgetting now — Jack and Jean Barnard —

0:47:46 Debra Schwartz: Ralston White's niece, and Ralston Ruth wife's niece, yes.

0:47:51 Barry Spitz: Larry Symmes, he made his files available. Stocking, Gene Stocking was amazing. Her family goes way back before it was Mill Valley. I think all these people are deceased now, but they were incredibly helpful.

0:48:09 Debra Schwartz: And what year are we now?

0:48:10 Barry Spitz: So, I began work in '96 or '95. The book came out. I had my preface written October of '96, and then it had a publication date of '97, because you always kinda want to make it look more recent. So this work was done in '95 and '96, and they were just terrific and they called it *Mill Valley: The Early Years*. It only focused up until around 1930. That was a decision we kind of made together, because more recent — number one it filled the book. It made a large book.

0:48:57 Debra Schwartz: What you had was enough to fill the book.

0:49:00 Barry Spitz: Right, it filled a large book already, that's one reason; but the other is, the more recent stuff is — Mill Valley, I don't have to tell you, a lot of controversies. It wouldn't have been so clear what — it just would've been a different book.

0:49:15 Debra Schwartz: More people alive to argue with the facts I suspect.
[chuckle]

0:49:17 Barry Spitz: I don't know whether I intended to follow it up. People asked me to. Since then there have been a few other books, small books, more picture books, taking it up more recently, but it probably should be updated, 'cause it's going to be almost 100 years from what I covered from 1930 on. But, this book sold out. Dewey Livingston again helped me with the design, a beautiful cover he did.

¹ The Lucretia Little History Room in the Mill Valley Public Library

0:49:53 Debra Schwartz: The cover of —

0:49:56 Barry Spitz: *Mill Valley: The Early Years.*

0:49:57 Debra Schwartz: There you have — but what is the picture?

0:50:00 Barry Spitz: The Old Mill —

0:50:00 Debra Schwartz: The Old Mill.

0:50:01 Barry Spitz: With two children sitting on it. This book sold out, and I had to reprint it several times, quickly.

0:50:13 Debra Schwartz: How many do you think you've sold? Just guessing.

0:50:17 Barry Spitz: It's had five printings. Over 10,000, but I'm not — somewhere in that neighborhood.

0:50:29 Debra Schwartz: What's the population of Mill Valley?

0:50:30 Barry Spitz: Right, that's more than one per home, more than one per home, but some turnover. But that is a pretty high per-capita sales. So Mill Valley — when I wanted to move to Mill Valley, I had fallen in love with the place while doing this research, which was so much fun. I would eat at Stefanos or — now I forget the name. It's right next to the movie theater. You used to be able to sit and look out on the street.

0:51:11 Debra Schwartz: Oh, you mean the bakery that was there, or before that?

0:51:14 Barry Spitz: Before that.

0:51:15 Debra Schwartz: Oh, the Noah's Bagel?

0:51:17 Barry Spitz: No, no, no. Way before that.

0:51:18 Debra Schwartz: Oh, the Sonapa Farms?

0:51:20 Barry Spitz: Sonapa Farms.

0:51:22 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:51:23 Barry Spitz: So I would research for hours and then go take a break and — it was sweet, it was just really wonderful. We just didn't find a place that was affordable, so I remained in San Anselmo.

0:51:43 Debra Schwartz: You can't get a house for — how much did you say you put

down? \$8,000?

0:51:45 Barry Spitz: \$5,600.

0:51:46 Debra Schwartz: \$5,000? No, that — [chuckle]

0:51:48 Barry Spitz: No, that won't do it, that won't pay very much.

0:51:53 Debra Schwartz: How long did it take you to write this book?

0:51:56 Barry Spitz: I don't really remember, but certainly a year or in that range, maybe a little more. But Mill Valley has its act together. That History Room, you didn't need to go far afield. They had all the Mill Valley records, all the newspapers. I was able to research that job efficiently.

0:52:24 Debra Schwartz: You aren't the only author to tell me so. And I'm not just saying this because I'm in Historical Society. But other authors, Tom Killian, Gary Snyder — many people have utilized — Matthew Davis — have utilized the History Room as a resource to write their books. It's a treasure for here in Mill Valley.

0:52:49 Barry Spitz: Right, I had used it already for the Dipsea book too. But really got to almost live there. And I said, Joyce Crews was a tough taskmaster, but she did the right thing, 'cause I've been in other history rooms where they let you take stuff out. It doesn't come back. She followed the rules, the correct rules, and it made it a little harder not to take things home, but that was correct and —

0:53:20 Debra Schwartz: She preserved the material, and you ended up spending a lot more time in the town you were writing about.

0:53:27 Barry Spitz: Right, exactly, you got it right. So that was the third book, and I've been a member of the Mill Valley Historical Society for a long time now.

0:53:40 Debra Schwartz: I hope we'll see you at the dinner tonight.

0:53:43 Barry Spitz: We'll talk about that. [laughter]

0:53:47 Debra Schwartz: By the way, I've used this book as a resource in my own business. It's the definitive book for me in providing a really good overview of the history of Mill Valley. So thank you for that.

0:54:01 Barry Spitz: Thank you, Debra.

0:54:02 Debra Schwartz: But yet, you're not done.

0:54:06 Barry Spitz: No.

0:54:07 Debra Schwartz: Yet we have more books. There's more to tell.

0:54:09 Barry Spitz: Right, there's still four more books.

0:54:12 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:54:13 Barry Spitz: So, given my outdoors résumé and my book résumé. I was asked to write or propose — I don't remember — but in any case, I was asked to write a guide book to the Marin County Open Space District preserves. At the time they had 33, and it's about 14,000 acres. I got to know Ron Miska. I knew Brian Sanford, and one of the rangers. And that was another wonderful project, because it got me — they have some preserves on Mt. Tam, but they also have preserves elsewhere, and I —

0:54:56 Debra Schwartz: Ring Mountain.

0:54:57 Barry Spitz: Ring Mountain.

0:54:58 Debra Schwartz: There's —

0:55:00 Barry Spitz: Several in Novato, Mt. Burdell —

0:55:00 Debra Schwartz: Novato, right.

0:55:02 Barry Spitz: Indian Tree is this amazing one in Novato that I never would have discovered. The Roy's Redwoods. And so, I got to go to places that I didn't visit regularly in my runs. The wheel again — and again, it was about 150 trails or so, all measured to the foot. I did buy a GPS watch, but it's just not as accurate. Maybe it is today, but it would go out a little bit in the deep woods, and I just felt that the wheel was most accurate. And also, you can do the intersections really to the feet. I still think that's the way to do it. To wheel the Tamalpa trail I remember was —

0:55:56 Debra Schwartz: [laughter] I can't imagine.

0:55:57 Barry Spitz: I don't know how accurate that is, bumping along like that, but there were some downsides to it. But again, I wheeled all the trails, visited — they were very helpful, the rangers, and we came out with a wonderful book in 2000 called *Open Spaces: Lands of the Marin County Open Space District*. I was the distributor for that, too. They published it. This was the first book that somebody else published.

0:56:29 Debra Schwartz: And they —

0:56:29 Barry Spitz: Marin County Open Space District. It's now called Marin County Parks. They didn't wanna get involved with selling it, so I was the distributor for that book, as well. And that sold out very quickly. They wanted to do another edition, and I was gonna do it with David Hurlocker. I told you Marie Mans was the greatest naturalist I've ever met. David Herlocker would stand second, and certainly unsurpassed in Marin,

great man. Still with them; he's their naturalist. He leads hikes you can go on, and he leads hikes almost every week for them. Anyhow, we worked together, and he added immensely with — he wrote about the spiders and the natural history. And I updated everything. That book sat — I don't know why — it's nine years now it's been sitting in the office. They've had some different general managers. Then they decided to do whole new trails plan that ended any chance of it coming out. But that book never came out. I got paid, but it's a shame, 'cause that book — it's been out of print now for 12 years or so, and people want a guide book to the Open Space Preserves, but there is none. So that's a sad story, and I still don't know the whole story behind it, 'cause it was a good book, better than the first one.

0:58:21: So, then we come to my town, San Anselmo, where I've lived 40 years. I did Mill Valley, so I thought, "What the heck, do San Anselmo." And that is where I learned to appreciate how great the Mill Valley resources was because San Anselmo does not have anything like it. They have a history room, the collection has some nice stuff, but nowhere near as large or as complete or as curated. A lady named Judy Coy has since done wonderful work. She was kind of involved in that a little bit, but has since gone on to be very involved, and it's a lot better. But it was way more difficult. They had a lot of *San Anselmo Herald*s, but they didn't have all of them.

0:59:17: That was a book that went up to the present. I did do a different approach for that book, and I did feel very comfortable, 'cause I lived there for so many years. I did feel on good grounds there, and so I felt that was a very good book. And that *San Anselmo: a Pictorial History* came out in 2003, and is now out of print. They've come up with one of these little Arcadia editions, and I am —

0:59:55 Debra Schwartz: But the ones that are in —

0:59:56 Barry Spitz: I'm down on this Arcadia thing.

0:59:58 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:59:58 Barry Spitz: They have their place with these extremely obscure, small topics and they do a good job, things that are 50 pages, or it's a 100 pages of pictures, is all that it really is known about this. All history books shouldn't look exactly the same and have the exact same format, and just be mostly pictures. But Judy Coy wrote one about San Anselmo, and she's done a good job. So, I'm asked to do more on that, to do an updated version, but I don't think there's — I don't think I will.

1:00:39 Debra Schwartz: Then what's the next book?

1:00:42 Barry Spitz: Well, why aim small? I did *Marin: A History*. The last complete history of Marin had been done in 1880, and it's a treasure. There's nothing quite like it, by Munro, a guy named Munro-Fraser. It's just this totally amazing book that literally describes everything that's ever happened in Marin, because not that much had happened until 1880. And that was the last complete history, so it certainly seemed time.

1:01:15: So how to structure that book became very interesting 'cause the topic is huge, and I ended up splitting — I was gonna write it with my friend, Dewey Livingston, who knows Marin history better than anyone, and has so many other talents in designing a book and — but he wanted to write it in a different way. So I ended up doing it on my own, and took the approach of “the days that changed Marin.” I think there were a hundred and — I forgot how many — and it made it easier.

1:01:56 Debra Schwartz: You chose to just select the particular moments that —

1:02:00 Barry Spitz: The landmark days that ended up changing the future of Marin. I think it's very — I like that part. It was a little easier to write than some other ways of doing it, and other people have enjoyed that. It's a little different approach, but maybe the right one, maybe not, but that, too, has sold out completely — and a beautiful cover. I worked with Laurie Thomson at the Anne Kent California Room, and they have — whatever I could say about Mill Valley I would say the same about that collection, even bigger, more — they have more room, more topics. And Laurie Thompson is another master archivist, librarian. She gave me her full support with pictures and materials, and we're good friends. I had her full cooperation in that book. And actually it was a benefit for the library.

1:03:19: This is little known here, this is one of your scoops here. People criticized the supervisors — they're called a “slush fund” or — that's the negative term, but they use another: discretionary fund. I got an advance to publish the book from that discretionary fund, but with the proviso that it would be repaid and all the money would go to the Anne Kent California Room. So it became a benefit for the Anne Kent California Room, and that made me feel good about it.

1:03:54: Then there's one last one. I did subsequently, as I say, in 2010, write another version of the *Dipsea* book, but then the Frank Howard Allen Realtor Company was celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2010, and they asked me to write a history of their company. Frank Howard Allen was a pretty neat guy, and nothing had been written about him, as far as I know. They published it, and they controlled it, and it's not sold anywhere. They gave it to their employees and the company has since been consumed. One legacy I have of that book — Frank Howard Allen designed — the name of the subdivision is slipping my mind, but it's on Laurel Grove, it's the Kentfield side of Laurel Grove.

1:04:54: I believe that it's the most beautiful street in Marin County. And he did that, he made that subdivision, and it's a testament to what could be, what should be, what's right, because that is the best, just the best that Marin has to offer. The Ross side, of course, is splendid, but that's due to the huge, huge parcels. His side was a subdivision, but you'd never know. It's so beautiful and peaceful and restful, and I take it as an alternate to Drake 'cause it calms me down, and that's a good sign. So those are the books.

1:05:37 Debra Schwartz: But what about the Conservation Club book? Did you mention that?

1:05:42 Barry Spitz: Oh my God! I left that out. [laughter]

1:05:46 Barry Spitz: Thank you, thank you. That is the last book.

1:05:47 Debra Schwartz: I just bought that book from you.

1:05:48 Barry Spitz: Right, and I didn't even put it on my list yet. That's the one that in many ways is my — and that I'm proudest of — it's kind of my swan song that I embrace. We had a few different little stories about what to call it, and we ended up calling it —

1:06:10 Debra Schwartz: For all those that can't see this, I'm watching you go through a bag filled with your books and trying to find that book, too. Let's see, isn't this it here? No, that's *Open Spaces*.

1:06:23 Barry Spitz: Yeah, I guess it fell out.

1:06:24 Debra Schwartz: Oh, hey, here it is. Isn't this is it?

1:06:26 Barry Spitz: No, no, no, that's the —

1:06:28 Debra Schwartz: Oh. Well, I can go run and grab it really quick. Hang on a second, let me just pause this for a moment.

1:06:33 Barry Spitz: I don't know what happened.

1:06:34 Debra Schwartz: Okay, now I've got your book for you, there you go.

1:06:36 Barry Spitz: It says *To Save a Mountain: A 100-Year Battle for Mount Tamalpais*. This was another 100-year project. I'm a life member of the Tamalpais Conservation Club. They were having their 100th anniversary in 2012, and Larry Minikes and Janice Barry were president and vice president and wanted me to write — I probably approached them, and they thought it was a great idea to write, not just the history of the club, which was founded two — before there was any public land on Mt. Tamalpais. So it became an intertwined story of the club, but more, far more, how Mt. Tamalpais went from 100 percent private property in 1912 — well 1905 was for the first public-land acquisition — to almost entirely public land. I'm really proud of this book. It's very little known because the Tamalpais Conservation Club published it and they're in hard times right now of a very — not much of active members to get the word out. But if you wanna know who these heroes are, and you always start with William Kent, as I do, who not only donated the very first public land, which is now Muir Woods — which they wanted to name for him but he didn't, he refused it. He was *the* number one force behind the Marin Municipal Water District election in 1912, even though he had the most to lose by

this. He was the largest land owner by far.

1:08:53: Most of the land that the Water District was gonna get was his land. He was gonna get paid for it, but not what he should have been; and he refused that, anyhow. He advocated, because it was in the public good, to have a water source and recreational use, so he was the leader in that. That was a very contested election, but he swayed it and we voted for. It was the very first Municipal Water District in California. But they had no money, originally. They just were given the right to buy this land, private land. He then led what's called "the biggest thing ever to happen in Marin," the Marin paper wrote, a bond issue in 1916. Again, against his interest, he still advocated that we pass this huge bond issue.

1:09:55: This was far more controversial than the original one 'cause there was money involved. We passed it, and that created — that gave the Water District the money to purchase the land and build Alpine Dam, the big project that was gonna solve our water problems forever. Didn't turn out.

1:10:12 Debra Schwartz: And the water gouging, because now we have a public agency and —

1:10:16 Barry Spitz: [chuckle] You said that, not me.

1:10:19 Debra Schwartz: And the ability for people to use the mountain recreationally, and hunting, too, as I believe.

1:10:26 Barry Spitz: Right. William Kent — that was the origin of the Tamalpais Conservation Club. The myth says — and probably true though, but has become mythical — that some people — O'Rourke and a few others, famous names on Mt. Tam — saw a deer being quartered on William Kent land at Rock Spring, and it just revulsed them. They wanted to stop hunting on Mt. Tam, and they did succeed in creating a Mt. Tamalpais Wildlife Preserve, even before the State Park or — that was in 1916. But Kent also was the force behind the State Park, and that's where the Tamalpais Conservation Club had its greatest impact. They were the leaders in that monumental battle to create Mt. Tamalpais State Park. And that's the heart of the book.

1:11:33: I feel my big contribution is understanding the relation of the State Park to Panoramic Highway, which I think has been forgotten in more recent years. Overwhelmingly, the voters of Marin approved a bond measure, in the early '20s when cars were just the rage, to connect Mill Valley and Stinson Beach more directly. Residents of Stinson Beach and Bolinas — the kids went to Tam, but it took 'em hours to go on Highway 1, and some days they couldn't even get through, the road was blocked. So they wanted a more direct route, but other people wanted a park to connect the Water District lands and Muir Woods, and this road was gonna run right through that.

1:12:36: It was privately owned. Kent owned a lot of it, but some other guys — Newlands and Magee were their names — were planning on developing their nearly

1,000 acres. And it was a huge battle royal, too, 'cause you build a road, as you know, and then homes usually follow alongside. Real estate prices go way up. The chance for buying that land would diminish. So this was *the* number one environmental battle, I believe, in the history of Marin. It went on in the '20s over Panoramic Highway — Kent absolutely in the middle of it 'cause most of the road went through his land, and he very much wanted a State Park. In the end a compromise was reached. They would build the road, but they would condemn all of the land. Kent donated his. They condemned the Newlands and Magee land and we had — Mt. Tamalpais State Park was created. And the day before he died, William Kent donated the initial acreage, his beloved Steep Ravine, and when he died the county went in mourning. So this book is dedicated to him. And I have wanted to write a biography of William Kent. He wrote his own autobiography, but he's a modest guy, and didn't take all the credit that he could have taken credit for.

1:14:10 Debra Schwartz: He had a political career.

1:14:11 Barry Spitz: Right, he was our congressman for three terms. He had that famous falling out with John Muir, and that the story that has — I've seen a video of it. This is the highest drama. This should be a movie. It could be a movie. Kent —

1:14:32 Debra Schwartz: 'Cause he admired John Muir. He was inspired by John Muir.

1:14:36 Barry Spitz: Absolutely. And Teddy Roosevelt, President Roosevelt, wanted to name Muir Woods for Kent, who donated it. It was the first National Monument donated by a private landowner, very historic stuff. Now you see a little more of it, but he was a total pioneer in donating land to the government. But he said, "No, name it for Muir, my hero" — and the pictures of them together, camping. But Kent was in the Congress, and he represented San Francisco, all the way to the Oregon border, very sparsely populated. And after the earthquake, San Francisco clearly needed a reliable source of water, after the earthquake and fire. So there was a lot of sympathy for San Francisco to get a water source, and they looked at Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite, which was a National Park. That was quite a battle.

1:15:53 Debra Schwartz: So, we know that initially they were looking at Muir Woods, which was the big rush for Kent to get this land preserved. And so, without — thank goodness — which is why we have Muir Woods, there wasn't —

1:16:11 Barry Spitz: Right. Even after he bought it, and donated it, it was under threat because they could have — a reservoir is a higher — I forget the legal term.

1:16:24 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, like eminent domain.

1:16:25 Barry Spitz: Right. It's a higher use of it, and he had to get it into the federal government hands.

1:16:31 Debra Schwartz: It had to be very quickly transferred into the federal government, which succeeded, thank goodness. And then of course, John Muir, with his

great love of the Sierra Nevadas and the Hetch Hetchy area, is now seeing his beautiful land on threat. So what was the stance that William Kent — what was the division? Was William Kent involved in somehow in the acquisition of the Hetch Hetchy as a water source?

1:16:56 Barry Spitz: Kent did come down in favor of damming Hetch Hetchy.

1:17:05 Debra Schwartz: There's the divide, between the two friends.

1:17:07 Barry Spitz: He was torn. And I am maybe even presuming some things, but he was very — being the congressman — very influential, and he would have served on the interior, some of the committees that were involved with this. But I really don't know his inner — I would never presume. But I know he definitely was not on — he was certainly not opposing the damming of Hetch Hetchy.

1:17:43 Debra Schwartz: This is a really hot topic, and this is something people can choose to investigate on their own, exactly the whole way that Hetch Hetchy came down with John Muir and his involvement, and trying to stop it, and things going on in San Francisco. It was such a politically-charged — with so much to do with other things besides the water.

1:18:07 Barry Spitz: Right. The PG&E role is enormous, and it was really there, which has made them what they've been. But Kent, later, then wrote, co-authored — at the end of his term, his three terms — co-authored the bill that created the National Park Service so that it could never happen again. So that was his legacy. And then he went on to be a co-founder of the Save the Redwoods League. There's a Kent Park at Kent Beach and Campground in Lake Tahoe. The guy was truly a pioneer, and we owe him what is the open space on Mt. Tamalpais, directly to William Kent. I played a small role in getting other people to see that. He still has family here, and his family takes care, and he has two of his granddaughters that are still alive. I met them. I've been in their homes. But Kentfield lives on, and Kent Woodlands. He developed nothing. All his lands, which were extensive, only two of them were sub-divided after he died. Kent Woodlands and Seadrift, but all of his other lands are now in the public domain.

1:19:43 Debra Schwartz: So this is your —

1:19:46 Barry Spitz: That came out in 2012.

1:19:49 Debra Schwartz: I can see that there is a lot of passion with this book, and that somebody who has hiked the mountain and enjoyed the mountain and written about the mountain. It is something to be able to appreciate the fact that there's somebody responsible for allowing you to do that.

1:20:08 Barry Spitz: Yeah, there are many, many other heroes, but he stands at the top. I try to tell the story of many others. The State Park was expanded over the years and many, many transactions. The list is — they gave me a CD of it. It may have been 100

different parcels added over the years. So others have played a role.

1:20:34 Debra Schwartz: So you've been able to tell other people's stories, you've been able to document and describe genesis of things around here. The Dipsea race, you've been able to expand. You've helped people to see — to know the place we live in. You've represented Marin County and Mt. Tam and the people in it. This is what you've been able to do with your life, which is interesting, 'cause I think of you as a corporate man initially studying business at Columbia. This has been an interesting path you've been on, with some twists and turns. Did you ever anticipate that this is where you'd end up when you were driving over in a broken-down car from the East Coast heading west?

1:21:26 Barry Spitz: Certainly not the whole story. I was a fish out of water at Columbia Business School. That was for sure, at near the end of the line. I started out with a very promising Economics major from Colgate, and got great grades. But definitely something was going on, and by the last term I wasn't even going to classes anymore. They let me read books, non-business books. They were very nice professors. I don't know why they did that, but they did, and so I barely got out of there. So something was brewing early that this wasn't the right path for me.

1:22:13 Debra Schwartz: And so let's talk a little bit about you — what the path is. You've talked about all these other people and places, how about — what would you — how do you see yourself? I know that we think of ourselves coming to an area, and we make an area in a sense that people help create a space, but the space can also create people. So in the ways that your life has been formed by living here in Marin County, and the way that you've been influenced —

1:22:58 Barry Spitz: Well, I must mention my family, 'cause I am at this stage of my life and I think ever since it's started, nothing has given me more joy — even the running highs and calling the Dipsea winners — then my family. My wife Pam is a teacher. And then Sally and Lily went on — they're both artistically gifted — and went to UCLA's School of Art and are living in Los Angeles. Raising them has been just a joy and a challenge. These are my deepest values.

1:23:43: But coming back to Tam — I'm gonna be 67 next month, I keep saying, "As long as I keep walking, I'm happy." Whenever I have any tough times a walk or run is complete therapy. I lead hikes — it's the 21st year now that I've been leading hikes for "Rambling with Barry." We have the same people. It used to be Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Now we have two groups, Wednesday and Friday, and I love doing that. I go out every single day. I run and I walk, and I would say I miss two, three, four days a year, and no more than that, no matter what the weather. Actually the rougher the weather, the better.

1:24:46: I like to go out early, and I pretty much see every sunrise. It's really quiet then. So maybe it's a selfish thing in some ways. I'm getting so much from it. So maybe that's one reason I wanted to return so much. Every time I'd show people — and I see it on myself — from so much of Marin you could turn around and not see a house, or a few

in a great distance; and yet, San Francisco is just a few miles away. This is absolutely incredible! Preaching to the converted here, we know what a remarkable place. And I tell that story *To Save a Mountain*. It's a miracle that this has happened. I don't think it's happened anywhere else, and that's one of the largest —

1:25:55 Debra Schwartz: And it's not just with William Kent. We're talking Marincello, the Bolinas Bay, Stinson Beach.

1:26:03 Barry Spitz: You talked about Marty Griffin. He's played a huge role in it. When they announced this Mt. Tam — this is a little anecdote. When they announced the new One Tam, and the collaborative, they kicked it off at Richardson Bay, the old mansion there, the old Lyford Mansion, and one guy said, "We have two great heroes here, Marty Griffin and Barry Spitz."

1:26:34 Debra Schwartz: Wow!

1:26:34 Barry Spitz: And I was embarrassed beyond belief, and I told them, "Marty Griffin has really done stuff."

1:26:39 Debra Schwartz: That's a compliment. [chuckle]

1:26:41 Barry Spitz: That was overreach, but wow.

1:26:46 Debra Schwartz: Hey, to even be in the same sentence.

1:26:49 Barry Spitz: Right, I shouldn't have been, but that made me feel good.

1:26:54 Debra Schwartz: So it's your way of giving back the love, I guess.

1:26:58 Barry Spitz: Yeah. I do like sharing. I like teaching. Does anybody want to hire a teacher? I'd love to do that in my last years. I'd love to share what I know, serve on a non-profit. I've been blessed with good health so far, and I do love getting out there. I'm running ever slower. I also should mention that I've been a coach. I've coached running for many, many, many years. Branson School, Marin Academy where my daughters went, San Rafael High, Marin Catholic, and most recently San Domenico School, where I founded the cross-country team. This is the first year I'm not coaching, but I really enjoy working with young people, and a chance for an afternoon run, which gave me another buzz, so that was pretty neat.

1:28:01: As I told you, I like to run uphill. I did do the Empire State Building run-up. I finished very high on that. Oh, the *IJ*, I can't miss that. I started writing a column for the *Marin Independent Journal* in 1990, and it ran weekly, a running column for 17 years, and now, due to a lot of changes in the paper, it's very occasional. But the first column I ever wrote was about a Mill Valley couple named Willem and Elze Tuinzing, who lived on 1 Walden Lane.

1:28:42 Debra Schwartz: I used to deliver Meals on Wheels with Elze Tuinzing.

1:28:45 Barry Spitz: Really? Way up on —

1:28:47 Debra Schwartz: Fern Canyon Road, up there. Yep.

1:28:49 Barry Spitz: Way up there. They were very involved in the running world. Their son, Kees, founded the Tamalpa Runners, and I used to go up there and go on runs, and —

1:29:00 Debra Schwartz: Lovely, lovely woman. I didn't know her husband, but she was great. She didn't start running till she was in her late 50s, I think.

1:29:09 Barry Spitz: I think that's right. She was the oldest woman to run the Dipsea. That's been eclipsed, but at that time she held the record, and she's in the Hall of Fame. She died about 10 years ago. That was the first column I ever wrote, and now I'm writing one this weekend 'cause Willem, her husband, died last week. They're having a service for him on Saturday at the Mill Valley Community Center. So I'm gonna write about him, in kind of a little circle-close. He was mid-90s, and a remarkable fellow.

1:29:43 Debra Schwartz: His son works at the Running Store?

1:29:45 Barry Spitz: Right, Kees is a good man. So that's all I have on my list here.

1:29:52 Debra Schwartz: Before we stop, let's say I have a last question I always ask. I think we pretty much covered a lot, but is there anything — anything at all, a memory, a thought, a reminder, a moment, in all your years of on the mountain — a moment that we haven't talked about, something you'd like to share, an embodiment of your experience on Mt. Tam, or your time as a runner or a hiker. Can you think of a final little story?

1:30:29 Barry Spitz: There's so many, but you've given me one and time's running out, so this comes to mind: I was researching the *Dipsea* book, and the traditional wisdom is that the highest point on that course is Cardiac, top of Cardiac, where the Coast View Trail now crosses the Dipsea. And to prove it, Jerry Hauke, who I've mentioned is one of my heroes, a great man, saved the Dipsea race from — many, many people have tried to either stop the race or diminish it, but he hung in there fighting. Anyhow, he was a surveyor, and he had the equipment, so we went up there on one wonderful evening, late, really late, sun setting, still, just a magical evening to be on the mountain, and I was — what's it called? I forgot the name, just the guy that holds the pole, really. And we measured, and it turned out that Cardiac was indeed five inches higher than Lone Tree. We shook hands and we walked down, and that was a very special time, and Jerry's been a good friend ever since. So that's just one of the many, many memories. I could fill your whole tape, so thank you though.

1:32:02 Debra Schwartz: Thank you so much for sharing your story and your time, and for recognizing the importance of historical societies, and to document the history of

our area and to know it, too. Thank you so much for all that you've done to help us know ourselves in the County.

1:32:22 Barry Spitz: Thank you Debra for taking your time, thank you so much.