

Mill Valley Oral History Program
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Historical Society and the Mill Valley
Public Library*

HUEY JOHNSON

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Debra Schwartz in 2016**

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In this oral history, environmentalist Huey Johnson recounts his lifelong work to preserve open spaces and wilderness areas throughout the United States and beyond. Born in Michigan in 1933, Huey moved out to California with his wife after graduate school to take a dream job as the Western Regional Director of the Nature Conservancy. He recalls how they spent their first few nights in California camping on Muir Beach, which “captured his soul,” and marvels how Spindrift Point and Green Gulch, right there nearby, would turn out to be some of his earliest land preservation projects. Huey recounts several other big projects he worked on in Marin, including Kent Island and Marincello, and his numerous battles with the Marin County Board of Supervisors over the years. He discusses creating the Trust for Public Land in 1972, which has conducted 5,000 projects around the country saving some three million acres. He recounts his service in Governor Jerry Brown’s cabinet from 1976 until 1982 as Secretary of Resources. Huey took his zeal for the environment internationally when he established a nonprofit watchdog organization to monitor a new U.N. agency on the environment, and in 1995 he founded the Resource Renewal Institute. While he has received numerous honors and awards for his work over the years, Huey notes that the greatest reward is returning to a place he has helped to preserve and beholding its beauty. He praises Mill Valley, where he has lived with his family for 50 years, for its natural beauty and peacefulness, remarking that wherever his work has taken him, coming home to Mill Valley has always recharged his spirits for renewed engagement in the battle for land preservation.

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Oral History of Huey Johnson
June 30th and July 11th, 2016

Editor's note: This transcript has been reviewed by Huey Johnson, who made corrections and clarifications.

0:00:01 Debra Schwartz: Today is June 30th, 2016. My name is Debra Schwartz, and I'm sitting here on behalf of the Mill Valley Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society with environmentalist, Huey Johnson. Huey, thank you so much for being with us today.

0:00:16 Huey Johnson: Thank you for having me.

0:00:18 Debra Schwartz: Huey, you've been in Mill Valley for a good long while, haven't you?

0:00:21 Huey Johnson: About 50 years.

0:00:24 Debra Schwartz: That's a little while.

0:00:24 Huey Johnson: [chuckles] Yeah, it has been a wonderful 50 years.

0:00:30 Debra Schwartz: Did you come from the area locally, or did you migrate over?

0:00:34 Huey Johnson: I migrated over, having accepted a job at the time as a Western Regional Director of the Nature Conservancy. And I grew up in the Midwest and it was sometime later that I was able to visit the Bay Area. I was working for a corporation and I was on an unlimited expense account, and they had me staying in the Fairmont Hotel. I was single, and I thought, "Why would anybody live anyplace else?" [chuckles]

0:01:07 Debra Schwartz: So where were you living? First a little bit, you were born and raised in where?

0:01:12 Huey Johnson: I was born in a small rural community in Michigan, kind of a child of the Depression, a time when the nation was in great stress, as you know. And in my case I was very fortunate. My father had a job, and we thought of ourselves as well to do — adequately — we got our own house, and so on. I had the great good fortune of having a community park not far from where we lived, and as a toddler, my parents — I have wondered sometimes, foolishly — used to let me wander off down a trail into the park. They'd come looking for me, or I would come back. And there was a stream through the park, so it was a way of falling in love with nature. I remember my earliest memories of my mother taking by the hand in the park, going on a wildflower walk.

Wildflowers, trees, whatever. I always remember she had, as small child in grade school, been part of a tree planting project, and the forest was now grown. We would always go up to one of the trees she planted, and I could hug it.

0:02:28 Debra Schwartz: What kind of tree was it? Do you remember?

0:02:30 Huey Johnson: Some kind of pine. I don't know, but there was a stream going through it, and my parents, even in earliest years, would allow me to go out and camp. Take a sleeping bag and my —

0:02:42 Debra Schwartz: On your own?

0:02:43 Huey Johnson: On my own. Or with a little friend. My father would come out at dusk and make sure we were all right. We'd have a fire and we go off and catch anything. We did a lot of hunting and fishing as a way to get introduced to the outdoors, which I still think is a great way for children to relate, to learn, about nature. And so I grew up there, learned to work hard, learned the importance of moral behavior, learned a lot about history and optimism, I think. Anyway, eventually I wandered off, worked my way through college, and decided the thing I had to do was to be rich. That was the thing to do when I was that age.

0:03:29 Debra Schwartz: Well, you'd been through the Depression.

0:03:31 Huey Johnson: Yes, indeed. So I shopped around, and got a job at a large corporation, paying very well. It was a great promise, and I went to work. I did very well. I started out in Chicago, then was moved to Minneapolis, then New York City, then Denver, Salt Lake City, and so on, residing in each of them, and learning about the culture and appreciating the place, but always having the opportunity to be outdoors. And I fell in love with the American West, and maybe a mistake on the part of the corporation was to send me to San Francisco for a conference once. Being single, I was always sent off to these big conferences, 'cause married folks logically wanted to be with their families. They made the mistake of sending me to San Francisco, and I was on an unlimited expense account. Staying in a Fairmont hotel. I was single and I —

0:04:34 Debra Schwartz: How old were you then?

0:04:36 Huey Johnson: I was probably 28, and I thought, "Why would anybody live anyplace else?"

0:04:43 Debra Schwartz: And so what year was this exactly, do you remember, or generally?

0:04:47 Huey Johnson: That would've been late '50s.

0:04:49 Debra Schwartz: Late '50s? So San Francisco's starting to go through some cultural changes at that point.

0:04:55 Huey Johnson: Indeed, yes, though I probably wouldn't have been aware of them. One downside of the small rural educational system that I grew up in, was that there was a board of education of principally farmers, and they wanted us to learn to fix fences, and electric motors, and there was no time for language and music. So that was a downside, but I caught up with it eventually, and I was with the corporation and I was working hard, and being promoted often in these places, as I had mentioned. I realized one day as I was sitting in a bar in New York City about to meet some friends for our weekend revelry, and I realized I couldn't hold my hand steady. I was holding my drink up. I'd been working seven days a week, 24 hours. Just non-stop for weeks, and weeks, and weeks. And I realized, "Why am I doing this?" And I thought, "Well, I wanna be rich. I wanna have my own ranch, and have places I can go and see my own land." Thinking further later on I thought, "Why do I need to do that, we've got parks, national parks and public lands, and they're free," so I quit.

0:06:15 Debra Schwartz: So you hung your suit up?

0:06:17 Huey Johnson: Yep.

0:06:17 Debra Schwartz: Put it in the back of the closet and —

0:06:20 Huey Johnson: I packed a backpack and I wandered around the world alone for a couple of years, studying cultures and history, and it was more important than my college education. I came back, went back to graduate school, studied Park Management, Natural Resource Management, and was fortunate to get a job with the Nature Conservancy, overseeing the American West, 13 western states. I was the first employee west of the Mississippi.

0:06:51 Debra Schwartz: Well that's a nice, rather robust territory.

0:06:55 Huey Johnson: Yeah, it was. [chuckles]

0:06:57 Huey Johnson: Of course I knew a good deal about it from my constant being transferred in my corporate settings. So I was able to hire staff fairly quickly. I would send them to Los Angeles, and I would go to Montana. [laughs] Or Hawaii. [laughs] Or Marin. So anyway, I had a great good fortune of doing exactly what I wanted to do every morning since.

0:07:25 Debra Schwartz: Since the moment of truth when you saw that shaking hand.

0:07:28 Huey Johnson: Yeah.

0:07:29 Debra Schwartz: Like a flag saying —

0:07:32 Huey Johnson: Yeah. I had gone too hard too long, but the question was why?

0:07:36 Debra Schwartz: Why? Right. May I ask quickly, just for contextual information. The schools that you did go to, what college did you attend?

0:07:46 Huey Johnson: These were public schools. I graduated from Western Michigan University in Michigan. I went to Utah State for Master's study, and some post-Master's studies, and then for my Doctorate at University of Michigan. Studying at the University of Michigan one day I saw them pinning a job announcement on the board of the graduate department. It said San Francisco, and I said, "That's where I want to live." It was the Nature Conservancy, and I stepped in a phone booth, and applied for it, and got the job. Packed up, and my wife and I, in our old cars, we headed West. We arrived here, and somebody had told me when I was in graduate school that there was a neat thing in Marin County — I didn't know Marin County — where you go to a place called Muir Beach, and there's some guys who have set up a little campground, and they watch all your gear for 50 cents a night, whatever it was. So our first nights in California were spent sleeping on the beach at Muir Beach. And an interesting part of that was that sitting on my bag, looking out to sea, if I looked to the right the first project I was to work on for the Nature Conservancy was Spindrift Point, one of the magic places in Marin, and to the left was Green Gulch Ranch — and I saved both of them.

0:09:18 Debra Schwartz: How ironic, and more than that, how fitting.

0:09:24 Huey Johnson: Mystical, kinda.

0:09:25 Debra Schwartz: Yes. I'd like to know what your impression was as you were sleeping on that beach, with the people that were probably sleeping on the beach next to you.

0:09:34 Huey Johnson: Yeah, well, of course, overwhelming beauty and joy. I'd never been near the ocean, and it immediately set a struggle in my mind. I was all set to live in the mountains. I loved the Rockies and the High Sierras, and I'd worked for the Fish and Game Department in the Sierras as a biologist, and also in Alaska, and so I knew the mountains well. I didn't know the seashore all that well, but those days in Marin captured my soul, and I've been here ever since.

0:10:10 Debra Schwartz: So you sort of fell in love?

0:10:12 Huey Johnson: Yes I did, we did, and it has been a wonderful, wonderful adventure all these years. I've been able to use Marin as a kind of a fort from which to struggle with all kinds of environmental issues off in the world, here and in other countries.

0:10:34 Debra Schwartz: So as your home-base.

0:10:36 Huey Johnson: It's been wonderful, and I had an opportunity to get to know Marin very well, and do a lot of work on significant places to be saved.

0:10:47 Debra Schwartz: How about an example of some of your projects, your local projects?

0:10:52 Huey Johnson: Well, I wrote down some. I think, the first one, as I mentioned, was Spindrift Point. Each of these has a long winded story and I won't bore you with now.

0:11:04 Debra Schwartz: Really? Not even a little bit about each?

0:11:07 Huey Johnson: Well, I could say this: it was on my first day in the office, my new office. I opened the mail. I didn't have a secretary yet — well, I had a secretary, but when I came in — somebody else had hired her — she was weeping. [laughs] I asked her "What's wrong?" and she said, "I know you're gonna fire me." I said, "Why?" And she says, "'Cause I can't type." [laughs] I said, "You're right." [laughs] So I opened the mail myself, a letter from this guy, I still have it, and he said, "You know my wife and I are living our dream out here," and so on. This fellow had a lovely headland on the north side of Muir Beach. He and his wife lived there in a retreat with the high fences, and I called my wife and I said, "You know somebody I think is pulling my leg back in the Forestry School, this can't be that beautiful." This guy was a professional writer, and we went out and knocked on the gate and he came — a little guy. And he was real. We became close friends and eventually he donated it.

0:12:10 Debra Schwartz: And his name?

0:12:11 Huey Johnson: Charles Borden, an author. He wrote a book called *Sea Quest*. He was famous for his sailing. And then the old Green Gulch Ranch to the left from that first night in the beach was owned by George Wheelwright, co-inventor of the Land Camera, a very wealthy man. And he had a wonderful story of being in the corporate grips as I had been. He was coming in with bottles of champagne to give to his people working in the office that day, Thanksgiving afternoon, I think — no, it was New Year's Day, or the day before New Year's. And there was nobody there. The guy who invented the Land Camera was a guy named Edwin Land. George went into Land's office — he was his partner — and there was Land sitting in the middle of the floor, weeping. And he had a little machine, he was ticking it with his finger. That company was built around this guy's genius. He'd have an idea, and they had designers and everybody all ready to go, and they'd build it, like the camera. And he said, "George, do you notice there's nobody here but me?" And George says, "You're right, I quit." [laughs] He said "Bye-bye, Land," and he left. Then he came to San Francisco and looked around and he bought Green Gulch Ranch to raise his children, which he did.

0:13:39 Debra Schwartz: Wow.

0:13:39 Huey Johnson: And then eventually his wife was dying of cancer, and he called and said, "We'd like to talk to you about doing something for Green Gulch." So I met with them a number of times, and in the end went shopping for a proper use of it, to keep it that way for a thousand years. That was his interest. I went to the Marin Board of

Supervisors, and they bickered and moaned and questioned it so much. I said, “Forget it.” Every big project I’ve ever worked on in Marin has been opposed by the Board of Supervisors. Marincello, Point Reyes — going on right now in our lawsuit in Point Reyes, the supervisors are against it. They tend to be speaking with the Chamber of Commerce more than the public. Anyway, preserving the ranch came to pass. I selected the Zen Center as the entity to own it, and I hope it’ll be there a thousand years. And the donor was very happy with them, eventually came back, and they took care of him there until he died.

0:14:43 Debra Schwartz: Really? And is that hut there —

0:14:46 Huey Johnson: His wife is buried there. His ashes are down there in the valley. Wonderful guy, he was very generous, very liberal. He met this Land — he was a professor at Harvard, and this student came out of his class and said, “I’ve got this idea, professor, can you give me your advice?” He glanced at it and said, “Could I take it home?” The student, Land, said “Okay, George,” and looked at it. The next morning the student said, “Were you able make sense of it?” He said, “Yes, young man, how would you like to have a partner?”

0:15:26 Debra Schwartz: And that was about the land, Green Gulch land?

0:15:28 Huey Johnson: No, that was before. That’s when he started the company that became the Land Camera, which was the early camera that would develop the film when you took a picture. So though he had a tenured position at Harvard, very valuable to most people, he resigned and went off into the corporate world, and was very successful, made a lot of money, and then was able to quit and come back. We both ended up in Muir Beach.

0:15:55 Debra Schwartz: And so I suppose you kind of found a kindred spirit with that fellow?

0:15:58 Huey Johnson: Yes, and many others. Real joy of saving land for me in those years was the interesting people who had deep personal values and cared about it. Another, Kent Island in Bolinas Lagoon.

0:16:15 Debra Schwartz: Oh yes, let’s talk about that.

0:16:17 Huey Johnson: That was a beautiful island in the lagoon, and some developers had acquired an option to it. Correction, they had found that in the 1920s, there’d been a harbor district that existed to build a racetrack out of Kent Island. The lagoon was to be filled and they were gonna build a racetrack. They got as far as getting the harbor district, which gave them the right to condemn the land at Kent Island.

0:16:51 Debra Schwartz: Oh, my gosh.

0:16:53 Huey Johnson: And in the 1960s some barflies in Bolinas said, “Hey you

know what, we can clean up here. I found out there was a harbor district in 1920, all we gotta do is we say we wanna be the board of the harbor district.” And they did it. Then they talked the developers into coming, and they were going to build a high rise hotel in the middle of the lagoon, and dredge up all the lagoon itself to create the bigger island, and have 1,000 boat slips or whatever it was. And an elderly widow owned that island, and her name was Alice Kent.

0:17:34 Debra Schwartz: Yes, William Kent’s daughter, correct?

0:17:37 Huey Johnson: I believe she’s still alive and well worth interviewing.

0:17:41 Debra Schwartz: Good to note.

0:17:42 Huey Johnson: And we went to her and said, “I don’t have any money but we desperately would like to save your island.” And these guys were very, very aggressive fellows, and they had threatened her saying, “If you don’t sell us at this price, then we’re gonna condemn you.” Scared her to death. Anyway, she agreed, and signed the document giving me an option. And then we had a Board of Supervisors — Peter Behr, a wonderful supervisor in those years, and I had to talk about it. We had a very, very conservative supervisor who was a developer named Kettenhofen. A nice guy, but all he ever thought about was development. And environmentalists disliked him with great passion. So Peter Behr went to him and he said, “You’re running for office soon. Marin’s becoming very environmental. I’ll give you a break here. You can be an environmentalist, too.” And Kettenhofen said, “This would mean a lot of votes. How do I do it?” And Pete said, “We’re gonna give the county a park. And at the right moment, all you gotta do is get up and vote yes.” Because at that time, the supervisors outnumbered our side. The majority had a one vote advantage. And Kettenhofen was one of the worst — always the most negative.

0:19:05: So I recorded the deed that morning. I had an arrangement with Peter Behr. At the Board Supervisors meeting, I walked in, headed up in the back room, and Behr went to Kettenhofen. And Kettenhofen stood up and he said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to announce and propose that we accept a piece of land for a park, a county park.” And Behr said, “Well, I’d be glad to vote for that.” [chuckles] A political maneuver. And so the vote was done, and the developers in the audience were scratching their heads saying, “What the heck’s going on?” [chuckles] By the time they knew, 10 minutes later, it was all over. [laughs]

0:19:48 Debra Schwartz: And what year is this?

0:19:49 Huey Johnson: Oh, I don’t know. It was early ’60s.

0:19:52 Debra Schwartz: Well, of course, this is in the movie, *Rebels with a Cause*.

0:19:55 Huey Johnson: Yes.

0:19:55 Debra Schwartz: Which is, if anybody wants to know more about some of the antics and some of the hair-raising, near-misses that happened, that movie's a fabulous resource. So, if you can explain a little bit, before we go onto a couple more of your saves, which we're very grateful for, the general ambiance of the area here in Mill Valley and Marin County. Because the land is saved at various times in the '50s, '60s, '70s. I'm curious about the temperament of the community. Are they pro-, anti-, or do people even understand what's going on — that the land's about to disappear, or could? Are people paying attention in general, or is it a small group of individuals who are? Just to help us understand better. For example, Marincello, that project. That was in the '60s, right?

0:21:05 Huey Johnson: I think so.

0:21:06 Debra Schwartz: Yes. What happened with that?

0:21:09 Huey Johnson: Well, to answer your question, there was increasing concern and awareness on the part of the citizenry at first when I arrived. It seemed like the landscape, like everything else in the country, was endless. So there wasn't all that much interest; it was a matter of personal interest, and motivation, and stuff. And occasionally a big project would come along. But certainly the biggest was one called Marincello, which was to be a new town. It had been part of a former ranch centered in an Army base on the coast several miles north of Golden Gate Bridge. And that's described in great length in the movie you mentioned. It was owned by an oil company, and the oil company leased it to a big New York developer, who was really big time. And he came out with a vision, design and built a miniature of this whole vast valley including Venice-like canals with boats and thirty skyscrapers.

0:22:19 Debra Schwartz: So that was going to be artificially created, because there's not a lot of water right up there on the ridges?

0:22:25 Huey Johnson: In the ridges or whatever. I'm not sure. In the end it was so preposterous, that I didn't ever take it that seriously. But the developer was very serious. And he sold the Board of Supervisors.

0:22:36 Debra Schwartz: So 20,000 self-sustaining? Is that how many people they —

0:22:39 Huey Johnson: Yes, or more.

0:22:41 Debra Schwartz: 20 to 30 and with libraries, and the Hyatt Regency, and —

0:22:46 Huey Johnson: A new town. Every hilltop with a skyscraper visible from San Francisco.

0:22:51 Debra Schwartz: And actually, Mill Valley. We would've been looking towards the Marin Headlands.

0:22:54 Huey Johnson: Yeah. And it was a huge dream he had and the developers had.

And a handful of us decided it wouldn't make a lot of sense and started opposing him. And that may have been a turning point for a lot of environmental interest in Marin. A lot of people thought about that and got angry and got involved. And there are lots of stories. One of the nicest ones, was a couple of elderly sisters. The Board of Supervisors had turned it down, not wanting it on the ballot. We wanted to try to get it in the ballot, to take advantage of educating the public. And these two elderly sisters blocked traffic on 101 with petitions. [laughs] One had a can for contributions, and the other would have people sign up. So a sister would go on each side of your car, have you sign a petition, and ask for a contribution. And that was just wonderful.

0:23:49 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that's so beautiful.

0:23:52 Debra Schwartz: That was written up, of course. And that started to create the drum roll of interest and support and pressure on the supervisors, etcetera. And in the end I kept going back to the headquarters of the oil company, it was in Pittsburgh. I think I went back half a dozen times at least. I'd be ushered into a meeting and there'd be a dozen people there and the vice-president of real estate and he'd say, "Well, you're known as opposing our project and we want to negotiate." And so he'd say, "We've cut back some." They'd unroll the plan, which before had had every hilltop covered, they'd cut back a little bit — each trip they'd cut back a little bit. And each time I said, "I'm telling you, the people of Marin are not going to allow this thing to be built and you'd save a lot of money by just forgetting it." And this guy was a tough, big fists, and he'd swear at me.

0:24:51 Debra Schwartz: These are Gulf Oil?

0:24:52 Huey Johnson: Yeah. Executive at Gulf Oil. And these were all his minions who were taking notes and getting ready to do the next draft. And the last time I came in, he wasn't there in the headquarters. A new face was there and some other people, and he said, "Here's our offer." And I said, "I repeat, I'm telling you no." And he said, "Never mind, everybody leave the room," in a loud voice. And they all got up and left. "Not you, Johnson." And I sat again and there I was alone, facing him, and he said, "All right, you bugger, you win. What do I do?" And I couldn't think. It didn't ever occur to me when I went, I guess. And I sat there blank with "win" in my head spinning around. I didn't have a legal document, but I said, "Well, you've got to sign an option." And he said, "Where is it?" So I tore out a notebook paper and I provided an option and he signed it and I said, "I've got to give you a down payment." And we negotiated the terms. It was going to be \$12 million and whatever. And he said, "How much are you going to put down?" I said, "\$100." 'Cause that's all I had.

0:26:09 Debra Schwartz: [laughs] How much did you have in your checking account?

0:26:11 Huey Johnson: That's what I had in my checking account. And he said, "What?" And he swore some more. I said, "It's symbolic. What you're getting from me is I'm going to go to Congress and I'm going to get Congress to guarantee you're going to get a tax credit of \$6 million, and \$6 million in cash. That will be the deal. And you can't

do it because nobody would trust you.” It was an oil company. And he said, “All right.”

0:26:36 Debra Schwartz: So you wrote the check for \$100?

0:26:37 Huey Johnson: I wrote the check for \$100, he signed the document, and I never went back.

0:26:42 Debra Schwartz: Done.

0:26:42 Huey Johnson: Done.

0:26:43 Debra Schwartz: And then the columns that had been erected in the beginning of the development —

0:26:47 Huey Johnson: Oh, yeah. That was right. They had proceeded with the development and they had one flaw, which — we were just desperate because everything we’d tried had failed. The developer, in his eagerness, had started cutting roads and he built a big magnificent entryway with a stone arch and stuff. And we had it resurveyed and he’d intruded on another guy’s land. We went to that landowner and said, “We’d like you to sign a complaint and we’ll stop this thing.” And that neighbor didn’t want that built, he said, “All right.” So then we went to court and finally ended up with young attorneys donating their time, a fellow named Bob Praetzel, and Doug Ferguson, Arty Rosen. Praetzel hung in there, a thousand hours he donated, and in a vote at the Supreme Court by one vote the Justices voted in our favor saying he ignored the zoning law, and so whatever permits he has are defunct. And that is how Marincello ended up —

0:27:57 Debra Schwartz: That gave you what you needed.

0:28:00 Huey Johnson: He had to start all over, and we could start all over after him — more people on the streets, a lot more people were educated, everybody was mad. And with that, the developer went bankrupt.

0:28:11 Debra Schwartz: That’s the developer, right?

0:28:13 Huey Johnson: And the oil company.

0:28:14 Debra Schwartz: Do you remember his name?

0:28:16 Huey Johnson: Frouge.

0:28:16 Debra Schwartz: Frouge.

0:28:17 Huey Johnson: F-R-O-U-G-E.

0:28:18 Debra Schwartz: He died shortly after that project, didn’t he?

0:28:20 Huey Johnson: He was shattered by his loss of a dream and he died.

0:28:30 Debra Schwartz: So with your \$100 check, you secured how many acres?

0:28:37 Huey Johnson: Several thousand.

0:28:38 Debra Schwartz: Yes, a couple thousand at least. And then that land was then transferred to —

0:28:45 Huey Johnson: It became owned by the federal government and transferred to the Park Service in time. I think an interesting point of transactions — people are surprised by the \$100 option, but I really never paid any more than that for all kinds of large places. And really what you were doing, you could offer them tax credits that were immense. If it was a sale for \$100, you'd say, "Well, if you'll give us 60, you'll get a \$40 tax credit and your real bottom line will be 90." We were very skilled at that and that was how the non-profit line of business was built.

0:29:22 Debra Schwartz: So who is *we*? Who's the cadre of *we*?

0:29:27 Huey Johnson: Well, the Nature Conservancy's case, land-saving — eventually I'd been there nine years and there'd been a lot of projects in Marin in addition to those we mentioned. I'll just tick off several. An interesting one was the pole farm at Bolinas. It was four miles of coastline that had been RCA property.

0:29:55 Debra Schwartz: Oh, on the other side of the Bolinas by the — yes.

0:29:58 Huey Johnson: You know, more of them out there. They had poles in the early days because radio communication was point-to-point, it didn't curve. So they got a pole so they can reach ships at sea coming into the harbor. But then the invention allowed radio waves to bend. They didn't need the poles anymore. And I went through, a long story, of getting that one lined up.

0:30:22 Debra Schwartz: But that's the one with the spaghetti?

0:30:24 Huey Johnson: Yes, when we had the spaghetti.

0:30:25 Debra Schwartz: Please tell. I've heard this one before. I'd love to hear it again. [chuckles]

0:30:29 Huey Johnson: All right. I'd been dreaming of getting this property, and I had no luck for several years.

0:30:39 Debra Schwartz: How large was the property? Do you remember?

0:30:41 Huey Johnson: Well, about three miles of coastline in that one.

0:30:46 Debra Schwartz: Just right along that picturesque —

0:30:48 Huey Johnson: Yeah, very, very beautiful, and more out of Point Reyes, another stretch of it. Then while I was negotiating for Green Gulch, the Zen Center had invited my wife and me to their retreat, which is east of Monterey. They have a hot spring and we were in the hot spring after dark. Some voice said “Hey, I just moved here from New York. I’m a real estate dealer and an artist, and I’m trying to figure out what to do with my time.” In that hot spring, we had about 20 people soaking in it. Somebody said, “Well, Johnson is in some place, you could — ” [chuckles]

0:31:29 Huey Johnson: I said, “Well, do you know any high level people at RCA?” [chuckles] I hadn’t met the guy.

0:31:32 Debra Schwartz: You can only just hear a voice?

0:31:34 Huey Johnson: Yeah. “Do you know anybody in RCA?” He said “Yeah.” He said, “The comptroller is my fishing buddy.” I said, “You and I need to be friends.” And we became very good friends.

0:31:46 Debra Schwartz: What was his name?

0:31:48 Huey Johnson: Herb Arnold.

0:31:48 Debra Schwartz: Herb Arnold.

0:31:49 Huey Johnson: We became very close. And he said, “Well, I’ll tell you what. Some time when I’m going fishing, I’ll call you up.” So one day, Friday morning, a call came, he said “We’re going in the morning.” I said “I’ll be there.” I went to the airport, flew to New York, and got a motel room, and I was on the dock at 5:00 AM.

0:32:07 Debra Schwartz: Which dock?

0:32:09 Huey Johnson: It was in New York City, out wherever it is, Long Island.

0:32:15 Debra Schwartz: Oh, so you went from California to New York City to go fishing with your hot tub buddy?

0:32:20 Huey Johnson: Yeah, that morning. And once I got him to sea, he couldn’t get away from me. [laughs] And I gave him a pitch on the fact that the corporation would get tax credits and public relations, and he then arranged a meeting with the president. Well, the trick one learns in this business very early then, you’ve gotta get somebody high enough up to make a decision. A committee can’t do it for you. Getting to the president of a large corporation is a tough job, and I had not been successful.

0:32:49 Debra Schwartz: That’s a lot of fishing.

0:32:50 Huey Johnson: Yeah, that's right. [chuckles] There was one fishing trip we did that led later to an appointment with the president. I flew back to New York again, Doug Ferguson went with me.

0:33:00 Debra Schwartz: Yes, local attorney and "rebel with a cause," Doug Ferguson.

0:33:04 Huey Johnson: So they had an Italian restaurant in the basement of the Radio Corporation America building, a skyscraper. And we went in there. Small town boys. We said, "Well, we have to have lunch." The meeting was at, say, 1:30. So we went down in the basement. There was an Italian restaurant. It was very dark, and we practiced our moves back and forth. I had borrowed a very fancy leather briefcase from a successful attorney friend of mine, feeling we need to impress the guy, with our proposal. So in the dark, we're passing papers back and forth, "You say this, I'll say that." Then we went in the room. They sat us down, the door opened and in came a dozen guys, and there was the president of RCA. Nobody said anything, and then I said, "Well, I would like you to see our proposal." And I opened up the brochure, and there was a pile of spaghetti. [laughs] Everybody in the room erupted in laughter but Doug and myself. We were blushing, I think, and terribly embarrassed, but it broke the ice very well. We gave the pitch, the guy said "Okay." And they wrote it up as a centerfold in their corporate magazine, the wonderful work we did, and they did and so on.

0:34:25 Debra Schwartz: So they collaborated with environmentalists.

0:34:27 Huey Johnson: Yeah.

0:34:28 Debra Schwartz: They were a good company. You got the land.

0:34:31 Huey Johnson: They got a tax credit that gave them — they couldn't sell it anyway 'cause we were gonna fight 'em. So anyway, that was a nice example.

0:34:41 Debra Schwartz: Have you ever had any food assist you with negotiation since?

0:34:46 Huey Johnson: Any who?

0:34:47 Debra Schwartz: Any food assist you? Sloppy spaghetti or anything?

0:34:50 Huey Johnson: No, I — [laughs] Though I ought to do it every time, it worked so well.

0:34:56 Debra Schwartz: Talk about the ultimate icebreaker.

0:35:00 Huey Johnson: Yeah, that was it.

0:35:02 Debra Schwartz: And that was what year, approximately?

0:35:04 Huey Johnson: Oh, in the '60s sometime.

0:35:05 Debra Schwartz: In the '60s. And Marincello was in the '60s, too, correct?

0:35:09 Huey Johnson: Yes, probably the late '60s.

0:35:11 Debra Schwartz: And the Bolinas Lagoon is — ?

0:35:14 Huey Johnson: Earlier than that, I think.

0:35:15 Debra Schwartz: Okay. So we're talking early environmentalism.

0:35:18 Huey Johnson: I think so, although there was a lot going in the early '70s as well.

0:35:22 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:35:23 Huey Johnson: And all this time I was working around the country. We put together a series of oases in Arizona. It's just startlingly beautiful and important. Wildlife preserves, a 25,000 acre wildlife preserve within sight of Helena, Montana, the capital. We just look out and see the mountain there. And I worked with Wangari Maathai in Kenya in her tree planting program, and got her to start an international tree planting effort. She ended up being the first environmentalist in history to win a Nobel Peace prize, and I got her going on that. So I have had wonderful successes, a wonderful life. With some failures, but being in Marin and coming back and resting my passionate soul after some of these struggles.

0:36:19 Debra Schwartz: It could take the stuffing out of you and this is where you can recharge.

0:36:22 Huey Johnson: Yeah.

0:36:23 Debra Schwartz: How about some more of the local projects? You and I know each other, of course, and I remember you mentioning to me along the bay, the Richardson Bay, wasn't there a project there?

0:36:33 Huey Johnson: Yeah. That one was at Tam, Tamalpais Marsh it was, I think. And it stretched from Tam Junction to over where the high school is, where the railroad track was. An interesting story. There had been a great struggle in the region to save San Francisco Bay, suddenly. Sylvia McLaughlin and others and East Bay got a "Save the Bay" going.

0:37:00 Debra Schwartz: Well the idea was at one point to fill in the bay and leave a little river through. Fill it in and develop it for 7 million more people.

0:37:06 Huey Johnson: Yeah, that's right.

0:37:07 Debra Schwartz: Oops, that sounds real interesting. So is that what was going on?

0:37:12 Huey Johnson: So there was fur flying in the fan a good deal and the courts were busy. Finally a judge said, "Okay, you guys are gonna just exhaust yourselves, and your treasuries. Here is my decree. I'm gonna give you" — whatever it was — "one month, and anybody that at the end of one month has a piece of property along the bay that is dry will own it and could develop it if they choose. And those with water on them, it's all over. It has to be wet forever." Well, there was pandemonium. Anybody that had a dredge was out there, wealthy landowners, building dikes to pump the water out and keep land dry. And this property was one of them. It included a large marsh. That marsh is where the railroad — now a bike path — was. And they built a little dam out in the bay where their property line was.

0:38:11 Debra Schwartz: So who was trying to grab the land? It was a developer then?

0:38:14 Huey Johnson: It was real estate investors.

0:38:16 Debra Schwartz: Real estate investors. They've got crews out there building little dams and drying out the land.

0:38:24 Huey Johnson: Yeah. A huge long one actually, and everybody that could get one done and owned some land was doing it in the bay. It was an intense exercise and you can appreciate it. Day and night. But anyway, they get the levy built, they pump out all the water, and in the middle of the night somebody came and dug with a hoe, dug a hole in the dike, and the water rushed in getting bigger and bigger and re-flooded the whole marsh. And these guys came out and they had to get it dry, so they had to do it again. They got to dredging and then, damn, it happened again in the middle of the night. And they started blaming me for doing it. I said "I don't know who's doing it." I had no idea, but I could never talk them out of it. Eventually they finally said, "Okay, look" — I'd been trying to buy the place for a couple of years — "whether it's you or not, we'll tell you what: We will sell it to you to get a tax credit ahead of the one month, 'cause after one month is up, it will lose its value."

0:39:22 Debra Schwartz: So there was nothing for them. Since they couldn't keep it dry, then they're going to sell it and at least get the tax credit.

0:39:27 Huey Johnson: Yeah.

0:39:28 Debra Schwartz: And then just move on.

0:39:30 Huey Johnson: Yeah. And so that's what we did. Years later there was a —

0:39:35 Debra Schwartz: And who's this covert operator in the night?

0:39:38 Huey Johnson: Yes, the middle of the night — gosh, her name, she was a nature — what was her name again?

0:39:45 Debra Schwartz: Terwilliger.

0:39:48 Huey Johnson: Terwilliger. Yes, Terwilliger was a grand character.

0:39:50 Debra Schwartz: Yes. Anti-litter, she taught this —

0:39:52 Huey Johnson: An angel for the children’s environmental education.

0:39:56 Debra Schwartz: A true local legend.

0:39:57 Huey Johnson: Elizabeth Terwilliger. Well, I knew her. We were at some environmental cocktail party and she came up and she had a lovely air, and she always seemed so innocent. She said, “Well Huey, did you ever figure out who was cutting a hole in the dike?” Even Reagan gave her an award in the White House.

0:40:17 Debra Schwartz: For her.

0:40:18 Huey Johnson: She was seen as a stalwart. And she said, “I did it.”

0:40:24 Debra Schwartz: Little Mrs. Terwilliger. [laughs]

0:40:25 Huey Johnson: Mrs. Terwilliger had gone out dressed in black as a ninja and she had saved the Tamalpais Marsh.

[Break in the interview]

0:40:37 Debra Schwartz: Today is July 11th, and this is Part II of my interview with Huey Johnson. Huey, the last time when we let off at Part I, we were talking about some of the projects that you were involved with here in Marin County. We talked about Marincello. We talked about Mrs. Terwilliger. Let’s just, for a quick recap, just describe the projects locally that you’ve been involved with.

0:41:09 Huey Johnson: Well, the list is fairly long, as you know. And the first one was on the right hand side of Muir beach, Spindrift Point. Left of Spindrift is a large ranch now, home of the Zen Center. Those two were some of the early acquisitions, going on to picking up properties in, or to be in, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, or Point Reyes Sea Shore. There were a number of acquisitions there. One that only got described was from the corner of Bolinas Lagoon to the north ridge up. I think there was 1300 acres, and it was the first project we addressed with public land. Interesting story I didn’t tell, but —

0:42:03 Debra Schwartz: Well, shall we while we’re doing a little —

0:42:07 Huey Johnson: Well, it depends on the length, you know. It's so many stories.

0:42:11 Debra Schwartz: You're a pretty good storyteller. Well, it's up to you.

0:42:14 Huey Johnson: Well, anyway, yeah, I will touch on that 'cause it's very interesting. And then, properties on Point Reyes, the several miles of seashore owned by Radio Corporation of America, I described that, I think, in our interview last time. And Tomales, the trail that was established. The old railroad grade from Tam Junction is another. What I didn't mention that I thought about later — if you go out, as you almost leave Marin County, going towards Sacramento on Highway 37, there was a lovely, huge weed field there. And there was a road that went back to the bay, one of the last undeveloped portions of the bay. It was owned by some gentlemen, old guys at the Duck Club, and I was negotiating with them, and they were willing to sell it. So, I had to come up with some way of paying for it.

0:43:31: And one thing, when you'd follow the levee back to the bay, the levee had lots of holes from gophers, and there were many pygmy owls who would get in the old gopher holes. You could drive along and stop and watch a hole, out would come a pygmy owl, just 10 feet away. And there was a very wonderful philanthropist named Palm Stout in the county, and she was well-to-do and very generous and liked saving land. So I talked to her about it and she wanted to go look. And I made a point of studying that area so I knew one hole where there was a pygmy owl for sure. Pygmy owls are little guys. They're about that big, nine inches or so, and they spin their head, around, you know, like any owl can. They lived in that bank and they fed out of the weed field. There were lots of them; there was a thriving colony of them. And we went up, I stopped beside the point, at which you could see a pygmy owl only about 10 feet away, and out came the pygmy owl. She loved birds, and she said, "Oh my god, what a beautiful sight." And she said "You're going to raise money?" I said "Yeah, I gotta raise money to pay for this place." She said, "How much is it?" And she got out her check book, and said, "I'll give you half to start." She gave me half the price of the place based on that pygmy owl, and we paid for it.

0:45:02: Sadly, later I gave it, sold it to the federal government Fish and Wildlife Service, expecting them to maintain it. And the Marin Audubon Society, under the guidance of a chairwoman who was obsessed about a particular bird, got them to flood it, and it wiped out the colony of pygmy owls. She wanted to get it for clapper rails. So it is now a mud flat. Very sad. Anyway, that was an interesting and wonderful thing, and even as a mud flat over the next hundred years other things will happen.

0:45:47 Debra Schwartz: And the other property you were talking about that we hadn't touched on over in Bolinas, were you talking about that one?

0:45:55 Huey Johnson: That was one. There are other properties. I think of one lady who wanted to save some property in Tam Junction, up the canyon. What was the name of the canyon? Well, in any event, I put together a land trust for her. It was the first one,

probably the first one in the state. 25 years later I got a funny note from her one day thanking me for all the work I'd done and how much she enjoyed knowing me and so on. It was curious, and she was something of a hermit. It turns out she was dying and I didn't know it at the time, which I should've figured out from the note I got from her. And so that one was done.

0:46:44: And there were a lot of little places here and there. An interesting one was at Point Reyes, where there were some small properties. The Park Service had a superintendent who was a difficult character. He often turned people off as much as helping. And there was a property owned section up on the ridge. It was owned by a wealthy conservative fellow named Bob Power. He owned the Nut Tree half way to Sacramento.¹ And the Park Service wanted it desperately, so they were trying to negotiate with him. The superintendent went to talk to him, and he had been talking about thinking of giving it. This guy was such a nut that he turned Bob off. Bob said, "You know, I don't like government much and I don't like you a lot."

0:47:48: To the superintendent, he said, "What I'm gonna do is, I'm gonna give it to Johnson at the Nature Conservancy on the condition that they sell it to you." The park superintendent said, "We don't buy land from non-profits." And Bob said, "Well, you're gonna this time." [chuckles] "Or you're gonna have to go to court and condemn me. It's gonna cost you a lot more than the Nature Conservancy's gonna charge." And he did give it to us. We sold it to the Park Service. With the money from that came the germ of the idea of, "Gee whiz, I could buy land much cheaper than the government and provide it as permanent open space, sell it, keep some of the money to continue our operation." And that became the Trust for Public Land.

0:48:41 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:48:42 Huey Johnson: And currently, today, the Trust for Public Land has saved three million acres and five thousand projects around the country. All from that event.

0:48:54 Debra Schwartz: From that rascal.

0:48:55 Huey Johnson: That rascal, yeah. [chuckles]

0:48:56 Debra Schwartz: What's his name, do you remember?

0:48:57 Huey Johnson: Bob Power.

0:48:58 Debra Schwartz: Bob Power, right.

¹ The Nut Tree in Vacaville was originally a roadside fruit stand that grew into a complex famous for its restaurant, gift shop, and amusement park rides. For more information, see: <http://www.nuttreeusa.com/history/> and <http://www.sfgate.com/restaurants/article/Nut-Tree-Nostalgia-A-premier-roadside-3304706.php>.—Editor.

0:49:00 Huey Johnson: I remember it clearly.

0:49:00 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:49:00 Huey Johnson: He was politically conservative, and when I needed Republican support in Sacramento he'd happily get in his car and go do it. He was a contributor to conservative politics. And he always wanted us to stop by and have lunch on our way back from Sacramento when we'd been there working on something. So, we got some very close friends.

0:49:21 Debra Schwartz: Yes. So what were the different agencies you've worked with in the span of your career, when you first — let's reiterate some of those and then even add on. When you first came to California you were working with —

0:49:34 Huey Johnson: The Nature Conservancy. I came to be the Western Regional Director of Nature Conservancy. I accepted that job while in graduate school at the University of Michigan, and as I mentioned in that interview my wife and I arrived out here and slept on the beach at Muir Beach because we were just out of graduate school and my wife and I were very low on funds, till we got a paycheck.

0:49:58 Debra Schwartz: Right. So you worked with the Nature Conservancy. How many years did you work with the Nature Conservancy?

0:50:04 Huey Johnson: Nine.

0:50:04 Debra Schwartz: Nine.

0:50:06 Huey Johnson: During those years I managed a whole bunch of projects, as I've mentioned, and ended up — from that experience with Bob Power at Point Reyes — I thought up and started the Trust for Public Land. And after five years there I was bored. We were very successful and had millions of dollars in the bank. Corporations that owned large holdings, and the Park Service wanted, or the State Parks wanted, or the counties wanted, we could acquire for far less than they could. We were just better negotiators, and so on. I think I had, well, millions in cash in the bank and I think eight million in land assets — the TPL [Trust for Public Land], on its fifth anniversary. And I resigned and went to be on the Governor's cabinet.

0:51:00 Debra Schwartz: We're talking Jerry Brown now.

0:51:01 Huey Johnson: Yeah, Jerry Brown's first term.

0:51:03 Debra Schwartz: And that year is?

0:51:05 Huey Johnson: I don't remember exactly.

0:51:07 Debra Schwartz: Decade? '70s?

0:51:09 Huey Johnson: '70s, yeah. Late '70s, probably, mid to late '70s.

0:51:14 Debra Schwartz: So now you're in government.

0:51:16 Huey Johnson: Now I'm in government, ready or not. [chuckles]

0:51:18 Debra Schwartz: You had to take your suit out of the closet, I suppose.

0:51:21 Huey Johnson: Stories go on endlessly about that. I didn't want the job. The governor kept calling me and he had a person, the former vice president of the Sierra Club, as secretary of the Resources Agency that was his cabinet member in charge of the state's environment. And it was a woman, and she really liked the idea of cutting ribbons, which you did a lot in that job. But she did not like the idea of saying no, and having to confront angry loggers or anybody else. But the job was a lot that. Protecting the landscape and the environment, and not letting would-be exploiters get away with it. And I became fairly famous for doing that.

0:52:08 Debra Schwartz: So you're like the bouncer, sort of?

0:52:10 Huey Johnson: Yeah, right. [chuckles] One day I had —

0:52:15 Debra Schwartz: Eco-bouncer.

0:52:15 Huey Johnson: A committee of lobbyists, at one point they came in, four or five of them came in, and said, "Secretary Johnson, you don't seem to understand, your work and your role here is to cooperate with us." I said, "Well, so much cooperation is going on, you just about ruined the state. I am not here to cooperate with you. If there are any compromises, you're gonna compromise." They said, "Nuh-uh, argh." So anyway, that's the way it went, and I would just say "no" and slam the door on them after that. They spread the word, I was the most hated man in Sacramento. And so many stories go on about —

0:53:01 Debra Schwartz: Jerry Brown is calling and inviting you again and again to join, but since you were hesitant there might have been some contingencies to you signing up, were there any?

0:53:13 Huey Johnson: Well sure. Knowing the influence of special interests on government, and that I wasn't interested in compromising.² So the Governor and I met at the Zen Center.

0:53:28 Debra Schwartz: Here at Muir Beach?

0:53:29 Huey Johnson: Yeah. And I had David Brower along. We talked to the governor over dinner. First time I had met him. He'd called me up. And I remember him

² I wanted a chat with the governor before I made a final decision.—Huey Johnson.

saying half a dozen times before that, saying, “I want you to come and be my Secretary of Resources.” I kept saying, “No, you need an outside critic worse than you need an inside sycophant.”

0:53:51 Debra Schwartz: Wait. [laughs] “You need an outside critic more than you need an inside sycophant”?

0:53:57 Huey Johnson: Yes.

0:53:57 Debra Schwartz: That’s a good line.

0:53:58 Huey Johnson: That’s right. [chuckles] He was a unique guy; he kind of liked that. And finally we had a dinner and it was fun. I called the Governor, said, “Alright, I’ll do it.” He said, “Well, let’s get together.” So it was just me and —

0:54:15 Debra Schwartz: So he came to you?

0:54:16 Huey Johnson: Yeah, and then we went out to this dinner at the Zen Center and Brower — Dave — said to the governor, “You know, you may not know what you’re getting into, he is not gonna be somebody who’s gonna sit around and wait for instructions.”

0:54:33 Debra Schwartz: So Brower, for those that are just hearing this name for the first time — maybe you might want to describe who your accomplice is in this meeting, Brower.

0:54:42 Huey Johnson: Well, it was Governor, Jerry Brown, and Dave Brower.

0:54:47 Debra Schwartz: Dave Brower.

0:54:47 Huey Johnson: Personal friend and environmental leader. And one other guy who’s always there at the governor’s elbow, called Jacques Barzaghi, former member of the French Foreign Legion, etcetera. And so the governor said, “Look. I want you to run environment, I’ll run politics.” I said, “I don’t want to get involved in pissing matches with political figures.” And, fine, so I accepted the job. I showed up in Sacramento and I said to the governor I want several things. I had to send a document and he had me wait. Well, I started mid-morning and I waited and he just wanted me to sign. All I had to do was sign the thing; that’s all he needed. I said, “Not signing it until we’ve got an agreement.” So at about 10:00 that night, I was still sitting there, and he came out, big smile, and said, “Alright. Come on in. What do you want?” I said, “I’m gonna take a vacation first. My wife and family deserve a vacation and I’m gonna be gone a couple weeks.” And I said, “Most of all, I’m not gonna report to the chief of staff,” which was unheard of. The chief of staff oversaw the cabinet. Well, the chief of staff happened to be a guy named Gray Davis, who was somebody I wouldn’t trust. I’d dealt with him enough previously. The governor said, “You can’t do this.” I said, “Fine, I don’t want the job.” [laughs]

0:56:25: This went on, he finally called Gray Davis, and said, “Gray, I want Huey to have his job. He’s got a problem; he refuses to report to you.” And Gray, he’s forever a lieutenant in the Army, he’d been one and he never got over it. He said, “What?!” He screamed and waved his arms around. “You can’t do that to me” — one thing or another. “Gray, I’m going to do it.” And I just sat there — the three of us. So from then on in the cabinet meetings, early on, Gray said, “Huey, the governor wants you to stop blocking the dams.” I’d blocked eight dams. And I said, “Gray, have the governor give me a call.” [laughs]

0:57:08: He would blow up. After a couple of those events, he stopped trying to intervene with my agreement with the governor. So I didn’t call the governor’s office and I sure didn’t call Gray. I just went on about my affairs and ran the resources for the state.

0:57:29 Debra Schwartz: That’s a very unique, unusual, and probably highly coveted position to be in.

0:57:36 Huey Johnson: Yeah, it was. [chuckles]

0:57:37 Debra Schwartz: You somehow carved out your niche, as a true naturalist and so that allowed you to do a lot for this state.

0:57:47 Huey Johnson: It did, indeed. I felt free and I didn’t really like living there and the governor knew that. I said, “Anytime you wanna fire me, you just let me know. I’ll go home. But I’m not gonna stand in a line to get your advice on things.” And so I just carried on and I made things happen. I required that the forestry industry plant two trees for every one they cut, and that really bugged them. I got the legislature to pass a law to that effect. And I shut down the salmon industry in the middle of the season because I felt the fish were too few in number that they were catching. And that wasn’t too popular. I had an interesting experience all told. One of my problems — later, I was embarrassed by — I had a huge staff, 14,000 employees in this huge building, and it was my building, so-called.

0:59:11: Anyway, I asked the female employees who wanted to, to go get a graduate degree at night. And so a lot of them did and my theory was, these are bright, young minds, far better than the bureaucrats running these agencies. I’d had one sit by the elbow of every one of the directors and learn of other departments, and so on.

0:59:46 Debra Schwartz: So you advanced their knowledge and their capacities.

0:59:48 Huey Johnson: Yeah. But the result was 70 percent got a divorce. These women went home and heard their husbands say, “Put another log on the fire,” and they’d said, “You put a log on the fire.”

1:00:03 Debra Schwartz: You upset the natural order.

1:00:05 Huey Johnson: Yes, at 70 percent, yes. [chuckle]

1:00:08 Debra Schwartz: See what happens. How interesting. That's interesting.

1:00:10 Huey Johnson: It really was. These people became independent. They became executives.

1:00:18 Debra Schwartz: An unexpected consequence.

1:00:21 Huey Johnson: Indeed. Unexpected, for whatever value that is. I had a good time while I was there. And I've told the story about the RARE II, the wilderness lawsuit, I think in our previous interview.

1:00:40 Debra Schwartz: Which one again was that?

1:00:44 Huey Johnson: There was an attempt by the federal government to make a final decision about all public lands, which would be wilderness and which would remain undeveloped, and that was one where I had a paper put in the attorney general's stack of documents. I had to get his signature.

1:01:05 Debra Schwartz: I don't know that we talked about that.

1:01:06 Huey Johnson: Well, you know, the story is a relevant one. The government decided to take all the public lands, which was 300 million acres, and make final decisions that some would remain wilderness and some would be developed for logging, and whatever, mining and grazing. And I started getting calls from forest employees saying, "We're being ordered to fill out forms on land that we've never seen. Nobody's even been out to look at it. We're under great pressure to do it, being ordered to do it." So, I was upset with this approach, and I questioned it, and in the end, I decided to sue the government to stop it. So, it turns out, as a cabinet member I couldn't just sue.

1:02:00: As a cabinet member I couldn't just sue without the attorney general's signing off. So I had to get the signature to file the suit by the attorney general. Well, the attorney general was a very conservative gentleman, and he and I didn't get along well at all. These special interests would go to him and say, "You know, this guy is ruining our business." So he and I would pass each other in the hall and I'd say, "Hello, you bastard," and he'd say, "Hi, you son of a bitch." Something like that, not at all friendly. [chuckles] I knew he wasn't going to sign that thing. So I got a visit when I announced I was going to file a suit, and had a committee of the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and the NRDC [National Resources Defense Council]. They all came and sat down and said, "Huey, please get off the suit. We've got everything worked out. We have cut a deal with the Forest Service, and we got some wilderness and they got what they want. The industry's happy." I said, "Well, I'm not." In any event, they left, and I sat there that night a very lonely person. Because if they went to the governor, he'd find out. These groups were the basis of his environmental support. He would intervene, say, "You know you can't file that suit." So I called a young attorney late at night that had been pre-

prepared. He had documents ready, and they were inserted in the attorney general's stack of mail. In the morning the attorney general came in, he was very busy. He'd look at his clock, he'd read the first —

1:03:37 Debra Schwartz: Just signed away.

1:03:38 Huey Johnson: Yeah, he's read the first half-dozen documents. Probably had 50 to sign, and he'd just sign 'em all.

1:03:47 Huey Johnson: So, I got my lawsuit. [laughs]

1:03:50 Debra Schwartz: Oh, my God.

1:03:50 Huey Johnson: And he always said after that, he would say, "You son of a bitch, how did you get me to sign that?" I never told him. [laughs]

1:03:58 Debra Schwartz: So, you really are imaginative in the way that you work around — I guess you really have to be.

1:04:07 Huey Johnson: Yeah, you had to be.

1:04:08 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

1:04:09 Huey Johnson: In any event, then I got calls from Phil Burton and from other congressmen saying, "Tell me you're not going to file this suit. We've worked for six months with your goddamn environmentalists. They're satisfied and you're the only one that isn't. Now tell me you're not going to file the suit." He was a wonderful character, very powerful at that time. I said, "Yes, I'm going to file the suit." He said, "You don't understand what I'm asking." He's screaming. "You better win," he said. And he slammed the phone down. I was worried about that. That's when I knew I had to move fast.

1:04:43: So I got the suit filed, and about six months later my secretary came in and said, "Congressman Burton's on the phone." And I said, "Congressman?" And he said, "Mr. Secretary, I'm one of your students, and I'm calling to congratulate you, you won your lawsuit." We became fast friends with that. Nobody ever stood up to him, as it turned out. And I could call him at any time and he'd interrupt meetings and do favors for me. I didn't realize how powerful that was at the time.

1:05:20 Debra Schwartz: Interesting, because at the time you could be quaking in your boots considering and imagining all the negative aspects but unable to understand how it actually could work in your favor, following your gut, belief in what you're doing.

1:05:33 Huey Johnson: Yeah.

1:05:33 Debra Schwartz: And then to have another unexpected result.

1:05:38 Huey Johnson: We got several million acres saved that way. Then the Forest Service, in stupid arrogance said, “That couldn’t be true. It’s luck.” And they challenged it in court and lost again. And that took out Oregon. So I got both California and Oregon’s — all their wilderness that they were going to give away, stopped. And there were millions of acres there.

1:06:05 Debra Schwartz: Wow.

1:06:06 Huey Johnson: It really was *wow*. The biggest thing I did. But then we did save 1,200 miles of wild rivers. Same controversy, refusal to compromise, and general joyful outcome. So those are examples of my time in official office.

1:06:35 Debra Schwartz: And official, that was your official duty.

1:06:39 Huey Johnson: My official duty for overseeing, yeah.

1:06:39 Debra Schwartz: You did your duty.

1:06:41 Huey Johnson: And I did it well enough that on several occasions one special interest or another would get their buddies in legislature to introduce a bill wiping out my agency, which was a point of pride to me. [chuckles]

1:07:00 Huey Johnson: Anyway, I faced them down, and they couldn’t get enough votes to do it.

1:07:09 Debra Schwartz: I don’t really know how you handle the constant pressure. What drives you?

1:07:18 Huey Johnson: Well, in that case, if you accepted the possibility of failure, what did it mean? They weren’t gonna throw you in prison. You might look foolish in the eyes of some. If you really love the job, they had you, ’cause they could threaten you. Endless special interests, logging interest, mining interest, grazing interest. These people are there for — till they retire. They have a career of 40 years. I said “I don’t like this job particularly. I’m willing to go home any day, and I ain’t about to compromise.” And they were not used to that, ’cause they liked their jobs and if they were too aggressive, I would issue a press release and accuse them of being horse thieves or whatever it was. I did sometimes. We had wonderful shootouts. And it was kind of fun. [chuckles]

1:08:22 Debra Schwartz: So you were a secretary, and then where did you go when your time was over with that?

1:08:30 Huey Johnson: Well, it was funny, I had this huge organization: 14,000 employees in a huge building. And as I went out they said, “Oh, by the way, where will we put your personal papers?” And I said, “Personal papers?” So they had about 30 boxes of all copies, of all communications I’d carried out in those five-and-a-half years in

Sacramento. I had to find some place to store those, and I came here and started the Resource Renewal Institute.

1:09:02 Debra Schwartz: We're sitting in the office of the Resource Renewal Institute now.

1:09:04 Huey Johnson: Yes, at this moment.

1:09:05 Debra Schwartz: So what year we're talking now?

1:09:08 Huey Johnson: I don't know, it was early '80's. And when Jerry Brown was out, they threw the rascals in the street. That was it. I then had some ideas and worked on them — looked for ideas that would make interesting institutions and useful institutions or organizations. I started things like the Grand Canyon Trust, which is very active today. Here's an example of a story that I would just like to touch on, that's of interest possibly. There's a picture there of you in Montana, and that picture was in Life magazine at the time. It was about 25,000 acres. Some kids came to me and they said that their dad had died. The family was well to do and they'd been left with 25,000 acre ranch, and they would like to see it become a wildlife refuge. They had a problem; they had a mean, old uncle who was the executor of the estate. He made fun of them when they said they wanted to make a wildlife refuge. I think there were nine of them. I remember them at Thanksgiving dinner coming and sitting in the living room, talking about this.

1:10:41 Debra Schwartz: To your house? On Thanksgiving?

1:10:41 Huey Johnson: Yeah.

1:10:43 Debra Schwartz: These orphans come to your house for Thanksgiving? And you talk about, "How can we give away all this beautiful land?"

1:10:47 Huey Johnson: Yeah, whatever. So I started working on it and the Fish and Game Department in Montana was delirious with the hopes of making it a refuge. The uncle wanted to sell it to the highest bidder. He was a crusty, old bugger — big belly hanging over his belt, Levi's — and he tried to be tricky. We wanted to buy it, and another guy wanted to buy it. Without telling either party, he sold it, so we would bid against each other in the final court, in his view. And I found out who the guy was, 'cause the Fish and Game Department let me know, or the judge did. And he was a bullet manufacturer, quite well known, wealthy guy.

1:11:45 Debra Schwartz: Do you remember his name?

1:11:47 Huey Johnson: I don't at the moment; I will probably think of it.

1:11:49 Debra Schwartz: Okay, we can get it later.

1:11:50 Huey Johnson: Anyway, he had a big ranch in Montana. So, I wanted to meet

with him and I contacted a guy who had a hunting rifle telescope company that I knew that loved wilderness. I asked him to help and he arranged for me to meet this other person. The guy was in the east and he was gonna be in at a conference. So we agreed to meet in a bar, some back alley in New Orleans. I was there, he came in, we sat down and talked. He said, "Well we're being conned by this executor, the old uncle." And I said "What are your needs here?" and he said, "Well some of it is there's an additional 9,000 acres of level hay fields." And that's what he wanted. He had a ranch and needed feed for his cattle. And I wanted the 25,000 acres, really of mountainous habitat. He said "All right, let's cut a deal. We'll go ahead, you buy it and I get to buy the 9,000 acres." Fine.

1:12:58: So in court, the judge had to open these things. The uncle had filed a suit personally against me for having tampered with an estate somehow. The boys, eight, nine boys were seated behind me in the courtroom and the executor and his two attorneys were up in front of me. And somebody came and whispered in my ear and said, "We're taking the boys for a ride." So the judge brought the court to order and he said, "All right, we're hereby opening the envelopes to decide." And he opened the first one, the bullet guy said, "I'm declining to bid." Oh, no, the executor said, "Judge, before that I want you to look at my suit against Johnson who has violated the law here." And the judge said, "Fine. Well, I see that as the case; we'll hold up before we open up the envelopes." That was it. He said, "Well, where are your witnesses?" "They're right" — the guy turned around and the witnesses were gone. The judge said —

1:14:11 Debra Schwartz: The sons were gone.

1:14:12 Huey Johnson: Yeah. The judge said, "Are you pulling my leg? You're making a fool of this court?" He chewed the guy out, and the fellow turned as red as a beet, and his attorneys had to physically hold him down, he was waving his arms and one thing or another. Finally the attorneys got him cooled off, and the judge says, "Shall we proceed with the hearing here?" And the judge was in on the cahoots of this thing, as it turns out.

1:14:35 Debra Schwartz: With you or the other guy?

1:14:39 Huey Johnson: No, with me. He was the one who said, "You gotta get those boys outta here."

1:14:42 Debra Schwartz: Oh, he is the one that did that.

1:14:44 Huey Johnson: Yeah, and there were no witnesses then.

1:14:48 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that's skirting the —

1:14:52 Huey Johnson: Yeah, skirting the — well, it wasn't my doing. Anyway, the judge opened the envelope and said, "One, there are two bids here, whoops, one of them doesn't wanna bid. The other one has bid 'X' so the ranch is his." That was the Nature Conservancy. By me or whoever it was at the time. Again this old curmudgeon of a

brother of the estate was waving his arms and shouting and whatever. 'Cause he had thought he had a bid going and gonna have a debate and an auction, you know?

1:15:32 Debra Schwartz: This is really a chess game here.

1:15:37 Huey Johnson: Much of it is. Then the governor of the state called out the National Guard helicopters and loaded nine boys and two of us to go fly over the mountains and refuge and see the elk in the snow.

1:15:55 Debra Schwartz: The National Guard? You can just access it like that?

1:16:00 Huey Johnson: He orders the National Guard, he's the governor.

1:16:01 Debra Schwartz: Oh, wow. Because they're delighted to have this land.

1:16:04 Huey Johnson: Yeah, they were so happy to get it, and they got it for a good price, 'cause we put in a low price, the boys had agreed to offer it for a very low price to create a priority for the state to purchase it from us.

1:16:13 Debra Schwartz: To go to this wilderness.

1:16:14 Huey Johnson: Yeah, I think in fact they did donate it. We didn't have to buy it. Then we just passed on the gift to the state. That was it. And the uncle was just berserk.

1:16:25 Debra Schwartz: So we're describing some of the challenges and victories of being an environmentalist to playing the game while standing your ground. And trying to maintain your integrity, but having to do business. This is not such an easy thing to do.

1:16:43 Huey Johnson: No, but it's kind of institutional chess. Just as there are some people are better chess player than others, I had a gift of dealing with complex land issues and charters.

1:16:55 Debra Schwartz: So, really, would you describe how you think you managed to do this? What are your gifts as you see them that help you?

1:17:05 Huey Johnson: Let it go.

1:17:06 Debra Schwartz: Okay, let's take a pause here.

1:17:09 Huey Johnson: Be right back.

[Pause in the interview]

1:17:14 Debra Schwartz: So we just had a short break there, and we were talking about the chess game of it and your skills. Let's say we've got young environmentalists

listening to this interview. You're the sage environmentalist, you've done so much, you've protected and preserved land, you've managed to maneuver through daunting gauntlets of resistance, and yet somehow you've managed to do it with aplomb, really. What do you advise for others trying to accomplish what seems at times to be almost impossible?

1:17:52 Huey Johnson: Well, I would say to lead from strength. Decide what your strengths are and polish them and build them. I am not comfortable with financial reports. And in fact, in the case of the Trust for Public Land, we quickly became so successful. We had millions in the bank and millions of land assets, growing like mad. They'd bring me the balance sheets every morning and I'd just cringe at the prospects. I just sat there studying the national figures, which didn't interest me. So I was satisfied with the idea that I would never be wealthy. So I would not be trying to make money off my transactions. I was doing it for a public purpose. And that gave me a tremendous advantage over profit-seekers.

1:18:40: And I made a point of reading about an hour a day on professional things, issues or topics that I was not that familiar with. Water policy, grazing policy, mining policy, law on this and that, environmental books, and history. I believed it was important to be a generalist, not to get locked into being a specialist. I had been at the University of Michigan getting a PhD. And when I'd applied for the Nature Conservancy job, I applied because though I had only been there a few months, I realized I was learning more and more about less and less. A PhD degree wasn't gonna prepare me for anything I wanted to do. I wanted to be a generalist, to be able to deal with problems and people, and it worked out. I had an earlier break when I got out of college. I went to work with a corporation, and was given a challenging job in a large corporation and promoted often. And I learned that the most important thing I had was my own informed energy.

1:19:57 Debra Schwartz: Your own informed energy.

1:20:00 Huey Johnson: So I needed to continue to inform myself, to be better prepared for whatever situations I'd run into. I had to learn about tax law to understand the importance of that and how to properly use the tool. And the importance of really studying a project, the complexities of it and understanding the personalities, and the technical details, and so on. And I was able then to go there. I think that corporate management experience was very valuable to me. And I went on and had some lucky breaks, several I've mentioned.

1:20:47: The University of Montana had a research forest called the Lubrecht Forest. I think I talked about that. I had a friend that was the head of the University Foundation. One day he called in a great panic saying, "My God. The president's in trouble. We have a huge school forest, the largest in the country, and he was supposed to clean up the inholdings in it." And he forgot about it. Some developers gotten a hold of a section that was put in an ad in the Sunday paper saying, "For Sale: Green Development Sites, Middle of the Wilderness."

1:21:27: Some alumnis were already going up the wall, raising Cain with the president, and he says, “Huey, can you help in any way?” I said, “Well, give me the background, the developer’s name, his phone number and other things.” I thought it over, looked at the situation, called the developer up, and said, “Mr. Developer, I’m who I am, and this is what I wanna do. We have a beautiful university forest. It’s endangered by the prospects of your development, and it’d be very important to humanity and the future not to develop it. Will you consider not developing it?” He said, “Sure, if you pay me some profit.” He just wanted to be paid for it. And I said, “Done.” We agreed and that was it, and I didn’t bother to call the university. [chuckles] I just let him sweat it out for a while, for a day or two. And they honored me by making me a member of their — what they think is their prestigious — graduate society. It was called the Grizzly Writers.

1:22:38 Debra Schwartz: The name is good. [chuckles]

1:22:39 Huey Johnson: They have a week out in the wilderness every summer, which the university puts on, this fabulous outing. You live in tents and they have cooks —

1:22:51 Debra Schwartz: It sounds like something you’d be interested in.

1:22:52 Huey Johnson: Yeah, it was good. And I have a beautiful silver buckle of a grizzly bear’s head.

1:23:00 Debra Schwartz: To do your job well, I suspect, you became a student of the world, trying to understand, to examine, to appreciate as much as you can on your own, not expecting it to come to you.

1:23:14 Huey Johnson: And on-going.

1:23:16 Debra Schwartz: And on-going till today.

1:23:17 Huey Johnson: Constant learning, yeah. And I’ve always believed out of all of this, the main skill I had was as a salesman. That really is what you’re doing. You’re selling, selling, you’re selling ideas, you’re selling used cars, you’re selling answers to problems for people, and I really took pride in being an excellent salesman. I became that. In the corporate world, I was doing very well, and I just decided to leave it. I wanted to get outdoors.

1:23:48 Debra Schwartz: So you continued with your corporate skill but in a different venue?

1:23:51 Huey Johnson: Yeah. I was able to apply that, and other people in the environmental field at that time hadn’t had a similar background.

1:23:58 Debra Schwartz: How about the people that have inspired and guided you? Locally and about in the world. Have you had that muse or that moment where you’ve met somebody besides that one cantankerous guy who really helped you to form research,

you know?

1:24:18 Huey Johnson: Well, the important one was Aldo Leopold, whom I didn't meet. I was working as a biologist at Lake Tahoe and my task was to take a boat around the lake every day, checking fisherman, checking their fish. It was winter and it was a lovely time to go out on the lake, and the mountains were all white. Often, several of us in our uniforms would go down to the ski resort Squaw Valley in the evening and cozy up to attractive ladies who were skiing. I would offer them a ride in my boat the next day. I had a great time going. We had a free house there.

1:25:04 Debra Schwartz: What year was this?

1:25:06 Huey Johnson: Well, I don't remember exactly.

1:25:07 Debra Schwartz: What decade?

1:25:09 Huey Johnson: You know, it would have been probably the late '60s. That became an important learning experience and opportunity.

1:25:30 Debra Schwartz: Leopold being — ³

1:25:31 Huey Johnson: There was tremendous snow storm and I couldn't go out on the boat. My boss and I were sitting playing chess in front of the fire and I was complaining away about the state of the world and environment and grumbling, and he said, "Well, you sound like Leopold." And I said who is Leopold? He turned around and pulled a book. It was *A Sand County Almanac*. I read it that night and I was so moved by it that I bought a copy and inscribed it saying, "To my wife to be, I've found my drum." In Thoreau's sense: a drum to march to. I still have that book with the signed autograph and I've been something of a disciple of Leopold. He hunted and fished. He was a field biologist and he wrote beautiful things. I could never write like that, but I have other skills that he didn't have.

1:26:38: As a little child, I remember reading a French naturalist named Fabre, F-A-B-R-E, and he wrote about insects. Somehow I became intrigued with that and I'd read all his stuff. And I would find others like that — Ernest Thompson Seton was a famous child author and naturalist and he wrote anthropomorphic stories about Jimmy Squirrel and his life and whatever, and I read all of those. Fortunately, my parents were very generous with their time taking me into nature, giving me freedom to do what I want to do and by myself or whatever. I went back thinking in terms of writers of books prior to Leopold that really, I felt, were huge pivot points. There were books, but none that had that impact into this day.

1:27:50 Debra Schwartz: It's an interesting thing when you think about what inspires

³ Aldo Leopold was an important 20th century author and conservationist who coined the phrase the "land ethic" in his 1949 book *A Sand County Almanac*, one of the great works of environmental writing and a major inspiration for the environmentalist movement.—Editor.

a person or how inspiration can fuel continued, life-long dedication. Inspiration is a powerful force, and it comes from all directions it seems. But once there, it's got a very long half-life at the very least.

1:28:12 Huey Johnson: Leopold, by the way, was famous for his land ethic. He describes in the final chapter in *Sand County*.

1:28:19 Debra Schwartz: The book that you just gifted to me, thank you very much, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humboldt's New World* by Andrea Wolf —

1:28:30 Huey Johnson: I feel this book is probably the most important environmental book I've read in thirty years. Von Humboldt was a German scientist, from a wealthy family. In the early 1800's he just dedicated his life to being an explorer. He spent five years in South America. The first Caucasian to go down there. The first person up the Amazon and so on. He was climbing a mountain there, turned around one day, looked back and realized everything was connected. He had known a number of scientists of that day. He really invented the word 'environment' that day on that mountain. I had really, now later, wished that I had known about him when I was a student. It turned out in World War I, German anything were stamped out and books burned and that was the end of it. He remained very famous in the world. We have Humboldt County here, Humboldt Current. He explored huge regions, and the book is well worth reading.

1:29:51 Debra Schwartz: Also there's a lot of inspirational people in this area as well. You've known some of the most amazing activists and environmentalists. I recall you telling me once about Catherine Livermore, was it?

1:30:09 Huey Johnson: Yeah, well, when I came out here there was a Livermore family at the time, and it still exists. At that time there was a family of five brothers and Mrs. Livermore. Mr. Livermore was an attorney. Well, she was a very aggressive activist on behalf of the environment.

1:30:30 Debra Schwartz: Here in the Bay Area.

1:30:31 Huey Johnson: Here in the Bay Area. She lived in Marin, started the Marin Conservation League, and did a number of things. And when I arrived out here, completely new, as the representative of the Nature Conservancy west of the Mississippi, the phone rang and it was Mrs. Livermore. She said, "You are the Nature Conservancy?" "Yes." She said, "Well, I have a task for you." I said, "Oh, well great." She said, "How about you come over to Marin and save the Seaman's Church in Tiburon?" I said, "Mrs. Livermore, we don't save buildings. We are saving natural areas." This was my official manual. And she said, really coldly, "Well, alright," and hung up. And a day later I had a call from the president of the Nature Conservancy in Washington saying, "What the hell are you doing out there?" I learned a thing about politics that day. [chuckles]

1:31:25: And her sons, one of whom was a vice-president of a very fine timber company called Redwood Forest, something or other, they had the only company that had

a schedule to last forever in the redwoods, harvesting just enough. It was very profitable. His name was Norman. He became the Secretary of Resources under Governor Reagan, and I got to know him and liked him. He was very helpful to me in the Nature Conservancy, even though I wasn't a favorite of Governor Reagan. Turned out he didn't either, but he was a wonderful guy. And he gave me an important tip. When I accepted the job first thing I did was call him up and said, "You gotta tell me what I'm doing." He said he'd come over and we spent an afternoon, and the main message I got out of it was that when he was there the bureaucracy gave him so much to read, he didn't have time to do anything else. After dinner, he left his family here and he lived in Sacramento. He'd go back to the office to read the stuff they gave him. He said, "So, they'll cripple you if they think they can." And I talked to another guy who's been assistant to the governor in Florida, who'd been a friend I met through land-saving. "Joe, what do you say?" He said, "Well, the best advice is never accept a document longer than two pages from anybody in the —"

1:32:56 Debra Schwartz: [chuckles] This is all good information for future environmentalists and people that are struggling through it now, but what is it that Mrs. Livermore said? She had a saying for you. Was it, "Flash the cash?" What was it?

1:33:12 Huey Johnson: I don't remember what that term was.

1:33:14 Debra Schwartz: She said, "When we're trying to get anything done, Johnson, don't forget to flash the cash."

1:33:20 Huey Johnson: "Flash the cash." That's probably right.

1:33:22 Debra Schwartz: Yes, so I remember you telling me this once. That helps, too.

1:33:26 Huey Johnson: So, Joe said that. And when I get to Sacramento, I refused, I got the heads of all the agencies: Forestry, Water, Parks. We talked and I said, "One of my rules is I'm not accepting any document longer than two pages." And their eyes rolled.

1:33:40 Debra Schwartz: And that was one of the contingencies that made your job a little easier when you were there.

1:33:44 Huey Johnson: Next meeting, some guy had a booklet about, "Here's our report on X." He slid it across the table and I said, "That's more than two pages," and I slid it back. All eyes were on it, so from then on if a document was that thick, it had to come in two pages.

1:34:00 Debra Schwartz: You've worked with some lofty families as well, the Rockefellers, right?

1:34:03 Huey Johnson: Yes.

1:34:04 Debra Schwartz: In saving the land in Hawaii near the Seven Sacred Pools.

1:34:08 Huey Johnson: Yes.

1:34:09 Debra Schwartz: That's quite an interesting story, I mean, you've been involved with a lot of very interesting people — big time.

1:34:22 Huey Johnson: I cared a lot about getting an international environmental organization going inside the United Nations. I worked hard on it for years and it was slow work. And finally, we got it in shape. Margaret Meade became very involved with it, as did some other people. The U.N. agreed to have one and they were going to have a conference in Stockholm to ratify the idea and discuss it. And so I went there and the lobbyists were much against it. Mr. Nixon, it turned out, wrote a note to the prime minister of France and England, I guess, saying, "I don't think we can stop this. It's going to probably hurt the environment. So, what we should do is weaken it so it doesn't work well." So what they did was go around to all the dark faces — members of the UN — African countries, Asian countries and say, "You know, the Swiss were very skilled at getting all of the U.N. agencies situated in Geneva, and just once it'd be nice to have one vote of one newly developing country."

1:36:01: And the newly developing country was decided by the powers that be to be Nairobi, Kenya. So the time came for the vote in the UN, and the chair got up and he said, "Well, we've arrived at the golden moment. We're going to establish, we hope to establish, a new U.N. agency. Why don't we make a vote?" Unanimous vote, everybody "Aye". Now he said, "We've got the outfits ready to go and everything's set in Geneva, and I would like a vote of acclimation." There was silence. And a hand went up, a black hand, he said: "Mr. Chairman, we've decided it's time we had a U.N. agency in a developing nation. We have the votes and that is going to be Nairobi." And so it did. All these bureaucrats had rented their apartments —

1:37:01 Debra Schwartz: In advance.

1:37:01 Huey Johnson: In Geneva. So I went to Nairobi for the first meetings, and while there, there would be cocktail parties every evening. That's kinda where the business is decided. And I wanted to establish a non-profit watchdog, over the U.N. agency, fearing — because the new chair already appointed by the head U.N. was a nuclear physicist from Egypt. And I said to myself, "That guy is gonna foist off nuclear power on the world, and use this job. So, I was trying to do something about that, and there was an Irish priest, who disagreed with me, and wanted the purity of the U.N. left untouched by any watchdog. And we would argue with each other. We had separate meetings with the non-profits, and he finally said, "I am sure nobody here really cares about your idea, Mr. Johnson, why don't you get lost." Something like that.

1:38:12: And I countered by saying, "Well, I'm going to have a meeting this afternoon, inviting all non-profits here, to start an organization to be the watchdog." And he said,

“Well, lots of luck.” So I named a room number and everybody came. That went well, but we decided to have a non-profit. That night at a cocktail party I met an African woman who was a college professor named Wangari Maathai, and she’d been at the meeting. She said, “I admire what you did very much and I’d like to be in it.” And I said, “How would you like to be my representative? ’Cause I don’t wanna come down to Nairobi every time we have a meeting.” She said, “Alright.”

1:38:55: So I got to know her well. And she has started this tree-planting program. She had gotten the women’s clubs of Kenya organized around tree-planting, or so it seemed, because in Kenya at that time, men dominated everything. Women did all the work, chopped the wood, took care of the kids, got the water, whatever. The men drank beer and relaxed. And so she got these women stirred up with women’s rights, and they would plant forests. Under Kenyan tradition if a forest was planted, whoever did the work got to use the land during their lifetime. So all these village women all over Kenya were planting forests, and she [Maathai] was behind the scenes. It was her deal; she had a name for it. They planted these forests and before long she had them agitating for women’s rights and other things. Radical stuff.

1:39:58 Debra Schwartz: This is sort of reminding of what happened with your employees in —

1:40:01 Huey Johnson: Yeah, that’s right. [chuckles]

1:40:03 Debra Schwartz: With the women, empowering —

1:40:04 Huey Johnson: This is more important anyway.

1:40:05 Debra Schwartz: This is more than environmentalism here.

1:40:07 Huey Johnson: Yeah, true. It really is environmentalism.

1:40:10 Debra Schwartz: It’s great. It’s a balance, yes.

1:40:13 Huey Johnson: I said, “The governor, or the president was a dictator.” And she was the only one in Kenya who’d write letters to the editor accusing him of being a dishonest crook, and other things. He hated it, but the press loved it. And he would threaten her. Finally, her husband, at a party at the UN — her husband drank a lot, and he came staggering in, and some of his friends were standing around, having a drink and they said, “Where’s the boss?” And he said, “What do you mean the boss?” They said, “Well, your wife, for Christ’s sake.” Because she was a source the press always tended to call, so probably the press would call her. And he said, “I’m the boss.” They said, “Maybe.” And here she came walking along innocently and she said, “Oh, he’s been drinking.” He looked at her and shouted, “Woman, go home and take care of the kids. And if you don’t I’m gonna divorce you.” Well, he proceeded with the divorce. And in Kenya all he had to do was walk around her twice and the divorce was final, something like that. For the first time, in the history of the country, she filed a suit, contesting his

right, without any legal proceeding, to divorce her. And the thing got in the federal court right away and there was three or four judges in the tribunal. They brought her in to make her case and they gave her about 10 seconds, then said, “Case dismissed.” And a reporter came up to her and said, “What do you think of that?” And she said, “They’re either corrupt or incompetent.”

1:42:00: The reporter went and told the judges that, and they said, “Clap her in irons.” They put her in chains and threw her in a dungeon. And the country started to rumble. All women in all the villages in Kenya, with their leader in the clink for defending their rights. They’re not at all stupid. They raised such a ruckus. After a couple of days, a guard came in the middle of the night, unlocked her cell, and took her to a side door, and pushed her out and said, “Get the hell out of here and go plant your trees!”

1:42:40: On another occasion, an English developer went to the dictator and, when Kenya gained independence, they created a beautiful park in the middle of the city called Uhuru Park. And that developer wanted to put a big hotel there for tourist purposes. She said “no,” and the dictator said “yes.” So she called out her village women and they went and they squatted in the park, had tents, and set up an opposition force. The dictator called out the military and they proceeded to beat up the women. The last picture in the press was Wangari being carried off by a stretcher with a big cut in her head where they clubbed her, going —

1:43:32 Debra Schwartz: Peace sign. Gave him the peace sign.

1:43:34 Huey Johnson: No. She said, “Keep going. Don’t give up.”

1:43:35 Debra Schwartz: Oh, keep going.

1:43:37 Huey Johnson: So, they didn’t, and the British left. And she became the first environmentalist to be given a Nobel Peace Prize after that.

1:43:49 Debra Schwartz: This speaks to something about activism and the way that sometimes you have to challenge how individuals — I think we’re in a changing world now. Many people don’t have the leeway in government that you experienced when you were able to cut your own deal. And this is a great segue into how we can talk about here and now, how we can continue to do what we need to do. You continue to do what you need to do to preserve and protect, and to keep ownership of the land in the agencies. Even those that are responsible for control of the land, like state parks or federal parks, and so on, keep them on task to keep this land available to the masses, to the public. We’re in a time of corporate control, and how do you challenge these large forces? She challenged her country, her politics, and she paid a price, but she was united. How do we do that now here? You’re busy still in your work today. You’re involved in lots of projects, yes?

1:45:05 Huey Johnson: Yes. Well, that one is very important to me, and we can describe it as a public trust.

1:45:11 Debra Schwartz: A public trust.

1:45:12 Huey Johnson: Defense of public trust. My right of being a citizen, every citizen of this country has an equivalent ownership of an inherited two acres of federal lands. So, there's hundreds of millions of acres involved.

1:45:28 Debra Schwartz: Do people know this?

1:45:29 Huey Johnson: No, that's the issue. People don't. And no politician has really dealt with it, including our best friends. Bernie [Sanders] would have. We dream that if we have a woman elected that she will, but so far —

1:45:49 Debra Schwartz: We're talking the Democrats here, yes?

1:45:51 Huey Johnson: Yeah. And what happens is, these lands have gotten some use. They are inherited, there was a big uproar in Oregon. Remember Bend, Oregon? The Bundy family got involved. That family had a big ranch in Nevada on the federal lands, and they were charged a \$1.35 a month for grazing rights for animals, for each animal. If you were to rent a pasture to graze an animal, it would cost you \$20. So, the taxpayers get nothing for all their landscape. They got a condition at Point Reyes. The ranchers there have use of public land, and they are attempting to make it appear to be their land. And that is an uproar. They pay \$7 a month for these animal units, and only written in. They've doubled the number of the animals on the land than should be there. And the result is overgrazing, too much manure, mud from all the grasses they've eaten. In that case, the law says to the Park Service, "You have to have a management plan. And you have to have one fairly often, every for 10 years." They haven't had one in 40 years, let's say. And they had no interest in having one. They seem to be running a ranch instead of a park. So, we've sued them.

1:47:35 Debra Schwartz: So, you've challenged this. It's just recently?

1:47:38 Huey Johnson: Yes.

1:47:39 Debra Schwartz: So, Resource Renewal Institute has sued them?

1:47:41 Huey Johnson: Yeah, along was two other organizations. Three of us suing them. And we have it in the federal court. The joy of that is the judge can order the federal agency to cooperate. And part of that is to send us documents. Well, the reason I filed a suit is, they had a herd of 500 tule elk out there, and the first responsibility of the park is to take care of wildlife.

1:48:09 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, so the federal park in charge there has — there's an indigenous group of elk that live there.

1:48:15 Huey Johnson: They ignored them and let 250 of them die of thirst and

hunger. Unheard of atrocity for an agency that was supposed to be responsible, and they refused to acknowledge even there was a problem.

1:48:29 Debra Schwartz: In the federal park there?

1:48:30 Huey Johnson: Yeah, so we filed a suit. And there's nothing like looking a federal judge in the eye to keep you honest. The judge ordered the Park Service to send us all their documents relating to the issue, including personal communications. And they said they didn't know anything about the tule elk deaths. There's a file full of photographs and documents. They knew a lot, and they lied a lot.

1:48:54 Debra Schwartz: So you've had access to that information.

1:48:56 Huey Johnson: Yeah, the Park Service had to send us their documents, and we sent them ours.

1:49:00 Debra Schwartz: So you can see clearly that they were aware of it.

1:49:02 Huey Johnson: Yeah, so in this case I hope that we will win. I have nothing against what had been grazing when we set up the seashore, which was a lovely landscape of some cows on a grassy landscape and a pastoral scene. It was pleasurable to see. Now big herds of dairy cows, they bring in truckloads of silage for food for them, and the story goes on. They are determined to over time own it personally. I don't mind there being —

1:49:47 Debra Schwartz: You mean the ranchers?

1:49:48 Huey Johnson: Yeah, I mean it's a good deal. If the ranchers weren't given, in essence, a \$14 a month gift for every cow they've got out there from the government, most of them wouldn't care. They're rich, they'd inherited a lot of money that their ancestors got from selling the ranches originally.

1:50:08 Debra Schwartz: To the federal parks.

1:50:09 Huey Johnson: Yeah. We're not trying to stop ranching, but we are going to require the Park Service to do what Congress ordered them to do.

1:50:17 Debra Schwartz: So in essence what you're trying to do, what you're finding necessary to do, is to remind these agencies in charge of the land of what their directive was when they received the land. And many people would assume that that was already attended to.

1:50:31 Huey Johnson: Right.

1:50:32 Debra Schwartz: That when there were these arrangements are made many years ago, that that's a structure by which any agency continues to work from. But that's

not the case?

1:50:41 Huey Johnson: Right, special interests are very powerful in Congress, and they're behind the scenes manipulating agencies. You have to fight them.

1:50:51 Debra Schwartz: I think John Muir brought that up in some of his quotes.

1:50:55 Huey Johnson: [chuckles] I think so.

1:50:55 Debra Schwartz: That the fight never stops.

1:50:56 Huey Johnson: That's right.

1:50:57 Debra Schwartz: And for you to challenge the — in essence, as I think some people locally would say — the ranchers, who are a proud group, who have got long roots here in the area is rather, I guess, an unfriendly stance, you can say.

1:51:15 Huey Johnson: Well, it ruins my chances of being elected mayor of that town out there I think, but what the heck.

1:51:21 Debra Schwartz: Yes, never want to.

1:51:23 Huey Johnson: The issue is what we've been concerned about all the time, and it's the permanence, the beauty, and presence of nature in American society. And the idea of parks, national parks, was a new idea that's spread around the world now. I think that as people understand their rights, their heritage, on these landscapes — and part of it is conflict. I've always had a tool I call "creative conflict." It's very basic to my success. To challenge and embarrass somebody that thinks they're gonna get away with some slick deal taking something from the public — from me and you and our lands — and to challenge them or to make them reconsider. Case in point: some people gave a 3,500 acre nature reserve outside of Santa Rosa, about 20 miles; and one day they're on the fence that the land had been given to the Cal Academy of Sciences. It was to be a nature preserve in permanence. One day the widow of the guy who'd given the land — next day we're driving around and there were signs on the fence saying, "Development land for sale." And it turned out some new board members at the Academy said, "Why do we need a damn nature preserve? We need a new wing on a library or a —"

1:53:01 Debra Schwartz: So the land that was given to them with the understanding that it would be preserved as a nature preserve forever is now —

1:53:09 Huey Johnson: To be developed. And so I thought it over very carefully, as a case in point of those issues I'm talking about, in a creative conflict sense. I wrote a column and got it published in the regional paper, saying that the California Academy of Sciences was given this land to preserve it. Don't trust them, they can't be trusted. Don't send them any money this year. They had been 100 years old and had never had a negative word said about them in 100 years, and it just about turned them inside out. We

were in the end able to get them to withdraw that. They fired the president, whose idea it had been cooperating with several board members, and now it's a lovely nature preserve.

1:54:01 Debra Schwartz: This really speaks to the need for civilians, for everybody to pay attention as to what's going on.

1:54:08 Huey Johnson: That's right.

1:54:08 Debra Schwartz: To help these agencies. Apparently everybody needs help in bringing forth their best self, and staying on point.

1:54:16 Huey Johnson: That's a good idea, yeah.

1:54:17 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, because a lot of us who moved to this area, we look around, and we look at the land, and we assume that — here it is, it's so beautiful, and it's been protected by people like you, and Marty Griffin, and Mrs. Livermore, and all the agencies, and we kind of feel secure with that. But, really, the idea of privilege comes with responsibility.

1:54:44 Huey Johnson: And defense.

1:54:46 Debra Schwartz: And defense. The need for all of us to help to preserve it.

1:54:50 Huey Johnson: Yeah.

1:54:50 Debra Schwartz: You can't just hand it over to someone and say, "Okay, you're going to do this. This is not my job." Really, you have to consider that it's all of our jobs, every day. Just because we weren't involved in the transference of the land to an agency, we can't necessarily expect anybody to continue to preserve that. It's our responsibility to participate.

1:55:13 Huey Johnson: And to understand the importance of heritage in our children's lives, and all our lives — defending it and strengthening it. The government has started a big effort to raise funds — conservatives in the legislature and in Congress — to have the Park Service raise funds by contributions. Rather than giving them for 100 years, Congress gives the Park Service money every year, as they originally intended. And they said, "No, you go out and raise it. Contributions." And so the Park Service formed the Golden Gate Natural Park Conservancy, which does nothing but raise money. They raised \$400 million, which is used by the Park Service, then. This is out just in the Bay Area. While things like the symphony, health benefits, poor people's needs, and so on, have their funding opportunities cut into by this \$400 million that's being raised by the Park Service fundraising arm.

1:56:19 Debra Schwartz: You mean, because the money's going to Park Service, that the federal government would have normally been supporting, funds that would —

1:56:25 Huey Johnson: To taking care of it.

1:56:26 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, and so the funds that are going into the land are being taken from other agencies that need it. Is that what you're saying?

1:56:34 Huey Johnson: The money that is needed to keep the lands healthy and active, has been cut way back. Mr. Reagan wanted a big military budget, and he argued that we should have things, social benefits, conserved by contributions. That was his idea originally, and it's still going on. The state park situation is even worse. They have, right now, what are called Iron Rangers. So at the beginning of the hiking trail, there's a machine there, and you put your credit card in.

1:57:16 Debra Schwartz: To hike the trail?

1:57:17 Huey Johnson: Yeah, to hike the trail.

1:57:19 Debra Schwartz: You've gotta pay to hike the trail?

1:57:20 Huey Johnson: Yes. And recently, there was about 20 acres of seashore acquired, in Sonoma County, and the parks agency, the state park agency, put in a whole bunch of these machines. The Sonoma Board of Supervisors voted that they didn't want them. And the conservative powers that be, headed up by Kinzie, a Marin County Supervisor, said no, and required that they had to accept these machines. So now you've got Iron Rangers.

1:58:03 Debra Schwartz: And this is in land that was secure, and acquired for the public.

1:58:06 Huey Johnson: Required for the public, using public funds.

1:58:09 Debra Schwartz: Using public funds, so the people, the public and our taxes, and so on, have purchased this land for our usage. And now we're paying for it.

1:58:17 Huey Johnson: You're paying for it twice.

1:58:17 Debra Schwartz: Twice.

1:58:19 Huey Johnson: So kids that wanna go out surfing along those 20 miles of seashore now have to pay \$3.50 a piece to get in. And Muir Woods, you have to pay \$10 a piece to get in. So you've cut out poor people, people who live in the cities, who have enjoyed access, from seeing Muir Woods. I raised my kids going out there. We'd go out at least once a month. Well, we couldn't afford to do that if we were there now, at that rate. Even today, I wouldn't be able to afford \$40 a month to go out to visit the redwoods. So this is happening around the country. And the sad thing is, the public is letting them have it.

1:59:00 Debra Schwartz: And why do you think that is?

1:59:03 Huey Johnson: Well, these land trusts are standing on the back of environmentalism claiming, “We are the environmentalists, give us money, we’ll do you good with it.” Then they turn it over to the government. And the environmental groups have become weaker and weaker — Sierra Club, others — as the funding is harder and harder to get. They’re competing with government nonprofit fundraising agencies.

1:59:28 Debra Schwartz: Do you have a suggestion on how to —

1:59:31 Huey Johnson: Well, let’s outlaw the nonprofit agencies raising money for government. I mean, why aren’t we able to help government? Because of what is called military spending. If you look, \$600 billion this year for military spending, \$30 billion for all resource issues in the nation: wildlife, parks, water. 30 against 600. And in order to get 600, Mr. Reagan started rating anything that existed to head of public benefits, saying, “Well, the public, if they are poor people that’s ’cause they’re lazy, they should get out and get a job, then they can go.” So the public better wake up.

2:00:21 Debra Schwartz: Yes, well, that’s depressing.

2:00:24 Huey Johnson: Yes, it is. That’s what’s happening.

2:00:26 Debra Schwartz: And now for you in the span of your career, who’s managed to do all this, and then you see this, it’s like the tsunami.

2:00:34 Huey Johnson: Yeah. Well, you know it’s what Muir said, Brower said: the problem never goes away.

2:00:41 Debra Schwartz: No.

2:00:42 Huey Johnson: You have to defend it, you have to be ready. You have to have a generation of people ready and you have to have kids. If poor kids can’t go out and visit parks because they have to pay \$3.50 a piece for everybody in the family, in time, you’re gonna lose interest in heritage. You’re not gonna know anything about it, ’cause you’ve never been out there.

2:01:00 Debra Schwartz: And the importance of parks, I mean, we’re going on and on and I know we have to kind of sew this up, but I remember you telling me about your friend, Yvon Chouinard, who, what did he say about — ? He’s a very successful business man.

2:01:15 Huey Johnson: Yes, he is.

2:01:16 Debra Schwartz: And what is it that he said to you about his success as a business man?

2:01:20 Huey Johnson: He said, “I’ve never gotten an original idea sitting at my desk, and my business Patagonia” — all his clothes and so on, his new ideas in fashion — “so I take six months out for the year and go fishing, because I always get my ideas when I’m out in the wilderness.”

2:01:37 Debra Schwartz: How about you? You’re an outdoorsy guy, you like to hunt and fish, and you’re a hiker and —

2:01:46 Huey Johnson: Right.

2:01:47 Debra Schwartz: So many things that you do. How important has that been as a guiding force in what you’ve done professionally?

2:01:56 Huey Johnson: Well, it is a huge force, and as I’ve mentioned I grew up in a rural small community near a park. It had a river through it. It was close enough that just beyond the toddler stage my parents would let me go visit the park with several little friends, and they would keep an eye on us. We were little kids, but we would still be able to go out there with a sleeping bag and a parent would come out at dusk to make sure we were alright, etcetera. It was obviously very instrumental, and this went on in my life as I enjoyed the outdoors a great deal. Various events have allowed me to continue an attachment to and involvement with the outdoors. And I view hunting as a form of environmentalism, if you do it honorably. I get my own protein, to a great degree. I don’t really need to go to a meat market to have somebody selling me something they’ve killed. If I’m going to eat meat I have to kill it myself, for instance. And I have had the great good fortune of being in the right place at the right time, I think, luck.

2:03:26 Debra Schwartz: So couple more things I want to talk about before we finish up here. You’ve had a lot of awards, you’ve had a lot of recognition, you’re highlighted in our local, wonderful film *Rebels With a Cause*, but you’ve had too many awards to even say — couple off the top of your head that you’ve received in the course of your work.

2:03:49 Huey Johnson: Well, the most important one, the United Nations gives an environmental award — or did anyway, not sure if they still do — one award a year to one individual. And I received a letter in the mail one day from the UN saying, “You’ve been given this award. It’s called the Sasakawa Prize.” And I thought somebody was pulling my leg. Some of my old friends or the loggers and so on stayed with the industry, that they had put together this thing and they’re kidding me. So I set the letter down, didn’t pay attention to it for a couple days and finally I felt curious. “What is this?” I said “Well we gotta check.” So we called the U.N. and said “Is this real?” They said “Yes, he’s been given the Sasakawa Prize, which is \$200,000 and a banquet at the U.N.” So we did it, and I had 100 people fly out from San Francisco and one person that day called and said “I can’t make it, but I’ve rented a ballroom in the large hotel, signed you in and the party’s on me.”

2:04:58 Debra Schwartz: Who was that person?

2:05:00 Huey Johnson: Martha Lidden. And it was a fine party. I invited everybody. All the U.N. people like to go to those things because they get a fine banquet. So there was several hundred of them and a hundred of my friends and we just had a heck of a fine time right through the night.

2:05:21 Debra Schwartz: It must be so gratifying, I should think, to be able to have these — I mean, you do what you do because you believe in it, but then the —

2:05:29 Huey Johnson: Unexpected rewards.

2:05:30 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

2:05:33 Huey Johnson: Yes, that's so. But the process of saving land, the joy and beauty of that is — these places exist now in permanence. And to be able to go back to an oasis in Arizona, the first one we saved, and it's just beautiful and there's a stream flowing through it and a grove of Cottonwood trees, out in the middle of the lower Sonoran Desert. No trees for hundreds of miles. And to go back there — all kinds of little birds come up from Mexico because the forest is there. Vermilion fly catchers are one I particularly like, little teeny things, and they're just as bright as a neon bulb. So to be able to go back and walk over those trails now, in Marin and wherever, is plenty of reward.

2:06:29 Debra Schwartz: Oh, I should think that would be the ultimate reward.

2:06:32 Huey Johnson: Yeah, far more important than money or — it was nice to get that \$200,000, but I had to give half of it to the government as taxes right away. And I've had presidential awards, acknowledgements of some sort, what do they call it? Whatever. I've got a box full of awards actually. When I was in Sacramento the habit is every group would have its annual meeting and the secretary would come give a speech and they'd give you a plaque.

2:07:01 Debra Schwartz: You can't walk on that plaque though, can you?

2:07:04 Huey Johnson: No, that's right.

2:07:05 Debra Schwartz: Finally, we're here in Mill Valley, you've raised your family in Mill Valley.

2:07:11 Huey Johnson: Yes.

2:07:13 Debra Schwartz: They say there's no place like home. I would love it if you could describe to the listeners what it's meant to you to live here in Mill Valley, what Mill Valley has given to you. You've given a lot to us certainly, but what has it been for you to be here?

2:07:31 Huey Johnson: Well, it's been a home base with great beauty and peace. And

very nice people. It's a village-like atmosphere, I can walk down to the city and go in a restaurant and usually see somebody that I know. At least it was, many of them died out now, of course. In any event, it has been a place for me to come back and rest up, and to fight from. If I go up on these issues, often national and sometimes international or whatever, you can't just keep going endlessly. You have to come back to someplace where you can reconnoiter your thoughts and reorganize your energy, and Mill Valley's been just wonderful for that. I was in the same house for 50 years, and have had the best of all lives, doing exactly what I want to do every morning. I'm still at it.

2:08:34 Debra Schwartz: You're still at it. That's something for everybody to remember. That you're going to be at it till the last moment.

2:08:37 Huey Johnson: Yeah, don't stop too early.

2:08:43 Debra Schwartz: With that grizzly belt buckle on, and your fishing rod, and your inspiration. Well, Huey, I just would like to say on a personal note, that as a hiker, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you've done for our immediate area. And for many of the places, for other states, Hawaii, and Montana, and Arizona, all the other places I've actually hiked in too, that are preserved because of you and your good efforts and the efforts of the people that you worked with. Thank you so much for everything you've done for this community. And I know that there may be people that are listening to this interview and they may be wondering what they can do to help you in your continued efforts, and what can we say to those people? Come knock on the door, or?

2:09:37 Huey Johnson: Well, you made the point, you don't do these things individually. You only do them with the help of the community and the help of people there who care enough to keep themselves informed and up to date and watchful of the heritage that exists there, making sure somebody doesn't run off with it and build a skyscraper on it. The government has a funding source, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and has tried to give money to every county in America.

2:10:10 Debra Schwartz: What's it called again?

2:10:11 Huey Johnson: The Land and Water Conservation Fund.

2:10:12 Debra Schwartz: The Land and Water Conservation Fund.

2:10:13 Huey Johnson: A tax on motorboat oil and so on. And I had some fun conversations with the fellow in charge of that in the West. He said, "Geez, we got a conference about the Land and Water Conservation Fund in Las Vegas, and we decided to go out and look at some of our good work." He said, "So I went with a map of several sites. The first site we came to we couldn't find the open space. Finally there was an address there. We went in and we said, 'Hey, you know that you guys have built a hotel on a park?' The guy says, 'Yeah, what are you gonna do about it?'" They couldn't do a thing about it at that stage.

2:10:58 Debra Schwartz: So I guess the moral of that story is keep your eyes peeled.

2:11:02 Huey Johnson: Know what you have and keep it that way.

2:11:04 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, know what you have and keep it that way.

2:11:10 Huey Johnson: We have to raise a generation of kids who have some attachment to places, to parks and beauty. And if we let this fee for everything happen, poor families — I came from a relatively poor family out of the Depression, and was fortunate to associate with nature early. Well, children have to have that opportunity.

2:11:35 Debra Schwartz: So, privilege and responsibility.

2:11:42 Huey Johnson: Thank you very much for having me.

2:11:44 Debra Schwartz: Thank you, Huey, thank you very much for everything, and thanks for your time today.

2:11:48 Huey Johnson: Well, we've gone on endlessly.

2:11:51 Debra Schwartz: Okay, well on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society and the Mill Valley Library we conclude this interview, and carry on.

2:11:57 Huey Johnson: Thank you.