

Mill Valley Oral History Program

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MARILYN PRICE

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

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In this oral history, bicycling enthusiast and social entrepreneur Marilyn Price recounts the path that led to her life's work as founder of the nonprofit Trips for Kids. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1940, Marilyn moved to California in 1966 after completing a degree in sociology at the University of Michigan. In the early 1980s, Marilyn set down roots in downtown Mill Valley. Marilyn describes her decades-long work in progressive nonprofits, which culminated in Trips for Kids, a project dedicated to taking disadvantaged youth on bicycle rides through Marin's beautiful natural environment as well as providing job training through the Earn-A-Bike program. Marilyn discusses how she built Trips for Kids out of her home and how the program expanded to the national and even international levels, with chapters as far flung as Canada, Israel and South Africa. Throughout this oral history Marilyn warmly expresses her affection for Mill Valley, passion for bicycling, and deep social commitment. She also discusses friendships within and beyond the Marin County bicycling community.

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Oral History of Marilyn Price

Index

- Berry, Noah...p.14
Bicycling Magazine...p.11
Bike swap...p.9-10
Bike thrift shop...p.10
Breeze, Joe...p.14
California for Nuclear Safeguards...p.5
California Beverage Container
Recycling and Litter Reduction Act
("Bottle Bill")...p.5
Cove Bike Shop...p.15
Coyote, Peter...p.13
Cunningham, Charles...p.8
Fisher, Gary...p.14
Fox, Kevin...p.8
Frank, Edith (mother)...p.1
Frank, Meyer (father)...p.1
Golden Gate National Recreation
Area...p.6
Hart, Mickey...p.13
Interbike Show...p.8, 10
Johnson, Huey...p.4-5
Johnson, Sue...p.5
Kay, Alan...p.8
Knowlden, Trevor...p.16
Koski, Eric...p.15
Lesh, Phil...p.13
Lewis, Huey...p.13
Lewis, John...p.8
Marin Count Bicycle Coalition...p.14
Marin Headlands
 Marincello Trail...p.6
Marin Museum of Bicycling...p.14
Meet the Mountain Bike Pioneers
event...p.14
Mill Valley Community Center...p.9
Miwok Stables...p.6
Phelan, Jacquie...p.8
Pompili, Jerry...p.13
Price, Beth (daughter)...p.4
Price, Bob (son)...p.4, 16
Price, John (husband)...p.2
Resource Renewal Institute...p.5
Ritter House...p.10
Rodeo Beach...p.5
Simon, Bob...p.10
Smith, Neil...p.5
St. Anthony's Dining Room...p.7
St. Louis, Missouri...p.1
San Francisco...p.3
Tennessee Valley...p.6
Tiburon...p.3
Trips for Kids...p.1, 5, 7
 Earn-a-Bike...p.9-10, 12
 Victor...p.12
Honorary Board...p.13
Moving to San Rafael
location...p.10
National program...p.11
International program...p.12
University of Michigan...p.2, 7
Weir, Bob...p.13
Williams, Robin...p.13
Witter, Dean...p.8

Oral History of Marilyn Price
September 10th, 2015

00:00 Debra Schwartz: Alright. Today is September 10th, 2015. My name is Debra Schwartz, and today I'm speaking with Marilyn Price from Mill Valley. Marilyn, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed by the Mill Valley Historical Society in the Mill Valley Library.

00:20 Marilyn Price: Thank you for inviting me. It's a complete pleasure.

00:24 Debra Schwartz: So Marilyn, I've interviewed several bike-related individuals, and I know that you are very pivotal in the Trips for Kids non-profit that you started, correct?

00:37 Marilyn Price: Exactly, right.

00:38 Debra Schwartz: So I include you in the biker bird section of the interviews. But first, let's get a little information about you and your family before we get into the biking part of your life. Can you tell me a little bit about your parents and where they came from and just a little family background?

00:56 Marilyn Price: My parents were born in St. Louis, Missouri. Their parents came from Europe. And I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, too.

01:05 Debra Schwartz: They came as immigrants?

01:10 Marilyn Price: No, their parents came as immigrants from Russia and Lithuania. I know there was one other country, but I don't know for sure. On my dad's side, and both my mom's sides, their parents came from Europe.

01:24 Debra Schwartz: But you live in California.

01:26 Marilyn Price: I live in California. I've lived here since I've been about 26 years old. First in San Francisco, and then we moved to Tiburon, and then I've been in Mill Valley since the early '80s.

01:42 Debra Schwartz: So before we move away from your parents, maybe you could give me their names?

01:46 Marilyn Price: Edith was my mother's name, and my father's name was Meyer Frank, which was changed, but I don't know what the — my sister knows, but I don't know what his original name was.

01:57 Debra Schwartz: And how many children in your family?

02:00 Marilyn Price: There are two, my sister and myself. She is two years older than

I am.

02:03 Debra Schwartz: So you grew up there and then you — a little bit about your education, perhaps?

02:11 Marilyn Price: I went to the University of Michigan for college and majored in sociology. And after that, I came back home to St. Louis for a few years, and then I moved out to California. I guess I was either 24 or 26 when I moved out to California.

02:34 Debra Schwartz: So what year would that have been?

02:37 Marilyn Price: Let's see, I was born in 1940, so it would have been like 1966 or '68. It would have been '66 because my son was born in '68. So I came out in 1966.

02:53 Debra Schwartz: What brought you here?

02:55 Marilyn Price: It was to be with the man that I eventually married.

03:00 Debra Schwartz: So love brought you to California?

03:01 Marilyn Price: Exactly, yes.

03:03 Debra Schwartz: And that man's name?

03:06 Marilyn Price: John Price.

03:08 Debra Schwartz: So you came to the Bay Area to —

03:12 Marilyn Price: Yeah, I came to San Francisco. At that time, I lived in San Francisco, and we lived there for about three years. After our first child was born, we moved to Marin County.

03:27 Debra Schwartz: San Francisco in '66 and '67 and '68 was a colorful time for the city.

03:33 Marilyn Price: Yes, yes, it was quite wonderful. He adored San Francisco. At that time, actually, I wanted to move back to St. Louis to be with my family, but he would never leave San Francisco. And now I feel likewise, [never] leave the area here.

03:50 Debra Schwartz: So what was it like for you, coming from — California is a little different from other states. There's a lot of freedom over here, especially in the Bay Area. Social barriers may not be as rigid here, especially [chuckle] San Francisco in the '60s.

04:07 Marilyn Price: I had my whole family in St. Louis and that was — for quite a number of years, I considered St. Louis my home. It took me quite a number of years to

say, “No, this is my home, and I would never move away.” But I’m not sure what that tie was. Although I loved it here, too. And then as soon as I had children, wherever they were is where I wanted to be.

04:43 Debra Schwartz: How was it different from St. Louis, coming to San Francisco for you?

04:47 Marilyn Price: As you say, not as many social barriers. In St. Louis, you kind of lived a certain lifestyle, more like what other people were doing, and coming to San Francisco, that part was freeing ’cause you weren’t associated with your whole family, and you could develop your own kind of lifestyle.

05:18 Debra Schwartz: So what part of the city did you live in?

05:21 Marilyn Price: We lived on Pierce and Steiner. It was kind of outside of the Pacific Heights area, but not in the Western Edition. There were parks around it. We lived in apartments, but it was a nice part of the city.

05:42 Debra Schwartz: And do you remember the hippie days and all the hippies?

05:45 Marilyn Price: Yeah. I wasn’t part of it, but I definitely remember. If I had been born 10 years later, I think I would have gravitated toward it. But coming from very much of a more conservative background, I didn’t take the leap. I kind of did later on in my life, because the environment became very important to me, and I definitely wanted to live an alternative lifestyle that was personally more protective of the environment than the lifestyle my family lived, and that I was actually living with my husband at the time, too. So I did depart much more radically later on, but that was when my kids were — oh, it was about eight or so years into my marriage, I think.

06:42 Debra Schwartz: So you lived in San Francisco for a few years and then you came to Marin County, and where did you come into Marin County specifically?

06:49 Marilyn Price: We lived in Tiburon. We bought a home in Tiburon and then lived there for a number of years, then moved to another home in Tiburon. I didn’t move to Mill Valley until our divorce. I just knew that I wanted to live in Mill Valley and that’s where I did find a home and have been to this day in that very same home. That was in the early ’80s.

07:16 Debra Schwartz: What was it you knew about Mill Valley that you wanted to be here?

07:19 Marilyn Price: Then, Mill Valley was a bit more hippie, a bit more. It did have a much more diversified population than Tiburon, certainly the landscape with the trees, the mountain, the quaint homes that were not as monochromatic. And the downtown, I loved the downtown, the hardware store, the dime store, and where I chose to live was just a couple of blocks from downtown, so very easy access to downtown. I just thought

it was the perfect place to raise a family. We had always lived on a hill, difficult for kids to get to, and living on the flat a few blocks from downtown, with the school a block away, Boyle Park a block away, the mountain, because I was so much into bicycling, just out my back door. It was just wonderful. I always thought that I would want one of my kids to have my house because I thought it was such a wonderful location. By then my kids were older, but for them and their families, too. I am fortunate because my daughter and her husband bought into my home and they are sharing the home with me and they absolutely love it. So we're keeping that plan that I had originally in my mind.

09:06 Debra Schwartz: How many children do you have?

09:08 Marilyn Price: I have two. Actually, I always thought it was going to be my son that would be sharing the home with me, but they have moved on to DC.

09:18 Debra Schwartz: And your children were born in San Francisco then?

09:21 Marilyn Price: My son was born in San Francisco and my daughter in Marin.

09:25 Debra Schwartz: And their names?

09:26 Marilyn Price: Bob and Beth.

09:30 Debra Schwartz: So, Marin General was it?

09:34 Marilyn Price: Bob was born at the medical center in California.

09:39 Debra Schwartz: Pacific —

09:40 Marilyn Price: Yeah, and my daughter was born at Marin General.

09:46 Debra Schwartz: That sounds great. So you moved to Mill Valley in the early '80s. Is that when it was, right?

09:53 Marilyn Price: Yes.

09:54 Debra Schwartz: Is there any way to describe or give us a visual of — I mean, you talked a little about the hardware store and the general store, and all that I recall well, but do you remember people? Were there individuals or community that you have that you keep in mind from that time that —

10:20 Marilyn Price: Well, when I moved to Mill Valley, it was before I got involved with Trips for Kids, but I was working at the time and I actually did not get — I did when my kids were little, but that was more in Tiburon — I was involved with the community because I was a housewife and mother and stayed at home. But when I moved to Mill Valley, I was more involved then with my work and people that I met at work, but this is where I had worked for Huey Johnson, who had his home there in Mill Valley, and his

offices out at Fort Cronkhite — no, Rodeo Beach, Rodeo Beach. But my life was more tied with my work and my bicycling, and then with Trips for Kids, than with the neighbors.

11:17 Debra Schwartz: So, I've interviewed Huey Johnson and wonderful interview, wonderful man. Maybe you could tell me a little bit about your work with him.

11:27 Marilyn Price: Well that was where I say my main passion became the environment. In the late '70s, I worked with his wife, Sue, for California for Nuclear Safeguards, and we were trying to make a stop to nuclear power plants, and at that time I met Huey. As a matter of fact, we both raised money through, I think it was a bike-a-thon, and every night I would make all these calls to all the people to ask them to participate. I think Huey and I were the top people that got the most people to sign up and give money. And I think at one point Huey mentioned that someday maybe we'll work together on something, and then he went up to Sacramento as Secretary of Resources. When he returned after his four or five years there, I was at a point that I'd been working at a bike shop, and I was at a point where I was either going to go to graduate school in social work, or do work in the field that I was so passionate about, which was environmental protection. And somehow I hooked up with Huey and met him for coffee in Mill Valley and got hired to assist him. At that time Huey was just starting and it was —

12:54 Debra Schwartz: Resource Renewal Institute.

12:55 Marilyn Price: He was just starting Resource Renewal Institute, and I was just the first person that he hired, and I learned everything from him. At that time we were using typewriters and then he got a Kaypro machine, and then we started putting stuff on the computer. I learned everything, all — I had never done much work in my life. I had volunteered for, oh, it was six to nine years with another wonderful person, Neil Smith, who is a forgotten person. Neil actually may have lived in Mill Valley too. Neil — I'm going to backtrack here a little bit — but Neil had been an architect. He left a very lucrative practice and invested his own money in recycling. And this is before the garbage company took over recycling. Neil had an operation in San Rafael on Irwin. I volunteered for Neil for about six years in this tiny little place where we recycled things, and he ran it until the garbage company bought it from him.

14:09 Marilyn Price: So that had been my prior experience. I had done that but on a volunteer level, and that was fulfilling my interest in environmental protection. We worked on the "Bottle Bill"¹ and ran around in garbage trucks picking up people's recyclables and being at the stations where housewives would come with their bottles and cans and we would collect them. So I learned some from that too. And then from Huey I learned more about the office-y kind of stuff. Writing your thank you letters to your donors, how to set up your files — and I don't know if I would have started Trips for Kids had I not had that experience because I don't know that I would have felt that I had the tools. And somewhere along that time, I worked for Huey some of it part-time, some

¹ California Beverage Container Recycling and Litter Reduction Act of 1986.

full-time, and I dreamed up this idea of doing Trips for Kids and gradually just started doing more and more of that.

15:14 Debra Schwartz: So you worked with Huey for nine years did you say?

15:17 Marilyn Price: Yeah, it was a number of years. I commuted by bike every day. I first used to go through the road and the tunnel, and then when I had started mountain biking in the early '80s — which was a few years before I started to work for Huey — then I started doing it by mountain bike ride and that's kind of an interesting story, too. Because I would go from my home in Mill Valley and I would go to the stables at Marincello. I would go to the Miwok Stables.

15:51 Debra Schwartz: In Tennessee Valley.

15:52 Marilyn Price: Yes, at Tennessee Valley. And I took this little bitty path that was — maybe people hiked on it, but it wasn't really a trail. I took it rain or shine. I had fenders on my bike, and I had to carry a hanger with me because the mud would get so bad, and I had to get the mud out of the fenders, but I would be there with — I would see the coyote all by myself and all the birds. Then I used to drag railroad ties to where these puddles were so bad you would just get up to your ankles in mud. So I made my own path. And at that time, the Park Service — Huey had been so instrumental in saving that area out there — and the Park Service decided they were going to get into developing paths for cyclists. So I kept putting in my two cents and I petitioned Huey to help to get that path as one of their adopted trails. With Huey's help we were successful. They weren't going to do it, but that path is now one of the trails that they developed and now it's a beautiful path. As a matter of fact, the bike messengers call it the Seven Bridges or something like that to Heaven. It's just a beautiful path, you don't have to carry that hanger anymore. [chuckle]

17:18 Debra Schwartz: This is GGNRA [Golden Gate National Recreation Area] land 'cause it was already designated.

17:21 Marilyn Price: Yes.

17:22 Debra Schwartz: So you rode from Mill Valley down Miller Avenue into Tennessee Valley, and from the stables there you lifted up and over Cody Bridge, I guess that's it.

17:34 Marilyn Price: Well it wasn't the Bobcat [Trail]. I connected with a road that would come down from Marincello, and then you would turn right. I'm not sure of that name — and just go right down into Rodeo Beach. Then on the way back you would go the other direction. And I did that for just a number of years rain or shine. I was just biking, I didn't want to drive, I just wanted to — actually I stayed with Huey until he moved into the city and I left only because I did not want to bike into the city. I would have stayed with Huey, and just kept on with my Trips for Kids, but that was the only reason I left, that I didn't want to bike into the city.

18:21 Debra Schwartz: I have to say in our short interview so far it seems like all roads lead to biking. [laughter] There's a bike almost in every story, so tell me about your biking.

18:35 Marilyn Price: Well, in my story biking goes back to my early family days because I — and I have said this many times to people — but when I was four, and I can remember this vividly, that I had ridden a tricycle. This would be a very common story to many people. There was no training wheels at the time, and my dad would hold the back of my seat to help me ride a two-wheeler, and I remember vividly him letting go, and I was on my own. I don't know if that was the pivotal point that hooked me with bicycling, but I know I never stopped bicycling. I used my bicycle with friends in grammar school, in high school. I went away to University of Michigan, first thing got a bicycle. I didn't want to walk to campus, I always bicycled. I didn't venture outside and do trips. I took a couple of them with somebody in Michigan, and not until —

19:35: Then I moved to San Francisco, and for two years, I did not have a bicycle. And then we got one. I bicycled some in the city, and then we moved to Marin, I really started bicycling very seriously in the early '70s. Going out with friends, out to the country. Then it was all road riding for about 10 years. It was road riding in century rides, I did one double century, out with friends and that was the thing that I enjoyed most when I was not tending my kids. It was usually a few times a week. And then using it for transportation too because the whole environmental thing, being such a wonderful tool. I have to think sometimes, what do I love about bicycling? It's the motion, it's the freedom. Just how you can go from here to there. Certainly you have to work going uphill, but how you can go so quickly using your own energy. And you have time to view what's going on around you. I just love transporting myself by bike.

20:53 Debra Schwartz: So how did you transfer your commitment to biking into your nonprofit? Tell me about Trips for Kids.

21:00 Marilyn Price: I was working for Huey and thinking about well, maybe doing some other things. I had volunteered for two years at St. Anthony's dining room in the city. I took the bus in and just served food. This was after I stopped doing the recycling program, and it was like, "What am I going to do next?" And one day on Mount Tam, bicycling up Mount Tam just out of Mill Valley, going up the Railroad Grade — I just revisited the spot the other day — and I looked out and it just came into my mind. Looking out at the city, and remembering the people down there, wouldn't it be nice to bring some of the kids that I used to see in the neighborhood there up on this mountain, on a bike? The kids would love to enjoy it like I was. And my next thought was I couldn't do it.

22:02: And two weeks later, I read in a bicycling magazine, that a psychologist in Southern California was doing a similar program with the YMCA, and I wrote him and I said, "I'm not a psychologist, what do you think? Is this something you think I could do?" He wrote me right back, "Yeah, you don't have to be a psychologist, just start

small.” And I swear, his letter gave me the, not just the inspiration but the, not necessarily confidence either, but yes, I’m going to go on to the next step, knowing that he said, “Yes, you can do it.” And with that, I just kind of like jumped in and started to research how to do it. Took me a couple of years, and I formed a nonprofit. The same time I was still working for Huey, and then just started doing it on a very part-time basis.

22:57 Debra Schwartz: And so what is it exactly that you did?

23:01 Marilyn Price: I have one other thing I want to add about that is a small world story. Turns out years later, this psychologist, I was talking to a man, Alan Kay, president of our Board of Directors, and Alan says to me, “Oh, my son-in-law did something like this in Southern California.” I said, “Alan, what’s your son-in-law’s name? I know so many people that are doing it.” And he said, “Kevin Fox”, the very same guy. So that’s the small world story. But so, tell me again your question —

23:37 Debra Schwartz: It was: What is it you’re doing exactly?

23:39 Marilyn Price: So how did I start next? So here again, giving people confidence of just trying things that they can’t do, that they think they can’t do, someone said to me, “Well, why don’t you just go up to the big Interbike Show and see if you could get bikes to start your program?” I said, “Oh sure, I’ll go. What am I going to accomplish?” But I did. I went up with one little piece of paper, and I started to visit the manufacturers. The first four manufacturers I went to said, “Oh, I think maybe we could provide you with bikes.” Now that was in the late ’80s, and there were not many philanthropic bike groups around. Now there’s tons of them. At that time there were guys going up to get sponsorships that were racing, but there weren’t philanthropic bike groups. I would dare say we were probably one of the first. So I came back just elated four of them would give us bikes, and one of them, with the help of John Lewis, who owned the Schwinn bike shop on Miller, one of them, Schwinn, came through with 15 bikes.

24:54: At that time I didn’t really have Trips for Kids established, but I worked with the American Youth Hostel, and for a year I ran a bike program for them. And at the same time I was working on getting our own non-profit status. And then in ’88, when we got our own non-profit status, I was ready to start Trips for Kids, and a gentleman — I went to Charles Cunningham and Jacquie Phelan’s wedding out in the other stables by Rodeo Beach. They had their wedding party, and a man who worked with Dean Witter, very much a philanthropist — they had me stand up on a soap box and I told people what I wanted to do, and I said, “Oh, we need bikes.” This man came up to me afterwards and he gave us another 15 bikes to start the Trips for Kids program. So it was like, just step by step, until it fell into place, and once you have the bikes you don’t turn back, and that is why, to this day, we get a bike sponsor. We’re not doing 15 bikes, but since I have started our national program to develop our international program, to develop chapters around the country, we have a bike sponsor that gives every new chapter five bikes. It’s a huge carrot on a stick to get them started, and not only that. As I say, once you get the bikes, it’s like, “Now I’m not going to turn back. I’m going to keep going.”

26:23 Debra Schwartz: You have the responsibility of that gift.

26:24 Marilyn Price: Exactly. Exactly.

26:26 Debra Schwartz: So you're a kid, you've not been on a bike, what's that kid's experience going to be with you? What's going to happen when he —

26:38 Marilyn Price: Well, on our trips, actually, they do have to know how to bike. There are occasions where kids do not know how to bike, and somebody from their agency will stay back with them, and usually by the time we come back from our trip they have learned. I know even one time a teenager learned how to ride. But on our trip, they do have to know how to bike. The kids we serve are 10 to 17. So we say that, ideally 10 to 17, we can take them a little younger or a little older, but they have to be big enough to ride at least a 20-inch wheel bike. We have a few of those; and their hands have to be strong enough to use the hand brake. But the thing that is new for these kids is they haven't really been off road. I would say the majority of the kids that we serve, and they're all kids who could not afford this opportunity without us, they would never be out there biking with us in these natural settings. But the new thing for them is riding off road, out of the city, away from the concrete, that's what's new.

27:49 Debra Schwartz: Do you provide transportation for them in the city? How does it work?

27:54 Marilyn Price: Yes, yes. We put the bikes and all the equipment that we need into a van. We meet the groups at the trail head. So the groups that join us do need to somehow have their own transportation. A few of them will take the bus. We'll meet them at the Manzanita bus stop and go up into the Headlands. We used to do one at China Camp where we could then bike to China Camp, so some of them will take buses. Many of the agencies have their own vehicles. Some will rent, or use volunteers and parents to help get the kids to us. We do also, actually, have our own kids, because we run also an Earn-a-Bike program, where kids in the Canal come after school to learn how to work on bikes and earn points to buy bikes of their own, with points not with money, and those kids we take on rides, too. And we do have a passenger van. So we do take those kids in the van with the bikes, and take them on trips in Marin.

28:58 Debra Schwartz: So your business is located in San Rafael?

29:01 Marilyn Price: Yes. It was run out of my home for 10 years in Mill Valley, and that's kind of an interesting Mill Valley story, because when I started, I started the rides, and I continued to contact the bike industry after getting the bikes because we needed parts, and they would send me parts to repair our bikes, and we would get more parts than we needed. So I would just store all these parts. And then I inherited — from Jacquie Phelan, who used to put on a bike swap, I inherited — I went to her bike swap. We raised \$500, which to me was amazing, from these parts that we didn't need. And so we got \$500 from that swap, and she didn't want to put it on anymore. So we took over her swap. We held it at the Mill Valley Community Center before it was rebuilt, and we held

our swap there for a number of years. I kept reaching out for more stuff, not just to repair our bikes, but also to be able to sell at the swap because every year we made more money at the swap. Our best year at the swap we made like \$65,000 dollars.

30:26 Debra Schwartz: Holy cow.

30:27 Marilyn Price: So, by then we had outgrown — I think maybe the construction started, that may be why had to leave the Community Center, and that year it was held at the Tamalpais High School. We're not doing the swap anymore, we've got other ways of raising money. It was a lot of work. But what happened also in the meantime, because we were collecting so many parts and bikes, I had 100 bikes in my backyard. Every single room in my house was filled with boxes so that we would have it for the swap. We would pack it all up for the swap and it's like, "Wow, I can't really live this way anymore, I need to find another location." At the same time I wanted to do, besides just the rides, I wanted to do an Earn-a-Bike program because I knew of them, and so I went looking for a place to have an Earn-a-Bike program, and a bike thrift shop. I looked in Marin City and I looked up in San Rafael and the first thing I did find that was going to work was with the Ritter House. Bob Simon with the Ritter House had a half a garage at our location in San Rafael and we rented it from him and started our Earn-a-Bike program and a bike thrift shop. And we just went from there until eventually we occupied the whole building and then bought the building outright and that is our home. So we just kept growing gradually.

32:05 Debra Schwartz: You know, I don't know that a lot of people know about your thrift shop, which hardly seems like a thrift shop, I mean, it is a *shop* shop.

32:12 Marilyn Price: Yes.

32:13 Debra Schwartz: There are so many wonderful clothes that it doesn't seem like just biking clothes either.

32:17 Marilyn Price: Yeah well, and the nice thing — there is also a bit of history on that. When I biked so much in the '70s, and was very much into the environment and into recycling, all my friends and me included, we had all this stuff in our garage that we didn't know what to do with and I thought, "Oh, somebody ought to start a bike thrift shop." Little did I know it was going to be me and I didn't come at it to develop a bike thrift shop, I came at it to raise money for Trips for Kids. That was another thing I learned from Huey about starting a green business that could help support your non-profit and it really has. That's what our bike thrift shop is and why it looks like such a nice shop.

33:00: This will be my 27th year to go back to the Interbike Bike Show. Now it's being held in Vegas, and that's where I first went to in Reno to get to these four companies. So we're very well connected with the bike industry — and this is all part of our shop, it's very environmental — and they send us their overstocked, their still-usable outdated merchandise. It is still new, and a lot of the items in our shop are these new things. So

people come from all over the Bay Area and donate bikes out of their garage, or clothes, and so that's why our shop does have a lot of new things, too. Besides being a green business, at this point in time it's like 60 percent of the money we need to run our program comes from our bike thrift shop. So that green business that Huey used to talk about, the whole environmental thing, of how it does an enormous job of really helping to protect the planet too because all of these things that people don't know what to do with, we give them a second life, we refurbish the bikes. So part of my whole recycling background of the three R's — and teaching the kids the three R's is very important in our Earn-a-Bike program, and that's all they work with is recycled parts.

34:27 Debra Schwartz: The three R's?

34:28 Marilyn Price: Reduce, reuse, and then recycle.

34:35 Debra Schwartz: And when you describe a green business that's what you mean?

34:38 Marilyn Price: That's what I mean, that it is an environmental business.

34:42 Debra Schwartz: Not so much buy new, but recycling and reducing.

34:44 Marilyn Price: Yes, yes, yes.

34:46 Debra Schwartz: Well, of course it's quite a charming setting over there. I've been there several times. There's a lot of gear, there's a lot of bikes. I would describe — if I dare say a comment about this — it's a hopeful place, because especially when you see all those children's bikes, which it's kind of sad that the children aren't on them anymore and they're sort of lonely bikes, but you know they have another home to go to and that's a hopeful bike.

35:16 Marilyn Price: Yes, and they've outgrown them for the most part. The kids have outgrown them and the family will come and trade in the — we don't do trades, but they donate back the old bike and then buy it at a very reasonable price, another refurbished bike.

35:34 Debra Schwartz: So when you go there and you see these bikes you know there's story, and there's history, and there's love, and there's experience with all these bikes, and they're ready to serve and get you ready to go out again, so it is quite a nice environment. How many employees do you have working with you?

35:50 Marilyn Price: Oh now, and this is just for Marin, we have probably about 25 people. I mean, some are part-time ride leaders, part-time shop helpers, part-time instructors for the kids. Nationally, I am still the only one that runs our national program. That we started in 1999, and the history of that, we started to get coverage in *Bicycling Magazine*. We were novel at the time, so in 1991 *Bicycling Magazine* did a beautiful story on us with colored photos, and I started to get requests from people around the

country, very much like me when I contacted Kevin Fox. “I thought of this notion, I don’t think I can do it, what do you think?” And now we served as that model, so people would write to me. Now it’s over a few thousand people have written. Either they thought of the notion or we gave them the idea, and we now help them get started. So we have 70 active chapters today, and another 20 that are inactive. They may become active again, and of those chapters, five are in Canada, one in Israel and one in Sierra Leone. We hope to just keep growing, but it’s just giving people the idea.

37:25 Debra Schwartz: How many kids have ridden with Trips for Kids? Have you ever —

37:28 Marilyn Price: We do, we counted. It’s more in kid days, ’cause I get the statistics from the chapters. And in Marin we don’t — it’s just too much work to keep track of individual kids, so we count it by kid days. And now the end of last year it was 142,500 kid days. I don’t know how many different individuals. Many of them maybe only went once, but that’s the kid day count with all the chapters helping.

38:00 Debra Schwartz: That’s a lot of kids. Any of the kids that ever come on your trips come back to you as adults and said —

38:05 Marilyn Price: I do, we see them. We usually try to grab them and interview them, and it’s quite delightful. I just actually was at a store up in San Rafael, and I had ridden up so my bike was there and the chain marks all over my leg and of course I’m like 20 years older or whatever, but this kid, he’s now in his 30s came up to me and I knew right away who he was. It was Victor, who was one of our first Earn-a-Bike kids when I first started that program. So just absolutely delightful to talk to him. His brother had participated, too. So stories like that and meeting them again, and usually we grab them and interview them to see what did they get out of it that we use in funding proposals and things like that.

38:51 Debra Schwartz: What do they say? What did Victor say?

38:54 Marilyn Price: Well, we have about 200 pages of quotes that we have gotten either by mail, e-mail, in person, or these little interview things. Like there’s a story of one of the kids on the ride. I always wear my Trips for Kids t-shirt 365 days out of the year. It’s like that’s the only t-shirt I wear. I walk into a bank in Corte Madera and she’s 23 years old, she looks at me and says, “My God! Trips for Kids! I went on one of your rides, you let my mom come too. That was the best experience I’ve ever had.” So that’s just an experience of a one-day ride with us. Then the kids in our Earn-a-Bike program, some who start at age nine and don’t leave until they go off to college, we hire them when they get to be 14, and then they come back and they really will tell you how much we did for them to help them. The Earn-A-Bike program is a beginning job-training program. To get the credit they have to apply themselves, they can’t goof off. Plus we teach them along the way. So it teaches them early job-training skills, how to stick with things, how to succeed. Then you’ve got the wonderful instructors along the way. So they definitely gain something from us. And those are the stories that you hear.

40:35 Debra Schwartz: So you've managed to efficiently combine your sense of what it is to be a good citizen in the world, your obligation as a human being to do your part for the land, the conservation, keeping things green, your passion for riding since the very first moment you were riding on your own, and your boundless energy. You've managed to meld all this together [laughter] somehow and create in your life the perfect niche for you, I suppose.

41:21 Marilyn Price: Definitely, when I think about it, because I was going to go into social work. I was going to go to a graduate social work school. So there's that idea of helping people less fortunate, the huge environmental concern, which is probably one of my major concerns today, the bicycling, and then the love of working with kids. So it was, and I knew that. When I thought of the idea I knew that it was tying all of that together, and that was going to be my next step in life. And it might be my last step in life [laughter] because I'm now 74 and my plan is to stay with it until I can't anymore, and I would like to stay with it.

42:08 Debra Schwartz: Well I have to tell those that are listening that Marilyn rode her bike up to my house for this interview, and there aren't very many people that can ride their bike up this hill, so at 74 or not you're still in excellent shape. It's a blessing and a privilege to be able to live the life that your soul somehow sends you in that direction, to be able to have the opportunity to do this so, and the way you tell your story miraculously things came together. But did you ever have doubts that this was going to materialize or was it just one day at a time or —

42:53 Marilyn Price: Well, in the early stages even though Kevin Fox gave me that encouragement to go to the next step, I didn't know. I didn't know that I would, but I also was fortunate. I didn't have anything to lose by trying. Today there's always different things that will bother you about running an organization, but I don't think I would ever lose faith in the interest in wanting to continue.

43:29 Debra Schwartz: So you have a lot of support. I went on your website, and I saw some of the names that are linked with your non-profit. How about telling me about some of the people that have come forward in support of Trips for Kids?

43:42 Marilyn Price: I would say, when I think about it, or I'm asked that question of what I have gotten out of it, one of the things definitely is all the people that I met. I mean, probably thousands of people, and I can even think of their names and envision their faces, so the support from just many, many people all along the way, just whether it's been a little or a lot, has been phenomenal. In terms of name support we have our Honorary Board that is mostly musicians. One of our board members, Jerry Pompili, was Vice President of Bill Graham Presents. He came up with the notion, I'm sure, about this Honorary Board, and he just had the contacts and wrote the letter. So we've got Bob Weir, and Mickey Hart, and Phil Lesh. Robin Williams was on our Honorary Board, Huey Lewis, Peter Coyote, and all he did was write a little letter, and they agreed to be on our Honorary Board, so if you see names that you know, that's where that came from.

45:00: So you've got the Honorary Board, and people that donate money to us, but it's the everyday people — and I am just appreciative of anybody's donation of time or money, whether it's \$5 from a kid who saved it from their piggy bank because he wants to help other kids, or an adult that'll send you \$10, to foundations that'll give you several thousand dollars, to volunteers that whether they come out once or many times — it's just everybody. That's what I say with our organization, I'm sure with every organization, it's just that step at a time, and how it attracts people, and how everybody is putting something in so that you just become more as the years go on, which has really happened with us.

46:05 Debra Schwartz: Here in Marin County we have a large biking group. We have the new biking museum, Joe Breeze opened that up and we have other bikers. Tell me about your affiliation with some of the old guard.

46:22 Marilyn Price: Actually when I first started I formed our own advisory board and — Gary Fisher was on it — I definitely used their names and I have stayed very much in touch with the whole bicycling community. Their MCBC², the museum, and all the pioneers. As a matter of fact this was our 16th year we put on — it was up in San Rafael at the Broken Drum Brewery that Noah Berry owned — we put on Meet the Mountain Bike Pioneers event. The pioneers would come, we would invite all of our friends, the pioneers would come and celebrate with us at the Broken Drum Brewery. This year we switched because the museum just opened, so we're now going to have it every year at the Marin Museum of Bicycling, which is the more appropriate place to have it. But definitely personally I am very connected with the pioneers, and just bicycling in general.

47:34 Marilyn Price: I mean, this my 27th year at Interbike, I never really want to go. "Las Vegas, oh!" But as soon as I get into the hall and you just start walking the hall, and you see all of these people, you see them every year and you know them. There is something, I guess it's because of my love of bicycling, but something really special to me about the bicycling community. I kind of think about when — soon after I moved to San Francisco, they came out with the weeble wobbles that you would put the band on your head and the little pinwheel's up above.

48:09 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, and the little balls, yeah.

48:10 Marilyn Price: And sometimes you'd be kind of like acting silly and you'd walk down the street, and other people were — you nod your head. So you'd both have your weeble wobbles on you, and of course you're friends. But it's like that with bicycling. You're out on your bike. You see somebody on their bike, you just smile. There's a friend. They share this love of bicycling with me. So that's another thing to love about bicycling.

48:35 Debra Schwartz: What would you say to anybody listening to this who has a

² Marin County Biking Coalition

passion? Obviously, you have a passion that you've actualized into your life's goal here. You're doing great things. And there, where you were in 1980, let's say, what would you say to somebody that's trying to live a life like you have managed to put together?

49:05 Marilyn Price: Well, and I just had that conversation today with a woman who called. She wanted to start a Trips for Kids Chapter. She lost her son. Her son was murdered and loved bicycling from a very young age. And she had written me, and then we did a little Facebook conversation. I just looked at her message this morning where she said, "It's daunting," and I called her on the phone. I tried to reach her before. I connected with her. In answer to your question, what I said to her, I felt exactly the same. That's when I thought of it. I didn't have confidence in myself that I had the ability to do anything like that. I wrote the letter to Kevin, he gave me some confidence. I just started, and that's exactly the advice I gave her. If you really have the passion — and then I throw in hard work and perseverance. Say, you have a lot of money from somebody, then if other people hire people to do it for you, but if you're starting it on your own — if you have that, you have the passion, you're willing to work hard, you're willing to stick with it, it will just happen.

50:18: You just take it step by step. I also learned that from Huey. He told me a story about perseverance. And I don't know if I remember all the details, but I think it had to do with saving trees. I think that's what the story was. And that he worked on it for years, and years, and years, and never gave up, and then they succeeded. So, I think I picked up that notion. I probably had it in me, but I picked up the notion of the importance of sticking to something and working toward it. And that's what I tell people today. That's what I told this woman, and I just hope, kind of left a feeling when we hung up the phone that she really felt like, "Yes, I can." I'll have to let you know that later, but I know it does happen.

51:13 Debra Schwartz: I'm sure you've had lots of bikes over the years. Yes? Or do you have the same bike as you've always have?

51:20 Marilyn Price: I have not. I've gotten rid of a few of the bikes that I had because I used to do road riding. I didn't actually want to get rid of them. But the bikes that I ride — I ride an old Redline that I got when I worked at the Cove Bike Shop in the early '80s, it's a mountain bike, and I ride that to this day. And then I ride a Trailmaster that another Mill Valley person, this was Eric Koski, their family owned the Cove Bike Shop and he invented the Trailmaster bike. When I worked there, I was able to get secondhand from another person that worked there one of their Trailmasters. Those are my bikes to this day. I haven't gone modern. I love the old, and I am just from where I come from, from an environmental standpoint, I just want to keep riding. It works for me, I don't have to compete and keep up with people. I like the old friction shifters, and the old brakes, and they're easier to maintain, and they will last a long time.

52:28 Debra Schwartz: So, I'm going ask you kind of an odd question. I've never asked anybody this question before, but you know how it is when you're on a bike a long time. They start to feel a bit like a friend, right? If you could tell your bike, if you could

say to your bike what it is that bike has done for you, what would you say?

52:49 Marilyn Price: Well, I would say sometimes that the bike has saved my sanity. Just if I get down or something, I will get on my bike, and whatever was bothering me goes away. That I would just never want to stop riding it. My son used to joke that when I died — I also get attached to cars. I use them when I have to, but I get attached to the cars, too. I keep them for years, and years, and years. So I had this old Volvo that I started out when it was our vehicle to transport the bikes and the kids. And my son would joke, because I didn't want to get rid of the Volvo. He said, "When you die, mom, I'm going to load your bike into the car, and I'm going to push you off a cliff." So, I'll be there: me, my bike, and my car, the old car that I didn't want to get rid of. Or else he was going to put me in — when I'm in a nursing home, he's going to put me on a bike where they'll attach my feet, and I'll peddle around and around, and I'll watch a tape of the scenery and of people biking that I never stopped. So, that's my son's jokes. We'll have to see on that one, too.

54:02 Debra Schwartz: But that's what it is for you.

54:04 Marilyn Price: It is, yes.

54:05 Debra Schwartz: It's kind of the love of your life.

54:07 Marilyn Price: It is, yeah. Well, and my kids.

54:10 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

54:10 Marilyn Price: Kids, kids, definitely kids biking. That's —

54:13 Debra Schwartz: But it's a love affair you have with biking. [chuckle]

54:16 Marilyn Price: Yes, and I dare say I bet a lot of bicyclists share this. Just the other day, another little interview, but this comes up a lot in terms of the universal experience of what we do. And in terms of Trips for Kids, I will read stories from the other chapters where they're talking about the trip that they took with a child, what they got out of it, how they went from A to Z on the trip. And I will think, "That is exactly us." One year I even got an inquiry from a man, Trevor Knowlden, his name. He lived in South Africa and on his own he took kids biking and he was interested in starting a Trips for Kids chapter. So he was sharing an article that had been printed in South Africa — very impoverished, he was impoverished, the kids were impoverished.

55:21: He shared an article of the trip and how it was written, I thought, "That's exactly what we do. We're doing the exact same thing all the way in South Africa." And again, it's taking kids, putting them on bikes, getting them out into nature. We're all accomplishing the same thing. And again, so that goes back to where it's not just me, but I think a lot of other people feel that passion, and what it can do.

55:51 Debra Schwartz: So in the final question I'm going ask you today, and I just want to say before I ask it, thank you for your wonderful story.

56:00 Marilyn Price: Oh.

56:00 Debra Schwartz: And I so enjoyed listening to it, but is there anything that we haven't talked about today that you wish we had? Anything at all that you haven't said that you'd like to say?

56:12 Marilyn Price: Oh, I'm sure I would afterwards on my way home on my bike, I'll think of a million things but for now, no. I think you did an excellent job, and I thank you very much, and it was very much fun.

56:26 Debra Schwartz: You, too.

56:27 Marilyn Price: It was very much fun reminiscing. There are probably just a million stories that I have in my head but —

56:33 Debra Schwartz: Just a nice ride down memory lane [chuckle] on your bike.

56:37 Marilyn Price: Yes.

56:37 Debra Schwartz: Thanks for taking me along.

56:39 Marilyn Price: Well, thank you. Thank you for inviting and listening and being interested, and that's all quite, quite wonderful.

56:47 Debra Schwartz: Okay well, that concludes our interview then. Thanks very much on behalf on the Mill Valley Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society for your time today.

56:56 Marilyn Price: Well, thank you.