

Mill Valley Oral History Program
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TRISHA GARLOCK and PENNY WEISS

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Mari Allen in 2014**

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In this oral history, Trisha Garlock and Penny Weiss tell the story of Kiddo!, the fundraising organization they founded together in 1982 to support arts and music education in Mill Valley's public schools. Trisha and Penny recall the outrage they felt when they learned that as a result of the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, state funding for such programs was going to be cut, leaving it up to individual schools and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) groups. At the time, Penny was president of the PTA at Old Mill School and Trisha was working in the arts non-profit sector, and the two neighbors and friends resolved to combine their experience and connections to create the Mill Valley Schools Community Foundation, later renamed Kiddo!. Trisha and Penny recall how the organization was initially conceived as a stopgap measure until the State resumed funding art and music education — which had still not occurred at the time of this interview. They describe how, after years of hard work on their part, and with the support of the local business community and civic groups, it became an institution in the community that has had a positive impact on the lives of the many thousands of young people who have passed through Mill Valley's public schools. The remarkable story that Penny and Trisha tell in this oral history is also a poignant story of a singular and enduring friendship that continued and deepened after the two retired from Kiddo!, Penny in 1996 and Trisha some 15 years later.

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**Oral History of Trisha Garlock and Penny Weiss
December 18th, 2014**

Editor's note: This transcript has been reviewed by Trisha Garlock and Penny Weiss, who made minor corrections and clarifications.

Mari Allen: Today is Wednesday, December 18th, 2014. My name is Mari Allen and I am here at the Mill Valley Public Library in the History Room interviewing Kiddo! The Mill Valley Schools Community Foundation co-founders Penny Weiss and Trisha Garlock, who are here today to talk about their contributions to the education of thousands and thousands of students in the Mill Valley School District. Penny, I'll start with you. If you can tell me first your name, where you were born, and how long you have lived in Mill Valley.

Penny Weiss: My name is Penny Weiss and I was born February 2nd, 1948, in Los Angeles. I've lived in Mill Valley since 1970 in the same house. It was our first house after we got married and we are living there still.

Mari Allen: And the name of your husband?

Penny Weiss: Robert Weiss.

Mari Allen: Do you have any children?

Penny Weiss: We have two grown sons, Josh Weiss and Gabe Weiss. They are both married and both have children and they live in the East Bay.

Mari Allen: Did they go to the Mill Valley public schools?

Penny Weiss: Yes, they did.

Mari Allen: Okay, thank you. And Trisha?

Trisha Garlock: Trisha Garlock. What was the question again? [laughs]

Mari Allen: Tell me when and where you were born and how long you have lived in Mill Valley.

Trisha Garlock: Okay. Born January 6th, 1948, in Bakersfield, California. Moved to Mill Valley in 1973 to the same house, lived there ever since, still do. Next door neighbor to Penny Weiss.

Mari Allen: What street do you live on?

Trisha Garlock: Florence Avenue. Just up the hill from the library.

Mari Allen: So Penny was here before you arrived.

Trisha Garlock: Yes. And my husband's name is Jim. We have two children, both grown. Both went through Mill Valley schools: Old Mill School, Mill Valley Middle, and Tam High.

Mari Allen: Trisha, prior to your involvement in starting Kiddo! what was it that you did? What was your occupation?

Trisha Garlock: I was an executive director of a non-profit arts organization, the World Print Council, in San Francisco.

Mari Allen: And Penny, what about you, what did you do before this incredible idea began?

Penny Weiss: I was very, very involved in the schools as a volunteer, and before that, I volunteered in the Sausalito co-op nursery school. But as soon as my eldest son started at Old Mill, I started getting more and more active in volunteering and PTA activities. When Trisha and I met, I was president of the PTA.

Mari Allen: So tell me about the beginnings of Kiddo!. What prompted you both to get really involved in changing the way education is in Mill Valley and your impact also on the state of California in creating the foundation that you did?

Penny Weiss: One of the things that we probably should note, in case somebody doesn't make the connection right away, when Trisha and I first came together, we were just close friends so there was a lot of time when we would just be sitting together and chatting and having tea and talking about what it was that we were doing in our lives. Trisha brought to this idea a huge amount of experience in non-profit management. I had zero experience in that, but I brought to the table a lot of knowledge about the Mill Valley schools because of what my position was. So the two of us together kind of made one whole to go forward with the project.

Mari Allen: What was the impetus, why create a schools foundation?

Trisha Garlock: Well, one day over coffee, Penny started talking. At the time, our son was two.

Mari Allen: Penny, how old was your son at the time?

Penny Weiss: That would have been in 1980, so Josh would have been about 9.

Trisha Garlock: Penny started talking about the fact that as PTA president, the principal had come to her to let her know that the district was going to be cutting the art and music program and that the only way to save it was to ask the PTA to pick up the funding for it.

Mari Allen: What was the cause of the budget cuts?

Trisha Garlock: Proposition 13. So Penny at the time — PTAs at the time, unlike PTAs of today, the main fundraiser was a bake sale at Old Mill Park at the Mill Valley Fall Arts Festival. And Penny said, “How can we fund teachers’ salaries from a bake sale?”

Penny Weiss: The more we talked about it, the more outraged we became about it. Both of us had a real passion about the arts. Obviously that was Trisha’s professional life, but I have always had a passion about art and music. We just got madder and madder as we were sitting there contemplating the injustice of it and then we also started talking about — at that time probably still the case — that five PTAs in Mill Valley were not able to raise equitable amounts of money. So maybe Old Mill was going to be able to do something and maybe Park was going to be able to do something, but Tam Valley was probably not going to be able to do the same thing. And the more we talked about that, the more outraged we got at the inequity of these things not being funded at a district level. So it was really founded out of a passion for the arts and an outrage that they were going to be taken away; and the madder we got, the more we said, “I don’t think I even want to live in a place that doesn’t value arts for children. How are you going to raise children without art? That is just not right!”

Trisha Garlock: Education without the arts isn’t a comprehensive education. So then we started talking about — you know, with a 2-year-old, I knew nothing about the schools — but I knew that by the time our son would be in kindergarten, I wanted to be sure there were programs in place. So with my knowledge of fundraising, non-profits, and such, and Penny’s knowledge of the schools, we thought, if we put our heads together, we could figure out some way to make a difference. So we started thinking about the idea that, you know, Mill Valley was a small enough community, there should be one organization, it shouldn’t be the responsibility of individual PTA units and their bake sales and whatever to fund these programs. We also felt it was a community responsibility. It was a community responsibility above and beyond just the parents because for a community to survive, you have to have good schools — and for a community to thrive. Hence the first name, which was Mill Valley Schools Community Foundation. That was very intentional that we put the word “community” in there.

Penny Weiss: We were certain, we had this certainty of naivety for sure, but we were certain that we could make up the difference in the inequity of what each of the individual schools was going to be able to contribute through the participation of businesses and community members. So when we were looking at, well, where is it going to get better for everyone as opposed to you go to the schools that are raising a lot of money and say, “Well now you are actually going to get less money than you got before so everybody else could have an equitable share.” We knew from the beginning that that wasn’t going to fly and that people wouldn’t participate in it. So when people ask us now, how did you know that was going to work? Well, we didn’t actually know, we just said, “Well, we will just make it happen.” That’s all. There was a lot of naivety involved, a lot.

Mari Allen: How did you get the buy-in of others, the people at the other schools, or the superintendent?

Trisha Garlock: Well, there was a lot of skepticism in the beginning. So we got together and we decided then we needed to put together a board, find out about starting a non-profit, and getting our 501c3.

Penny Weiss: Trisha's husband Jim, who is a lawyer, was really helpful in making all of that — the legal part that we had to do — make it happen.

Mari Allen: Were these conversations still happening in one of your kitchens?

Trisha Garlock: Oh yes. So we decided, we needed to build this community and we needed to gain the trust of the individual school communities, because as I said, there was a lot of skepticism. So what we did — and Penny already had the connections, being the PTA president at Old Mill — to find the most respected people in each of the schools to join the board and be part of that, so that they would then be able to transfer that trust that they had to the rest of their school community. Another thing that was happening at the time, which really kind of helped bring the foundation and the cohesiveness together, was that — because everybody was very focused on their own school and that was all they cared about, just their own school — the year or two before, two schools had closed.

Mari Allen: When was that, do you know?

Trisha Garlock: That was Homestead and Marin Terrace.

Penny Weiss: I think that was 1980.

Trisha Garlock: Yes.

Mari Allen: So Prop 13 was in 1978, '79?

Trisha Garlock: '78. For the first couple of years, schools were fine because there was a surplus but as soon as that surplus was gone, then the funding for schools started to be cut, and that is when the first thing always — people look on the chopping block for some reason that is beyond me — is the arts. So anyway, we brought together the leaders from all the schools to be on the board.

Penny Weiss: We went to PTA meetings. When you ask how we got everyone to buy in, it was very difficult and there was a lot of skepticism. Now, when you say “schools foundation,” people know what that means. When Trisha and I started, it was an unknown entity. There was a schools foundation in Kentfield; there was Marcus Foster in Oakland; there was the Ed Fund in San Francisco, and I think that was about it. So when you would go in and say, “Well, we are going to start a schools foundation, and this is how we are going to do it” — it wasn't part of what someone would say, “Oh, I

understand. Now we are going to do this.” So there was a lot of explanation. And we kept saying to people, “We are creating this right now, so it can be whatever we decide it is going to be.” People would say to us over and over, “What does that mean and how is it going to work?” And we would say, “It means what we decide it is going to mean, and it works the way we decide because we are making it up right now.” So there was the buy-in from the PTAs; that was one issue. The school board was cautiously supportive. We went to them first and [they said], “Well, go back to the PTAs and see how the PTAs are going to respond to this before we say anything.” They didn’t say, “No, you can’t do it.” So it was a little bit cyclical on who was going to get in the boat first and say, “Oh, we think this is a great idea!” We went to the administrative council.

Mari Allen: Can you tell me who is on the administrative council?

Penny Weiss: The administrative council was all of the principals and the superintendent. This is where the naivety came in. Trisha and I were so enamored of this wonderful idea that we had that everybody was just going to go, “This is like the best thing ever!” We thought everyone would be so excited. And then we got to the administrative council and we were really shocked at how much opposition there was from the principals, and not the least of it was, “Mm, I’m not sure we like the idea of a citizens’ group raising money and then deciding how programs are going to be administered.” We said, “Actually, that wouldn’t happen. We are talking about raising the money and the school district can still run the programs.” At the time, that’s what we were talking about. “No, we don’t think so.” And we could actually feel that, I remember, we could feel that meeting going south. And if the administrators had said “No,” that was going to be the end of it. I can remember sitting at the table and saying, “Okay, you know what your schools need. Let’s put everything on the table that is getting privately taken care of, that the school district is not paying for.” And they were very different from one school to another, which was part of the concern that the school board had. They were surprised when they started looking at the inequities that were happening at each of the schools. They weren’t aware — I don’t remember it exactly, but Tam Valley might have had a project related to — I’m making this up because I don’t remember — the marsh, and Old Mill might have had one related to something else. So all of the children were not getting exposed to the same programs. So we just said, “Let’s put everything on the table.” Arts were not the identified program area when we first went to the council.

Mari Allen: What was?

Penny Weiss: Nothing was. We went in hoping for a single, unified focus.

Trisha Garlock: We went with an open mind.

Penny Weiss: We knew what we wanted, we wanted it to be the arts, but it wouldn’t have mattered what we wanted if nobody else wanted that. So we said, “Let’s just put everything on the table that all of you have a concern at your individual schools about continuing the programming, and anybody who has an objection to anything that is on the table, throw it off and that won’t be the program that we can fundraise around.” We also

made pretty clear to them that if custodial services was the thing you wanted us to do fundraising around, we couldn't do that. It had to be something attractive.

Trisha Garlock: And something that benefited the children directly.

Penny Weiss: So they might have all agreed on custodial services, but that wasn't the thing that we were going to be able to do. So everything got thrown on the table and one by one somebody objected to something and they all got taken off the table and what was still sitting on the table when we got done with that conversation was art and music. And we said, "Okay, if we can all agree on art and music, then let's try and coalesce around that. Can everybody agree that we can try and do that?" And so then we were able to go forward. But we were taken aback by the level of opposition.

Trisha Garlock: It really took us — well, we started talking about the idea in the fall of 1981, and we received our non-profit status in August of 1982, and our first fundraising year — so it took us almost a year to build the support of the people, for us to even go ahead. Our first fundraising year, we had our first fundraiser in the fall of 1982.

Mari Allen: And that was?

Trisha Garlock: A casino night at Strawberry Park and Rec.

Penny Weiss: And that actually came out of — the Buck Fund had recently happened. I'm sure every non-profit in the universe was thinking that was the font from which all money was flowing, so Trisha and I said, "Let's go, they will give us money because this is such a good idea." And we went and talked to them and they said, "Okay, we might think about giving you a one-time \$20,000 grant after you show us that your community really wants this, so you have to go back to the community and raise a match." So we were hoping it was going to go in the other direction, but it didn't happen; it didn't happen. So when we thought about the Casino Night, and we thought about how much money are we going to raise — again it was naivety. I know casino nights became very popular later, but at that time they were not. We sat down and said, "How much money can we raise? Okay, we'll raise \$10,000 from entrance tickets. We'll raise \$10,000 from a raffle, and we'll raise \$10,000 from the gambling, and then we'll have a match and then some and we can go back to Buck." But it was based on nothing; we made it up.

Trisha Garlock: The other thing again, okay, here we are, brand new organization, nobody knows who we are, nobody even really understands the concept of schools foundations working together. We are going out, we are asking for contributions of prizes, in-kind donations and such. It was kind of like, how do we build credibility, how do we go about that? So we started looking around for the most respected, you know, other kind of non-profit idea in the community that we could partner with and we went to Mill Valley Rotary. The Rotarians said, "Yes, we think this is a good idea, and we will co-sponsor this event with you."

Mari Allen: So you made a presentation at a Rotary luncheon?

Penny Weiss: Yeah.

Trisha Garlock: And then, their members donated prizes.

Penny Weiss: Earl Johnson, remember?

Trisha Garlock: Oh, the first set of braces that he donated to our auction — huge!

Penny Weiss: That was gigantic because everybody was going to Earl Johnson for braces and he donated a set of braces. That was so gigantic, that was really enormous, so that was a big help for us.

Trisha Garlock: They really helped us gain that credibility in the business community that we didn't have on our own. So with the partnership — they all served as bartenders, and they helped us get the donations.

Penny Weiss: Dealers at the tables, it was fun. It was a Halloween theme at the Strawberry Rec Center. I don't think — we had sold tickets in advance, but there were ticket sales at the door.

Mari Allen: Do you recall how much a ticket was at that time?

Penny Weiss: Oh, Lordy.

Trisha Garlock: Probably \$5, \$10, I have no idea!

Penny Weiss: We knew we had advanced tickets, but tickets were also available at the door. All of a sudden, there were just legions of people lining up to come in.

Mari Allen: How did you advertise it?

Penny Weiss: We advertised it through the newsletters, I think.

Trisha Garlock: PTA newsletters, and the *Mill Valley Herald* — no *Mill Valley Record*, then.

Penny Weiss: Right, it was the *Record*.

Mari Allen: So your casino night, how much did you raise at that casino night?

Penny Weiss: We raised \$30,000. \$28,000, I think.

Trisha Garlock: \$27,000.

Penny Weiss: We were so excited, I can't even begin to tell you how excited we were. We were just jumping up and down with joy.

Mari Allen: What did the Buck Fund do?

Penny Weiss: They gave us a grant for \$20,000 and they said, "One time, don't come back."

Mari Allen: What did your seed money do for you, what did you do with that money?

Trisha Garlock: In the early years, what we did — because the mechanism for hiring people that weren't district employees was through the PTA — we then divided the funds on a — I don't remember, we have gone back and forth between per-student, per-classroom basis — I think it was probably a per-student basis that we distributed back to the PTA specifically for art and music. And the art and music teachers, they were able to keep them. And we've had an art and music program that we have nurtured, developed, and grown over the years to the point that we have one of the best arts programs in the county, in the state, and you know — not sure about New Jersey that funds schools properly, they probably have some pretty awesome programs, but ours I think would really stand up very nicely to almost any arts program around.

Mari Allen: When did things change in the school district? You said that PTAs initially were given the money to fund teachers. When did it then go back to the school district making those decisions?

Trisha Garlock: It has always been a partnership and cooperation, and everybody has to work together, and so there has always been kind of an understanding of what is important. There is kind of a universal feeling that art and music are important. Over the years we have added other programs based on need through the district, but Mill Valley Schools Community Foundation then, now Kiddo!, is its own organization, and really in cooperation with the district, makes the decisions of where funding goes.

Penny Weiss: We were very, very aware from the very beginning — and I think it has been the case all the way through — that the whole, which is the foundation, exists because everybody owns it. If it was perceived as something that was an overlay instead of something that everybody had an ownership in, then it probably a) wouldn't exist, and b) wouldn't succeed. So we were very conscious of it; it was part of the origination when we talked earlier about how we formed the board. We were very, very conscious about the constituencies that really needed to be represented and listened to in each step as we went along. And even with that, I think it was Gladys Thatcher at the Ed Fund, when we went to see her, she said to us, "Expect this to be hard for five years and at the end of five years, you will be solid or you will be out of business. So just expect that it will be difficult." I think we didn't have any clue what five years meant. We just said, "Oh, well great, thank you." But it was.

Trisha Garlock: We were young then.

Penny Weiss: You know, it is really a hard thing for people to change, even when you can put in front of them: “It can be better, it can be better, you don’t need to accept this the way this is.” But even with that, there can be skepticism and concern.

Trisha Garlock: There is also the point that when we talked about the naysayers in the beginning, there were a number — and we thought long and hard about this — there were a number of people who said, “You are enabling the state by coming in and filling in these programs that are important. The state should be funding schools and if we fundraise on our own, we are letting them off the hook.” And we discussed this over and over again, ad nauseam, around and around, and came to the conclusion that it wasn’t worth a generation of kids’ education to make a point that might never be heard. And the reality is, it has now been several generations of children’s education. The state is still not funding schools properly. And if we had not done what we did — there are over 600 schools foundations across California, if they were not doing what they were doing — the state wouldn’t be doing anything more and who would be suffering are the kids.

Trisha Garlock: But at the time, we didn’t think we were creating an institution; we thought we were creating a stopgap. We thought the state would realize the mistake and pick up the funding.

Penny Weiss: We were a finger in the dike. And we actually talked about being out of business in five years because the state would surely come back and fund schools properly.

Mari Allen: Who was on your initial board, how many people?

Penny Weiss: Trisha, you are so prepared.

Mari Allen: Trisha is looking through her scrapbook.

Trisha Garlock: Thirteen, including Penny and me.

Mari Allen: Were most of the people PTA presidents as well, or who were these board members?

Trisha Garlock: No, not necessarily. But what we did is we made sure that we had representation, and to this day, the board still makes sure — it is three times as big, no, twice as big — but makes sure that there is representation from each of the schools. There are advisors from the school board and the school district; it is a very inclusive process. Because everybody has to be on the same page.

Penny Weiss: If it wasn’t a PTA president, it would have been either a former PTA president or it would have been somebody that through my experience of dealing with people in the PTAs, it would have been somebody that I would have been able to identify as a leader and really, really well respected in that school’s community.

Trisha Garlock: The other thing we have always done throughout the years is we made sure that we had someone who was an accountant, and someone who had the skills that we needed to really make the organization work as an organization.

Penny Weiss: Because we were operating on a shoe string, too.

Mari Allen: Still out of your kitchens at this point, or where were you?

Penny Weiss: Oh yeah. And we knew there were certain things that we were going to need to have done so that certain persons were on the board and we were pretty sure we were going to be able to get it as a pro bono service. So there was some consciousness around what were the things we needed as an organization to make it go.

Trisha Garlock: And then we had — for many, many years, the school district gave us an office. It was a little 8x8 closet that had no window.

Penny Weiss: In the middle school.

Trisha Garlock: In the middle school, in the counselor's wing. We had two desks; we only needed one phone.

Penny Weiss: Because we were sitting about three and a half feet away from each other.

Trisha Garlock: Not even that far. And we would answer, just one phone, because we would both answer it, and we could answer it from whatever desk the phone was sitting on.

Penny Weiss: It's not an exaggeration. It was 8x8 and it did have no windows and we were in that room for five years.

Mari Allen: For five years!

Penny Weiss: I have PTSD about that now. I really have to be, *I have to be* near a window.

Mari Allen: After that. When did the name change to Kiddo!, and whose idea was that? And why would you change the name?

Trisha Garlock: Well, the name changed actually, I think it was our CPA at the time, who was our treasurer, who said, "I can never remember the name, is it Mill Valley Schools Community Foundation? Is it Mill Valley Community Schools Foundation? It's just a mouthful; it's too much. And I have a friend who names companies, who happened to be a parent in the district." So he brought in Danny —

Penny Weiss: Craig Frazier and Danny —

Trisha Garlock: Altman. I started to say Able, but it was Peter Able who was the treasurer. Anyway, he brought in — Craig was a designer and Danny’s company was A Hundred Monkeys, who still has a company in town.

Mari Allen: And Craig Frazier is now a children’s book illustrator and designer.

Trisha Garlock: This was in 1994.

Penny Weiss: It was right before I retired.

Trisha Garlock: Right, so probably 1994-1995.

Penny Weiss: ’95.

Trisha Garlock: So they came up with — they actually had four names to choose from.

Mari Allen: Do you remember what those four names were?

Trisha Garlock: I only remember two of them.

Penny Weiss: Wow, I don’t remember.

Trisha Garlock: Kiddo! is the one that we selected and it has served us well ever since. It is something people remember. It is friendly, it has to do with kids, and since then, all the other schools foundations in Marin County have come up with their own Kiddo!, so to speak.

Mari Allen: Describe your logo.

Trisha Garlock: Craig was the one who designed our logo.

Mari Allen: For the recording, describe your logo so that —

Trisha Garlock: Well, the other thing that I want to say about the logo, Craig is an incredibly creative artist/designer. He was a graphic artist for many years, and when I was talking to him not too long ago, he said that one of the things that he is most proud of that he has done is the Kiddo! logo because it has had such lasting impact. So the Kiddo! logo is the word Kiddo!, but over the “i” instead of just a dot, is an exclamation point. So we have been able to take the word “Kiddo!” with the exclamation, or as recognition has grown, just the exclamation point, which says to people in our community, “This is Kiddo!, this is making an impact, this is important.”

Mari Allen: Tell me about the business program. You talked about how the Rotarians got involved right at the beginning. So you were thinking about how to involve the parents in your community, but it sounds like you were also initially thinking about how to involve the businesses.

Penny Weiss: Well, Bob Canepa was one of those initial Rotarians. And we could see that the Mill Valley Market was going to be a very identifiable family and leader in the business community. So, was Bob on the original board, was he?

Trisha Garlock: No, we started the business program when he joined the board in the mid '80s. We finally talked him into it.

Penny Weiss: He created the business program. He came to us with an idea and he said, "If you want the businesses to participate — " I've forgotten what he said, but it was something like, "What you don't understand is that seven times a day, somebody walks through the door of every business and says, 'Give me something free,' so that they can use it for an auction or whatever it is they are using it, and we know as business owners that those people do not shop in our stores. So if you want the businesses to really participate in a big way, you have to create a cyclical program that is going to reward the businesses for rewarding the work you are doing with the schools. You need to create a partnership with the businesses. You can't just go in the door and ask them for something without recognizing what it is that you have to offer them."

You know, in all naivety, we said, "What is it that we have to offer them?" And Bob said to us, "You have the single largest shopping block in Mill Valley. With the parents and families in your community, that is the single largest shopping block in town. So if you have influence with those people, now the businesses will listen and say, 'We can do a partnership here, yes, we care about the kids.'" But as Bob said to us, "They have to care about the kids and what you are doing *more* than five other things that are coming in the door that are also important." So he actually came to us. He created that initial program.

Mari Allen: What was the name of the program?

Trisha Garlock: It originally was called Helping Hands. It was an "adopt-a-school, adopt-a-classroom" program. It was taken from some of the larger programs where, for example, the Navy adopts the high school in San Diego. He said, "How do we take that concept and bring it down to a small community level?" That is when we came up with the adopting — we now call it sponsoring — a classroom, a school, the district and such.

Penny Weiss: In case it didn't get on the table, it was called Helping Hands.

Mari Allen: How did Bob start talking to the businesses? Did he present at Rotary? Did he go door to door?

Trisha Garlock: Sure, he presented at Rotary. Bob is really persuasive; he is a good networker; he is a good fundraiser. He is just an all-around good person.

Penny Weiss: Just like we were looking [for] who were the leaders in the school's communities to be involved in what we were doing, Bob brought to the table "Here are the business leaders that you need to have involved here."

Trisha Garlock: So he had Earl Johnson, the orthodontist. Pretty soon then we had Cleve Johnson and we had Marshall Rothstein, and we had all of the orthodontists supporting the schools. It grew from a small program. At first we were really concerned that we wouldn't have enough sponsors to sponsor all of the classrooms. The school district was much smaller at that point in time. And now there are three and four sponsors per classroom!

Penny Weiss: It was really lovely. Because I'm not in the middle of Kiddo! now, I don't know if they still do it, but it was really lovely in the beginning. The classrooms would go on field trips to the businesses that had sponsored them. The businesses really felt a wonderful ownership of the kids that had come in. The kids then said, "Oh, we went on a field trip to the *Mill Valley Record* and we saw how the printing presses work." And they would go home and talk to their families about it and then the families would get — it was wonderful, it really was wonderful.

Trisha Garlock: And when we used to have Lyla's Chocolates. Lyla used to be a teacher. So she would always make up a math lesson for every classroom that she sponsored and the kids would figure out, well, how much chocolate they needed and figure out, oh, we have to pay for packaging and we have to pay for shipping, how you make a profit, all of these kinds of things.

Penny Weiss: It was terrific. The kids would go into a store and think, "Oh, she must be making a bazillion dollars because chocolate costs this much money." So really it was an education for the kids too. It was such a lovely thing to watch how it worked. It was very exciting for us. And then it kind of started to grow really on its own energy, and then we created a business committee. At first, Bob was really doing a lot of that, soliciting businesses to participate, and then it just got too big and we needed more help. We started bringing people on board specifically to work on the Helping Hands program. So now that started to have its own energy too.

Mari Allen: I have another question. So you began this endeavor before there were computers. So describe what it was like.

Trisha Garlock: We had computers! We had one, remember, I had one Radio Shack computer at home, and I used to do the bookkeeping on the Radio Shack computer and whatever. But there weren't any in the schools.

Penny Weiss: That computer was driven by MS DOS. I don't know if people who are listening to this are going to know what that means. But when we wanted to do selections for our emerging database, you had to create a string. It would be, when "a is greater than b" and "b is three times c" and "minus f" with little dots and things, and the string would

just be enormous; these enormous strings, don't talk to me, I'm creating a query. And then you'd get to the end and it either would or wouldn't work and we'd go back and go, "Okay, there has got to be a period in the wrong place somewhere here." It was really archaic and very frustrating and very, very slow. And then, Henry Corning came to us.

Mari Allen: Who was he?

Penny Weiss: Henry, how did Henry get on to us?

Trisha Garlock: I don't remember. I think he had children at Old Mill.

Penny Weiss: I think that might be right. Henry came to us and he said, "You can't operate a business like this." He said, "I'm going to get you two computers. And a printer." I mean, what you really have to get to is when we first started we didn't have a telephone; we didn't have anything. We went to Citibank and they gave us one of their old phones; that's where we got it! It was really pathetic.

Trisha Garlock: Everything was donated. Everything.

Penny Weiss: So it was like, "Does anyone have a typewriter that they can give us?" And, "Here's an old phone." And then we had this MS DOS Radio Shack computer that was really something. And when Henry came in and said, "I'm going to buy you two brand-new computers and a printer," we were kind of hysterical.

Trisha Garlock: And then every five years, for many five years, he'd upgrade, he'd give us new ones.

Penny Weiss: So wonderful surprises and things like that would happen for us; it was fantastic.

Trisha Garlock: Part of what has been so wonderful over the years to me are all the people that we have worked with. We have had just amazing people who have served as board members over the years, who have helped in so, so, so many ways. It seems like a lot of times Penny and I would get the credit, but it was all of the support of the board, of the community, of people who were willing to donate, people who were willing to roll up their sleeves, stuff letters, lick envelopes, get out mailings, you know.

Penny Weiss: My kids, I'm sure yours do too, still remember.

Trisha Garlock: Oh yeah.

Penny Weiss: Trisha and I would bring the mailings home and our families would stuff all of the envelopes. Do you remember when we did our first big printing down the peninsula because we found a printer that was less expensive, and we didn't want to pay for shipping? I still remember; I drove it down there.

Trisha Garlock: I remember it was over the in the East Bay; it was Fremont.

Penny Weiss: I slept in my car while they were doing the printing for hours; it's like, I sat in my car and waited.

Trisha Garlock: And the car came back and it was so heavy.

Penny Weiss: And then we packed up all this stuff in the car and we did that for several years and I still remember when I called you and said, "One of the boards was wrong and they printed the entire thing upside down."

Mari Allen: Oh, my gosh.

Penny Weiss: I mean, really, I was hysterical. My first reaction was "Okay, we can take it apart and we can glue it back together and still send it out." Now, we were really watching every — I think it was going to cost \$100 to have this stuff shipped up, and we said, "No, we can't spend \$100, we will just drive down there and sit in the car and wait."

Mari Allen: How long were you in that 8x8 classroom? When were the offices —

Trisha Garlock: It wasn't a classroom, it was a closet.

Penny Weiss: It was a closet.

Mari Allen: So when did you move from the closet?

Penny Weiss: Five years, we were in there five years.

Trisha Garlock: We moved — at the time, the district was very small. I think when we started, the district was maybe 1,400.

Penny Weiss: Didn't I have one of my first dogs and we had the crate in the office, too, and then you had Lindsay in the stroller?

Trisha Garlock: Yeah. Anyway, after the first parcel tax —

Mari Allen: So you said when you started there were 1,400 students in the school district?

Trisha Garlock: I think so, somewhere around that, 1,400 or 1,500, somewhere around that.

Penny Weiss: That sounds about right.

Mari Allen: I'll say for the record: it is over 3,300 students now.

Trisha Garlock: The first parcel tax had a classroom upstairs with lots of windows in it, a big classroom in the middle school. So after the parcel tax was over, Penny and I said, “Gee, nobody is going to be using that room. Maybe we should ask for it.” So we did. So here we had a big classroom and where were our two desks? Right next to each other, right in front of the windows, because we were so happy to have a window.

Penny Weiss: It was an enormous space, it was really enormous. We were still probably five feet apart instead of three and a half feet, but we were both planted right in front of the windows.

Mari Allen: Now I know you started an unusual fundraising opportunity when you created a consignment store, is that correct? Tell me about that, what was that?

Trisha Garlock: That was the Second Banana. What we were looking for at the time is — we had donated income. We thought, you know, with donated income — I remember one of the analogies that we used to use was, “Every year, we have a bucket. We fill it up with donations. We dump it out into programs. And then we have to start all over again with an empty bucket. And wouldn’t it be great if we had some sort base of ongoing income?” So we went to some kind of a workshop on starting a business and we actually looked into — we researched five different businesses for something for a source of ongoing income that we didn’t have to rely on straight donations for.

Penny Weiss: One of the things was that it needed to be related business. That we learned in the workshop. It needed to be related to what it is that your non-profit is doing.

Trisha Garlock: We looked into daycare, which was a need. We looked at miniature golf over where Edna Maguire was, because that was a closed school at that point, and then the consignment store. Good thing we ended up with the consignment store because the other two — they reopened the school, and childcare has all sorts of regulations and we couldn’t figure out how to make it profitable.

Penny Weiss: We couldn’t get past the liability issues on childcare. It was going to be too big.

Trisha Garlock: Yeah. So we settled on the children’s consignment store.

Mari Allen: When did that open, what year was that do you think?

Penny Weiss: I have no idea.

Trisha Garlock: That would have been 1986 — it was probably four or five years after we started, so maybe ’85, ’86. But the thing was the middle school again had extra space, so we were able to get a classroom. Now, upstairs was not ideal when you are talking about shopping. Middle school is not ideal, it is not a location with other retail where people are kind of walking by, but it was free. The Lions Club — we had a Lions Club in Mill Valley at that time — they loved to do projects, so we found a designer to donate the

design for the store and they built it all out for us as a donation. And it was in the middle school for many years until the middle school started growing and then they needed the space back. We had to move, we found a discounted rent over on the Strawberry side and were able to keep it open until that property was being sold and we decided it just wasn't worth moving it again. But it was a great run while it was there; it was fun.

Mari Allen: When did the middle school move you out of the upstairs location to the current space?

Trisha Garlock: Again when the middle school was growing, they needed the space for classrooms. They moved us down to — used to be the IMC, the Instructional Materials Center — it used to be downstairs, and we had a little space carved out of that. And then as the district grew, then the IMC moved over to Edna when that was opened.

Mari Allen: And the current office, when did you move into that space?

Penny Weiss: It was after I left. We were still upstairs when I was there.

Trisha Garlock: Yeah, yeah.

Mari Allen: So Penny, when did you leave? When did you retire?

Penny Weiss: 1996, 1996.

Mari Allen: So that was 15 years.

Penny Weiss: Correct.

Mari Allen: And at that point, if you can recall, how much money was Kiddo! raising at that point?

Penny Weiss: Oh, maybe \$100,000? I can remember when Trisha and I said, "If we can ever raise \$100,000, it would be like a miracle, it would be like a miracle." Now the really giant quantifiable amounts of money happened after I left. Trisha spearheaded and marshaled that through.

Trisha Garlock: It is all built out of need and it is all built out of — you know, in the early days, we were able to save and maintain these programs with small amounts of money; it was a smaller district. And then as the district grew, as the cuts continued from the state of California, the needs were greater and the school population grew. We needed to raise additional funds to keep the schools whole.

Mari Allen: And in looking back, both of you, over what it was at the beginning to what it is now — so this year, 2014, the goal for Kiddo! is \$3.1 million to fund programs for about 3,300 students. So your idea that began over coffee and tea in 1981 has

morphed into something that is indispensable for our school district. What are your thoughts on that?

Penny Weiss: For myself, when I left Kiddo! I went to two other — I didn't leave Kiddo! to go to these other projects, but the other projects happened, which were also wonderful, they were also community-based projects, they were very rewarding for me. But Kiddo!, the work we did at Kiddo!, will always be for me the thing that I am absolutely the proudest of. I remember when Trisha and I first started in her little anteroom kind of thing at her house, and we said, "You know, if it doesn't work, we will have made a lot of friends and we will know a lot of people after it is done." We honestly did say that. And I can say to this moment that my best friends have been the people that I met through Kiddo!. They are friendships that have gone on for 35 years. It was a work that came out of passion; it wasn't just a job for us.

Trisha Garlock: It really wasn't a job, it was a passion, yeah.

Penny Weiss: It was something we both cared so deeply and integrally about and we both still do. It is who we are. It is an enormous privilege to be able to have done your life's work out of a passion instead of just having to go to work, and you make relationships and you make a difference in your community. For me, it has just been a blessing of my life. It really has been.

Trisha Garlock: It's also — I mean, people often used to ask me because I stayed on for another 15, 16, 17 years, I don't know, after Penny retired. They'd ask me, "Your kids are grown, why are you still interested in doing this?" You know, all I had to do was go to a music performance, a music class, a dance performance, watch the kids in the play, go into an art room, and see the joy that these programs bring the kids and have for over 30 years. To be able to look at that and say, "We had a small part in making this possible, enriching the lives of all of these children." Who knows, we often think about, "I wonder what, because they studied music, how did that change the course of their lives? Or art, all of these things." We have parents who come back and talk to us who have kids that are grown and have kids of their own that also come back and say, "Oh, I remember the Kiddo! programs, and I remember this —"

Penny Weiss: On a very, very personal basis, my younger son Gabriel, who participated in plays and things that were made possible, went on to major in theater at Northwestern University. We saw the nurturing in him in the theater arts. Both of my sons are very involved in music, and that was something that was nurtured in them when they were very young. So on a personal basis, one is now 43 and the other is 37, I can see how having that as an integral part of their lives made a difference. And then you can multiply that times thousands.

Mari Allen: How has Mill Valley changed since you started this? You can be very candid about that. What changes have you noticed in our town?

Penny Weiss: Oh, there is a long silence there! There have been a lot of changes since we started, a lot. I would have to say that part of the reason, probably a significant part of the reason why I left when I left was that there was — I remember saying to Trisha, “If I have to tell one more person why this is important, if I have to explain this one more time, why this matters in a very personal way for these children, I think I’m going to lose it. I don’t understand why we are still having to explain this and it seems to me that it is getting harder to explain to the new groups that are coming up.” There was more of a sense of, “Well, of course this is here and it is part of what we are supposed to be having.” We would have to explain, “Actually, this is here because we are making a very big commitment for this to happen.” So I think we have seen a big change. It’s not fair because I’ve been out of the school district for a long time, but for me at the time when I left, there was just a different sense of what people were due instead of the passion of taking an ownership for the change that was needing to happen. The town itself has changed enormously since we moved here. Downtown used to be a resident-serving community.

Trisha Garlock: Lockwood’s Pharmacy, the General Hardware.

Penny Weiss: There was a children’s shoe store, there were pharmacies and hardware stores and markets.

Trisha Garlock: A general store where you could buy thread and material.

Penny Weiss: You really could go downtown and take care of all your business. That was very integral for us in nurturing that whole sense of community. We had community businesses. We had community schools, we had community businesses. Things weren’t compartmentalized, I think. I don’t know if they are compartmentalized now; I know downtown isn’t resident-serving anymore and that changes the complexion of what it feels like when you are downtown. Do they still do the Halloween parade through downtown?

Trisha Garlock: Yes.

Mari Allen: Halloween parade, no.

Trisha Garlock: No, the kids.

Mari Allen: Oh, from Old Mill School, they still do, yes.

Trisha Garlock: They go marching, and all the schools have their Halloween traditions.

Mari Allen: Trisha, what do you think in terms of how things have changed?

Trisha Garlock: Well, I think, it is hard; it still is an incredibly wonderful town filled with incredibly wonderful people. When you live here a long time — I think back to the

neighborhood when I first moved in. We'd been there a couple of years, and we had the Alto fireman down the street, and we had somebody who worked at the pharmacy, a lot of teachers lived kind of in the neighborhood, and you had the person who worked at General Hardware; everybody in the neighborhood. Those people have by and large all moved away. There are a few of us still there. But the other lovely thing is that now in our neighborhood, there were years when we never had a trick-or-treater. We never have too many because there are too many stairs and it is on a hill, but there were no children in the neighborhood. And now the children are coming back in the neighborhood and that is just part of the cycle where now there is a young community again.

Penny Weiss: I don't want to sound too negative in terms of what the community is like. When you look at the level of participation that is happening with Kiddo! it is enormous, and that is not coming from people who don't have any sense that this is important. I mean, I don't know what the percentages are now of participation, I think it was about 50 percent when I left.

Trisha Garlock: Now it's up to — with lots of challenges and lots of work — it is up to 75 percent.

Penny Weiss: So you know, people are seeing that things are important. The bar is higher. So I don't want to sound too negative about it. When I left, I was feeling a little bit negative. But there it is, I think it's magnificent. I think Mill Valley is unusual as a community that, over and over and over again they pass parcel taxes, over and over and over again they vote to support the schools, to maintain the streets. We always said when we first started, "Mill Valley has never considered itself a wide place on the highway." It has never been that, it has always been a place, the people consider themselves to be from Mill Valley, not from Marin County and not from a suburb of San Francisco. They identify themselves. I think that is unusual in a non-urban kind of community. I don't know that we could have ever gotten off the ground or continued to exist without that sense of community. So there it was in the beginning name.

Trisha Garlock: It was very intentional to put that there.

Penny Weiss: It was intentional. But you couldn't do it if it wasn't a place that acknowledged community as opposed to, "I get up in the morning and I go to the city and that's my job and I go home and go to sleep." People care. They cared then and they care now. It is a special place.

Mari Allen: Penny, what are you doing now?

Penny Weiss: I am retired now. After I left Kiddo!, I helped the library with their fundraising for their renovation, their reconstruction, here. I did that for the better part of '96. In '97, I was hired by the city to do the fundraising for the Mill Valley Community Center. And I did that for five years until the center was built and then I was off. I thought I was retired.

Trisha Garlock: Penny has retired many times.

Penny Weiss: I've retired three times and I thought it was done. I was off work for two and a half years and then Barbara Solomon at the Redwoods came to me and asked me if I would create a development department; they didn't have a development department at the time. I worked there for five years. I left there in 2010 and have been not working since then.

Mari Allen: Officially retired?

Penny Weiss: Officially not working now.

Mari Allen: Trisha, what about you? When did you retire from Kiddo!, and how did things change when Penny was gone?

Trisha Garlock: Well, it was pretty scary at first! Because we were kind of tied at the hip and it was — you know, when we talked about being in the very beginning, where her knowledge of the school and my knowledge of fundraising, and we just put that all together; we really worked together on everything. So it was a little scary when Penny retired, you know, but the work was too important not to just push on. I had a wonderful board of directors and eventually over time we brought in additional people. By that point in time, it was firmly established; it had a momentum, and just able to kind of move forward. I retired, a year, a year and a half ago. I am just thrilled with the new executive director and do whatever I can to support and bring the history back to the organization. I continue to sit on the Endowment Committee. That is something that we started many years ago and it is again kind of that dream that if the endowment grew to a point, it could fund arts programs in perpetuity. One of the things, the endowment was kind of a general endowment for many years and when I retired, the board officially changed the name to Kiddo! Endowment for the Arts in honor of the early years and what we had accomplished. At that point, we can focus on having these programs funded in perpetuity through the endowment, which would be wonderful. Since then, too, I have been working as the board president for an organization called SchoolsRule Marin, which is a consortium of all of the schools foundations in Marin County built a little bit on the principle Kiddo! started in looking to provide equity in programming throughout the county.

Penny Weiss: I think it is a beautiful kind of circle of things. Trisha and I still live next door to each other and now we have found our way back into my kitchen. We are painting together on Thursday afternoons. We have time now so we are doing watercolor painting together. We both take Italian; we both are really passionate about going to Italy every year. So what started in the kitchen is back in the kitchen, which is a nice thing. It is nice for us to have time to be together again.

Mari Allen: It's an incredible story of your friendship. But to build something that you have that will go on for many, many, many more years is incredible.

Trisha Garlock: I mean, when Penny retired, she said, “You know, it is easier for me to retire because I know that I am leaving it in good hands and I know you will take care of it, you will nurture it, whatever.” So it really feels good to me that now that I have retired, I also know that I have left it in good hands with a wonderful Kiddo! staff, a wonderful dedicated Kiddo! board, and I know that it will continue on, so that makes me very happy.

Mari Allen: What do you think your kids think about all you did? They grew up with two moms very involved in their schools and in Kiddo!. What do you think they would say?

Trisha Garlock: Both my kids, I know, are very proud now. I think at the time, it was like, “Do I really have to stick on more labels?” or “Mom, how come you are late to pick me up?” because I was on the phone trying to raise funds for the schools.

Penny Weiss: I can remember Gabe saying to me once, “Is it not possible to go through Red Cart Market without having you talk to every single person who is in the market?” I know the kids are very proud of the work that we have done. Joyce Kleiner just came out with a book of legends of Mill Valley and Trisha and I are in there. I have three grandchildren. It is just a joy to me that kids look in the book and say “Oh, my, grandma, it’s you!” So I have a lot of pride in it and my family has a lot of pride in the work that we did. I don’t know what you can hope for in a lifetime that is better than doing something that you feel really good about, sharing with people —

Trisha Garlock: And making a difference in kids’ lives.

Penny Weiss: Making a difference. I know our families are very proud of us.

Trisha Garlock: Although Jim did call himself “the Kiddo! widow” for years. [laughs] The one thing I do not miss are all of the late night meetings and being out several nights a week.

Mari Allen: Any final thoughts, either things you want to say to each other or things that if your grandchildren are listening to this, what things do you want to say before we conclude our interview?

Penny Weiss: I mean, I know I’ve said this to Trisha in her retirement, but we really went on a life journey, and we went on a life journey together, and I couldn’t have asked for a better partner to do this with. It made an enormous difference in my life.

Trisha Garlock: I think part of this is — as you are a little bit older, you are thinking, “Do I really want to do this? Do I really want to do that?” With the two of us, “Well, of course we can.” There were people throwing road blocks in our way all along the way and we’d just say, “We just aren’t going to settle for that. We need to do this and —”

Penny Weiss: I think we really empowered each other.

Trisha Garlock: I think we did. You know, it was like, things that I wasn't too sure about, Penny would say, "Well, of course we can do that." Or something she wasn't too sure about, "Well, we can do that." We really, really worked together. I don't think either one of us could have done it on our own.

Penny Weiss: I don't think so.

Trisha Garlock: I think it was synergy and that partnership that really gave us the perseverance. It did take a lot of perseverance in those early years to make this organization a reality.

Mari Allen: Well, thank you on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society, on behalf of the Mill Valley Public Library. I just wanted to thank you both for your incredible contributions to our town, but even more so, to all of the generations of children that have just grown tremendously from that seed idea at a kitchen table that has grown into this sustaining organization. So thank you very, very much.

Penny Weiss: Thank you.

Trisha Garlock: Our pleasure.