

Mill Valley Oral History Program
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WENDE CRAGG

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

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In this oral history, Wende Cragg recounts her life in Marin County and expresses her intense passion for mountain biking. Born in Berkeley in 1948, Wende grew up amongst seven siblings in Berkeley and Oakland. In the late 1960s at Merritt College she met her ex-husband Larry Cragg, with whom she soon moved to Mill Valley. Wende recalls hanging out at Mill Valley's Prune Music when it was a crossroads for Bay Area musicians. She also recalls her presence at the birth of mountain biking in the early 1970s and her participation (as the first woman and, for a time, the only one among a male-dominated cohort) in the development of the sport. Wende describes her first ride out to Tamarancho, recalling how she was initially terrified, but soon became hooked on the sport, discovering its spiritual dimension and considerable therapeutic value as well. She recounts competing in the Repack races (for which she holds the women's record) and later capturing some of the most iconic images from the early years of the sport as a photographer. Wende describes her passion for mountain biking as all consuming, and discusses the initial difficulty she found in balancing this with her work as a textile artist. This oral history concludes with an expression from Wende of the immense joy (and pride) she feels when she sees young people — and especially young girls — who are passionate about mountain biking.

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October 14th, 2015

Editor's note: This transcript has been reviewed by Wende Cragg, who made minor corrections and clarifications.

0:00:00 Debra Schwartz: Today is October 14th 2015 and my name is Debra Schwartz. I am sitting here with Wende Cragg. Wende, thank you so much for talking with me today.

0:00:12 Wende Cragg: You're welcome.

0:00:13 Debra Schwartz: This oral interview is conducted on behalf of the Mill Valley Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society, and I'm very excited to talk with you. You are unusual in that you are one of the only females in the early history of mountain biking. So, I imagine you have a lot of stories to tell, but let us start with a little bit about your family and your background. Can you tell me — ?

0:00:44 Wende Cragg: Yeah, [I was] born in Berkeley 1948, one of eight kids. I lived in Berkeley from 1948 until, I think, 1955-ish, maybe '54, when we moved to East Oakland, but growing up in Berkeley, we had the best possible world. We lived next to a wood mill and next to a creek. So we had the best of all worlds. We had all the leftover wood products, all the scraps, and we'd make rafts, we'd make tree forts, we'd make stilts, we'd make just anything we could possibly make out of wood. And I learned to ride a bike there, of course, learned to roller-skate there, and when I moved to Oakland, the roller-skating became my real passion. I was so involved in roller-skating that most of the time I'd just live with my skates on. [chuckles] And I actually slept with my skates on a couple times, and I always had my skate key around my neck.

0:01:52 Debra Schwartz: How old are you now at this point?

0:01:53 Wende Cragg: I'm 66. I'll be —

0:01:55 Debra Schwartz: No, I mean when you were skating.

0:01:56 Wende Cragg: Oh. When I was at — probably —

0:01:58 Debra Schwartz: When you were sleeping with your skate key.

0:02:00 Wende Cragg: I was probably between 8 and 10.

0:02:03 Debra Schwartz: Okay. So first a little bit — we'll go back a little further to your family and then we're going to get back to Berkeley where the mill is because it will be interesting to hear where that actually was.

0:02:14 Wende Cragg: Okay, like I said I was one of eight kids. I had four brothers

and three sisters, and I always seem to identify being a tomboy. I grew up as a tomboy. So I always identified with the boys and I wanted to do what they were doing. My sisters, personally, I thought they were just boring and they didn't want anything to do with worms or nature, or the creek, or whatever. So, I usually played with the boys and they were always adventurous, they were always the ones that were doing the wild, crazy, wacky things, and I think I just grew up having more of a sense of adventure and a spirit where I just wanted to experience that kind of thing.

0:02:58 Debra Schwartz: Where in Berkeley exactly was your house?

0:03:00 Wende Cragg: Our house was in a strange place. It was off of University Avenue, right behind the old Southern Pacific Railroad Station. So right behind our house, the railroad station ran and —

0:03:15 Debra Schwartz: That's close to the freeway, isn't it?

0:03:17 Wende Cragg: It's less than a mile from the freeway. I'd say maybe eight to 10 blocks. Yeah, so we had not just the railroad, but behind that there was a huge vacant lot. It was a semi-rural area to grow up, but on the other side of the street was all houses. We were the only house on our side of the street and we were enclosed by industrial — like I said, we had a wood-working shop and a bakery on one side, but Strawberry Creek ran directly under our house. Our house was actually situated on stilts above the creek. So, we had that creek during the summer time, and it would rise and — lower and rise as the seasons evolved, but we spent all of our waking time playing in that creek or playing in the vacant lot just doing kid stuff, you know?

0:04:22 Debra Schwartz: And tell me a little bit about your parents? What brought them to Berkeley? Or where they born — ?

0:04:26 Wende Cragg: They both grew up on a farm in Iowa. My parents came out here shortly after the war because they knew that there was — my dad was in construction. So they came out, he knew that there was work here after the war, and they settled in Richmond and lived there for a couple years, and moved to Berkeley, which was where I was born, and then we moved to East Oakland. So that's where I lived from the age of, oh, six until 16-ish when I ditched 'cause I could not live in Oakland anymore. I dropped out of high school, went back to Berkeley, pretty much was a street urchin, and ended up moving in with my brother and his wife, 'cause they lived in Berkeley; and one of the conditions of me living there was that I had to go to college even though I was a high school dropout. So I ended up going to a junior college and I wanted —

0:05:33 Debra Schwartz: In Berkeley?

0:05:34 Wende Cragg: It was Merritt College in Oakland. It was just a community college. I studied to be an oceanographer. I wanted to be on the ocean. It was a romantic fantasy, which proved to be a non-reality when I almost drowned in Mazatlán and I realized, "This is not my environment." You know, "I'm not too comfortable here." So I

changed majors and I switched to forestry. I wanted to be a forest ranger 'cause I just grew up loving nature, having that beautiful Berkeley environment. So I signed up for the forestry class. I was the only woman with 67 guys in my class. That's where I met Larry, my ex-husband.

0:06:24 Debra Schwartz: Larry Cragg.

0:06:25 Wende Cragg: Larry Cragg.

0:06:28 Debra Schwartz: He was in the forestry — ?

0:06:29 Wende Cragg: No, he was in the same class as I was, studying forestry, although he didn't want a career in forestry. He had to get out of the draft. At that time you had to be enrolled in college so, he —

0:06:44 Debra Schwartz: So before we get going any further, let's just get the names of your parents.

0:06:47 Wende Cragg: Oh, okay. My dad's name is Bill, my mom's name is Milly. And my family —

0:06:54 Debra Schwartz: Last name, your maiden name?

0:06:56 Wende Cragg: Fisher.

0:06:56 Debra Schwartz: Fisher?

0:06:57 Wende Cragg: Fisher, yeah. Not related to Gary Fisher, but we do share the same last name. My siblings, my oldest brother was Bill, then there was my older sister Donna, then my brother Dennis, then my sister Judy, then me, and then my brother Terry, my brother Yan and my younger sister Deb.

0:07:24 Debra Schwartz: That's a big family.

0:07:26 Wende Cragg: That was a big family.

0:07:27 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so now back to the classes and you met Larry Cragg. So you were now how old?

0:07:32 Wende Cragg: I was 18.

0:07:35 Debra Schwartz: Wow, young girl.

0:07:35 Wende Cragg: 18, yeah.

0:07:37 Debra Schwartz: And so you're — I just have to ask: You were able to sign

up for classes at Merritt even though you weren't — you didn't have your high school — ?

0:07:47 Wende Cragg: Yes.

0:07:47 Debra Schwartz: That wasn't an obstacle?

0:07:48 Wende Cragg: Yeah, you had to be — I think it was 17 or 18 you had to be. You didn't have to graduate from high school, but you did have to be a certain age. It must have been 18. I'm trying to remember, because I think it was 1967, 'cause my birthday is so late in the year it would have — it's almost like a non-year that I celebrate.

0:08:14 Debra Schwartz: Well, it's okay, close is good.

0:08:17 Wende Cragg: I was 17 or 18 I believe, yes. I was 18 and a half when I ended up meeting Larry.

0:08:25 Debra Schwartz: And you dropped out of what high school?

0:08:27 Wende Cragg: Castlemont High.

0:08:28 Debra Schwartz: Castlemont High?

0:08:28 Wende Cragg: Castlemont High.

0:08:29 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so continue. You meet Larry —

0:08:31 Wende Cragg: So I met Larry and we ended up moving to Mill Valley. It was a happenstance that Larry and his good friend at the time, Bill Steele, they were hitchhiking somewhere, and they picked up someone, and the guy happened to mention that he knew of a home for rent in Mill Valley. So Larry and Bill and Bill's wife, Lindy, moved in and I ended up moving in about three or four months later. Yeah, after we'd met. I moved in pretty quickly. We met in July, and by December — I think I moved in on my birthday in December, so six months.

0:09:16 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:09:17 Wende Cragg: Six months.

0:09:17 Debra Schwartz: And how was Mill Valley for you? Any comments about —

0:09:22 Wende Cragg: We moved into this tiny little shack, it was literally a little cabin at the end of Edgewood, at the beginning of the Pipeline Trail. And the four of us shared this tiny, tiny — couldn't have been more than 800 square feet, in the Redwoods. And, like I said, we did have access to the mountain, and that was the greatest joy for me, discovering — having that access to the mountain was just incredible.

0:09:52: We lived there for two years, and then we moved to Inverness for a half a year, and then we ended up, in 1970, moving — what’s now called “living off-grid,” although back then it was called “living on the land” — and we lived with my brother and his wife up in Hopland for a couple of years. And then we ended up buying the house in Fairfax. I’ve been there forever.

0:10:24 Debra Schwartz: But you have an affiliation with the early beginnings of the mountain biking.

0:10:32 Wende Cragg: Right.

0:10:32 Debra Schwartz: So let’s chat about that. How did that happen?

0:10:35 Wende Cragg: It happened totally by accident. We were neighbors with a woman named Emma, and she became involved with this guy named Fred. Well it turned out Fred, was Fred Wolf. Fred Wolf was good friends with Charlie Kelly, who was really good friends with Gary Fisher. And they had just started cannibalizing these old Schwinn cruiser bikes, and they were just then starting to put gears on them.

0:11:10: Larry got a bike, he was encouraged by Fred to get a bike, and somehow they talked me into — all these guys, like three or four of these guys, purposely put this bike together for me. It was a JC Higgins frame and it had state-of-the-art equipment. It was five-speed, it had drum-brakes, and it weighed 56 pounds. It was nearly half my weight.

0:11:38 Debra Schwartz: ’Cause you’re not a very big person.

0:11:40 Wende Cragg: And my very first mountain bike ride, I rode from my house; I lived on the edge of Tamarancho. I rode from my house to the first A-frame, which is less than a mile. It was predominantly on a little tiny trail, literally it was like a HO gauge trail, and I was so terrified.¹ I rode it, but I was so terrified. I got out to the A-frame and I said, “I’m not doing this again.” So I rode home thinking that was the end of it. “I’m not getting back on.” It was so terrifying trying to control this bike on this —

0:12:19 Debra Schwartz: This very heavy bike, yeah.

0:12:20 Wende Cragg: It was heavy. I was in pretty decent shape, but not well enough to ride this massive weight. And so, I thought that was gonna be the end of it and somehow Fred, who was really, really — he knew wild flowers, he knew trees, he knew — he enticed me just subliminally in ways that I’m almost embarrassed. I was so hook, line, and sinkered. He’d say, “I know where there’s some chanterelles, but we have to — it might be best if we just got on the bike and went out there because it’s kind of a ways.” Or, “I know where there’s some red larkspur growing, but it would probably be best if we didn’t hike there ’cause that would take forever.” So, he enticed me.

¹ HO gauge refers to a popular scale of model railway.—Ed.

0:13:10 Debra Schwartz: Was that intentional?

0:13:11 Wende Cragg: I think that subliminally, maybe, these guys wanted a token woman. I hate to say that word, “token,” but they wanted to, perhaps, make it more inclusive. At the same time, there were some people that didn’t want to. Otis Guy² for example did not. Once I got into the whole mountain biking thing, he was one of the few that didn’t want to spread the word as vocally as we were because I think he knew intuitively that we’d also get some bad apples in the mix. And he didn’t want to spread the good news too far [chuckles] and ruin it for the few that had access. We had full access to the mountain. We had full access to all the trails you could ride. And once I started getting into it, once I got hooked, there was no turning back because it didn’t take long for me to just realize, “Wow. This is what I wanted to do my whole life.” I grew up wanting to be a ballerina or a merchant marine. The two were such a dichotomy, but it seemed to satisfy the sense of adventure and the dance in me. And once I got hooked on that mountain bike, that was the beginning of the end for me, because it was such a passionate, obsessive thing that I had. I gained so much freedom and such a sense of adventure that I realized, “This is the best fitting thing I’ve ever experienced, for me personally.”

0:14:56 Debra Schwartz: So how long did it take from that time where you were just grunting along, pushing that thing up — ?

0:15:00 Wende Cragg: It took a couple of months for me to actually start noticing muscle. The fat was turning into muscle and I was getting stronger by the day, because at that point, I was probably riding every single day. I think it was 1970, or, yeah, I’m pretty sure it was 1976 that I rode 78 days in a row without taking any break. I was emotionally compensating for some difficulty in my personal life, and I’ve always said that the mountain bike was the most perfect shrink in the world because you are so — you can’t deny that you have to deal with certain things that are in your head when you’re out there all by yourself and there’s no one to talk to except yourself. So, a lot of times, I’d just use it as my personal shrink. I knew that it was doing such a world of good for my head, emotionally and physically and every other way, that I just — I’d wake up in the morning and that’s all I’d think about. “What’s the weather doing?” Because I have an incredible view, the first thing I see, I pop my head out, I have wrap-around windows, I can see everything, so my first instinct: “What’s the weather doing? Where am I riding today? Is it too hot to ride inland? Do I go to the coast? Do I ride up the mountain today? Does it look like it might rain so that I wanna stay close?”

0:16:33: Because being an independent woman also meant that, well — certainly back then we didn’t have cell phones or anything, so I had to really be cautious and take into account, “Well, if I’m out there all by myself” — because I didn’t really have any mechanical skills. And I was usually riding like this [gestures] with both fingers crossed so that I didn’t have a mechanical breakdown or even a flat tire. Because although I did

² Otis Guy tried to dissuade not women in particular but people in general from spreading the word. He was afraid that if too many people found out how much fun it was, things would get out of control.—Wende Cragg.

know how to change a tire, I hated it. I hated it. So, I was always riding with the positive vibes that there's not gonna be any breakdowns. I had all these old maps from the '70s, and every single — they were highlighted; they were completely highlighted in yellow. Every single trail, I just explored everything, not just on the mountain, but Tamarancho, the water district, Point Reyes, I had mapped out. I'd gone all by myself out there and looked at all the different possibilities for routes and all that. And you could ride everything out there at the time.

0:17:43: Then I'd come back and I'd get so excited and I'd call people up and we'd organize these great group rides for a week later or something. I'd say, "It's gonna be like four or five hours. We need to bring water, we need to bring food. The frisbee, we'll bring the dogs, maybe a bathing suit because we might go to Bass Lake or something." And it was just a whole day, all day adventure. None of us worked officially back then, so we had that option of, and the luxury of, being able to just take off for the day and do that. It was unbelievable. Plus, having that access was — the world was our oyster. We just were so incredibly blessed.

0:18:27 Debra Schwartz: And was Larry riding as well?

0:18:28 Wende Cragg: He rode a bit. He did start out riding, and then once we were divorced, he just kinda — it fell by the wayside. I think his music took precedent over that. But, yeah, he rode for a couple of years.

0:18:44 Debra Schwartz: So, if we're going to stay in time sequence here, maybe this would be a good time before we jump in to the whole Fat Tire Flyers scene, to talk about the Mill Valley scene where you were working, as you mentioned in our pre-interview, with Prune Music and that experience at that time in Mill Valley.

0:19:10 Wende Cragg: Larry and I were living in Mill Valley and we didn't — neither of us officially had a job, although he'd do odd jobs, I did babysitting or sewing or whatever. And he happened to wander into this little tiny, tiny little store in Mill Valley. This must have been 1968 or '69, and it was just literally a storefront. It had a couple of guitars in there, and it was probably no more that: 16 by 16 feet, it was just minute. And that's where the original Prune Music started on this side of the bay 'cause there was one in Berkeley at the time.

0:19:53: He worked there for maybe six months or so, \$10 a day. And what he'd started to do was take the instruments off the wall and then tune them up 'cause he didn't have anything to do, there were basically no customers coming in. Once they moved their location to a place that was probably five or six times the size, then they started to generate business. And by then, like the early '70s, they were starting to get a clientele that was pretty illustrious. Carlos Santana would come in. I had the biggest crush on him. This was before Woodstock, before anyone had heard of him. We'd get people like Dan Hicks, The Dead would drop in. John Cipollina. Just all these idols that I grew up with, because I was — being at Berkeley, my whole thing was music, and we would never miss a film or an Avalon Ballroom or any of the weekend events.

0:21:01: I saw everyone, every top — I mean, I could list off everyone who played in the '60s 'cause I saw them. My passion for music ran pretty darn deep and falling into that music scene with Larry was the perfect fit for me at the time. And just having that opportunity to meet some of those people.

0:21:32 Debra Schwartz: Did you go you hang out at the store with them?

0:21:34 Wende Cragg: Oh, yeah. I didn't drive until I was 22. So I'd walk down the steps — I think they're the Dipsea Steps — 'cause, yeah, I'd walk down and just hang out there, and I'd bring my little embroidery projects and sit there and just kinda — because there would be jams, there'd be impromptu jams, there'd just be, like I said, people that would drop by that your jaw would just drop open, my God. Back then it was just part of the scene, and I didn't realize at the time how colorful these characters were and how much they played a role in the whole Mill Valley scene, but they were pretty darn important.

0:22:19 Debra Schwartz: Do you have any single memories or any stories that would, can sort of well represent the experience, how it was for you?

0:22:28 Wende Cragg: Not really. I was just pretty much in awe. I'm not a musician myself, I don't play anything, I can't sing. I mean, I'm kinda — not tone deaf, but I couldn't even pick up a guitar and even attempt to pluck it. So I was always in awe of this talent all around. Plus, the guys in the store played, too; they were all musicians as well. So these impromptu jams that would just occur were just once in a lifetime kind of things 'cause you'd have these individual musicians that would just kinda groove with each other, and it was real special.

0:23:11 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, it sounds wonderful. It sounds like a, like a butterfly sighting, just something that happens rarely, but when it does, it's so beautiful.

0:23:18 Wende Cragg: Yeah, very serendipitous. All of it.

0:23:22 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so let's get back to the mountain biking. Now you've strengthened, you have developed a very serious and heartfelt relationship with biking. You've got your community of people around you, and then what happens next?

0:23:39 Wende Cragg: Well, gradually, I also elevated the status of my — the quality of my machine. So I was only on my heavy bike for probably eight months and then I graduated to a bike that weighed 48 pounds, so it was a little less. I stayed on that bike for about a year and then I graduated to a beautiful custom painted Alan Bonds. Have you interviewed him?

0:24:10 Debra Schwartz: No.

0:24:10 Wende Cragg: Alan Bonds is another guy. He would take these old Schwinn

and do the most gorgeous custom paint job to reflect the original artwork, and I got one of his bikes. That weighed 38 pounds. So, I was slowly graduating, losing the poundage and getting stronger at the same time. And about that time, Larry and I started to get involved in photography. He had bought a Nikkormat and together we shared the camera. We started to take pictures of the Repack races and just all our adventures. And within a short time I realized, “This isn’t gonna work. I need my own camera.” So, I got my own Nikkormat with all the lenses and I started packing that on my back, which was pretty amazing in itself because I was probably packing about 10 extra pounds in camera gear, and lenses, and film, and mini tripod, or whatever. The camera itself weighs a couple of pounds. I was never without that camera, and thank goodness because I just started clicking away and caught all those candid shots of all those people that were the makers and the breakers and the shakers.

0:25:40: And all those people who are so incidental in what we had at the time, which was such a rustic, organic beginning. There was no rhyme or reason to it and no one had any direct intention of — they had no real focus on where this was gonna go. So, I think it all came as a surprise to a lot of people, how much it evolved and how once it took off it was like wildfire. And that didn’t really happen for, gosh, six or seven years after the thing started. So it was a short incubation period, but once it exploded it became just — by the ’80s, the early ’80s, it had started to evolve globally. So we could sorta see — in fact, I had been interviewed by some — I think it was *California Bicyclist* or something like that, back in the early ’90s, and they asked me, “What do you think of the future of mountain biking?” And I said, “Oh, I think we’re gonna be in the Olympics.” And sure enough, it was like a couple of years later, it was in the Olympics. So I’m still in shock. I feel somewhat like an accidental tourist through that whole thing.

0:27:05: I feel that it was so serendipitous, but almost surreal at the same time, to have been included in this little network of people who were making such a huge difference. And I really seriously think that at the time we were going through the oil crisis, the gas embargo and all that, you had to line up to get gas. I’m sure you remember. So the mountain bike, its evolution at that particular time was so timely it changed the whole face of cycling in general because I think — nobody rode back then. They were just either hardcore roadies or just cruising around on your old, literally your old cruiser, and that was it. There was no in between. The whole concept of being able to ride a bike on dirt or pavement was very appealing.

0:28:12 Debra Schwartz: How ironic the fuel crisis should fuel — well, actually not, I suppose. Innovation is often sparked by need.

0:28:20 Wende Cragg: Right.

0:28:21 Debra Schwartz: So, you were in the midst of all this and you’re surrounded by men.

0:28:27 Wende Cragg: Yeah.

0:28:28 Debra Schwartz: So, what was that like?

0:28:31 Wende Cragg: Well, it's funny because about six years ago I was interviewed by *Bike Magazine*, and the editor was the guy who interviewed me, and he said, "So, what was that like? Were you hit on all the time?" And I said, "No, not really." And then it occurred to me, "No, I wasn't." [laughs] Charlie, he's even joked through the years that I had balls.

0:29:00 Debra Schwartz: Charlie Kelly?

0:29:01 Wende Cragg: Charlie Kelly. So, I guess I did have a set of balls, and I was not attractive to those guys like that. They were all the most gentlemanly mentors. I mean, they were so patient with me. I was definitely one of them after I got my balls situated correctly. Because, I believe, they started to have a healthy respect for me. I never gave up. Never gave up. I never complained. 'Cause you're out there and you don't have a choice. Once you're climbing in this peak, I mean you can turn around and go back to the parking lot, what's that gonna do? But you always had to get to the top with the guys no matter how long it took and they always respected that. They respected the fact that you were willing to make that extra effort. Even though I was carrying a lot of weight. A lot of times I was riding a heavier bike, you know, so I think that, in particular, gave them a levity for how much I was trying and how determined I was.

0:30:12 Debra Schwartz: Did you ever feel like the little sister surrounded by a bunch of older brothers? Were they protective of you?

0:30:19 Wende Cragg: I felt like they were my contemporaries. They were very protective. Highly protective of me. Like I said, they would coach me, they would mentor me. Gary Fisher was particularly coach-like with me, and he took me under his wing. Charlie did too. I mean, Fred did. All these guys. Joe did. Otis did. All these guys that had some kind of bike history that really knew how the bike operated. There's an old adage among bikies, "It's not the machine, it's the motor." It doesn't matter what kind of bike you're on, it's all in, you know, how much strength and determination and passion you've got for what you're doing, 'cause no matter what, it doesn't matter if your machine is a piece of crap, if you got the vision, you're gonna make it happen, you know? So I think that they respected that aspect of me, that I just was so determined to do it, you know?

0:31:30 Debra Schwartz: And where did that come from? I mean, when you think —

0:31:31 Wende Cragg: My mom. I'm sure it came from my mom. She was, I mean, the mother of eight kids, and she was remarkable. She was the most incredible human being. She was a renaissance woman, she could do anything, anything. I mean, we'd come home from school at our lunch time, we'd run home. Our elementary school was only 10 blocks away, so we'd run home, and she'd be wallpapering or she'd be re-upholstering, or making drapes, or putting in a brand new garden or baking, she was the most incredible baker. So I kinda picked up some of that, just that zest for continually

doing, creating, just making it happen, you know?

0:32:23 Debra Schwartz: Speaking of your mother, what were her feelings about this? The world that you were in.

0:32:30 Wende Cragg: She was pretty amazed, I believe. I don't think she was surprised, but at the same time, she was probably in awe of me. Sometimes I'd call her up and — you know, after a Repack race or something [chuckles] — and I'd boast about how I wasn't the last one, you know? I wasn't the last, I had a faster time than so-and-so. I even beat Larry. I was kinda ballsy. I was actually pretty stupid, because none of us wore protective gear at all, and we'd just fly down Repack. It wasn't until I had maybe two or three Repacks under my helmet that I actually got a helmet, and I was probably one of the few people who wore one. I only raced Repack, I think, four or five times. I do have the woman's record, which is only one minute and five seconds slower than the all-time male record.

0:33:28 Debra Schwartz: Of Charlie's, right?

0:33:29 Wende Cragg: It's Gary Fisher, has 4:22. Mine is 5:27. So it averaged out to about 28 miles an hour, average, and if you've ever been down Repack, it's two miles of steep, rutted, deeply rutted — I had a crash on the third attempt, and I think I tried it one more time, and I couldn't really — at the top of Repack, my legs were shaking so hard at that point I was, after that crash, I was terrified. And so I realized, maybe this isn't a good option for me, so I ended up photographing instead. But yeah, the first three or four times I was all balls out just like the guys, until that first crash, and then I — 'cause I ended up in this culvert, and I was like, "I can't get out." [chuckles] I was like struggling, no, seriously, some of these culverts, these rain-washed gulleys, were like three or four feet deep, and trying to get your — lug your bike out, and worrying about somebody coming down at the same time was like, oh. So I realized —

0:34:38 Debra Schwartz: And this is rain or shine, right?

0:34:40 Wende Cragg: Yeah, pretty much. Yeah. So I realized after a short time that that maybe — I didn't really like the racing aspect of it, that was not — although I was highly competitive with the guys, but if I actually had to race with the women, I was a wimp. I didn't like it. I didn't feel comfortable. I felt like, "They're going for blood and I just wanna play," you know? This is not serious business, we're out here to have fun.

0:35:10 Debra Schwartz: The women. Tell me about the other women.

0:35:13 Wende Cragg: Oh, there weren't too many women. Like I said earlier, Jacquie Phelan was the first woman.³

0:35:18 Debra Schwartz: Talk about Jacquie. You told me a little pre-interview that —

³ Actually, Denise Caramagno was the first woman.—Wende Cragg.

0:35:21 Wende Cragg: Jacquie is — how do you say it? — flamboyant, and very colorful. A very colorful — dreadlocks at one point. At one point she wore a little rubber ducky attached to her helmet. She came out of — I wasn't there at the time, but I heard through the grapevine that one race she came across with her top down. [laughs]

0:35:56 Debra Schwartz: She pulled her top down as she was going across the finish line?

0:36:00 Wende Cragg: Yeah. That was the rumor. I'm not sure if that was the truth. She just was one of those women who — she liked the attention. So she happened to be the best possible world for us to spread the word among women. Because I took Otis's advice and tried not to spread the word too much, thinking that it might ruin our sport. She was more inclusive and inviting. She wanted all the women to join her, which was a great thing. So she formed the WOMBATS, which was Women's — it has something to do with Alice B. Toeclips. That's her —

0:36:44 Debra Schwartz: [laughs] Alice B. Toeclips!

0:36:45 Wende Cragg: Yeah, that's her name, Alice B. Toeclips. And she formed this group, called the WOMBATS, which was the Women's Off — something.⁴ It's a tea society, and you'll have to look it up, because it's very, very unique. But she formed this group. It had quite a number of members for a long, long time. And she would do these rides and seminars and all kinds of things. So she personally is a heroine to me, because she spread the word among women, which I — I don't know if I was not inclined to do it, it's just that, like I said, I took Otis's advice not to.

0:37:31 Debra Schwartz: What did you tell me earlier about the kind of athlete she was and the effect it had on the gentlemen?

0:37:39 Wende Cragg: Oh, yeah. One of the first times I ever recall seeing Jacquie, we had — well, Charlie Kelly had started this Thanksgiving Day Ride, which has become really nationally known now. They call it the Appetite Seminar. It's a grueling 20 miles, and I don't mean this — it really is grueling. You climb several peaks, a couple of ridges, and there's a place called — it's about half way through the ride — a place called Smoker's Knoll, where everyone gathers to get their wind back. She appeared —

0:38:20 Debra Schwartz: Is that a euphemism? The Smoker's —

0:38:22 Wende Cragg: The Smoker's Knoll?

0:38:24 Debra Schwartz: To get their wind back?

0:38:25 Wende Cragg: To get their wind back? [laughs] Yes.

⁴ WOMBATS is an acronym for the Women's Mountain Bike and Tea Society.—Ed.

0:38:27 Debra Schwartz: Okay. [laughs]

0:38:28 Wende Cragg: It is the Smoker's Knoll for a good reason. [laughs] But she showed up and I just — I think I have a photograph of her somewhere hidden in the archives of her pushing up this little knoll, with a three speed English girl's bike with a basket, and I believe she had skinny tires. And I know that all the guys were — they didn't even want to acknowledge it, first off. They thought she was a freak. And I was in total awe. I was intimidated to say the least.

0:39:07 Debra Schwartz: So she comes up in a bike that is basically completely unequipped for —

0:39:11 Wende Cragg: Absolutely. And she'd already ridden from San Francisco, where she lives. So she shows up and this was remote to begin with, area, out towards Lagunitas, we're already out there. And then she ended up doing the whole ride. So like I told you earlier, she must have done 70, 80 miles that day, with the commute back and forth to the city plus — yeah, because that's 20 miles. That's 20 miles into the city and back. Just unbelievable. And then she'd show up on these century rides, where we were all on road bikes, and she'd be on a mountain bike. It's just unheard of. It's impossible! [laughs] It reminds me of — there was a racer in the early '80s, Cindy Whitehead, she raced — a mile into the race, a 50 mile race, her saddle broke off.

0:40:08 Debra Schwartz: Right.

0:40:09 Wende Cragg: Do you remember that?

0:40:09 Debra Schwartz: Yes. And she just rode the rest of the race.

0:40:12 Wende Cragg: And she won!

0:40:13 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, standing up.

0:40:14 Wende Cragg: Standing up! It's unheard of! It's impossible. [laughs] Physically impossible. So that's —

0:40:22 Debra Schwartz: That race was an amazing, difficult race.

0:40:25 Wende Cragg: Yes.

0:40:25 Debra Schwartz: Wasn't that in the Sierras?

0:40:26 Wende Cragg: Yeah. That put her on the map. That put her on the map as an ultra-human. And I felt that way about Jacquie: an ultra-human. [laughs] The other woman you should interview [is] Denise Caramagno. She was Charlie Kelly's girlfriend. They had just gotten together. She was 17 and Charlie was in his 30s, I believe, maybe, approaching. And they had a relationship for several years. Denise, I absolutely adore.

She is one of those — very determined, super strong. She's amazing. So she was one of the few women that we were able to initiate. We tried to drag a couple of — Fred's wife, poor Emma. We'd take her on these rides. We were trying to induct her, and first off we would take her on these rides in the heat of the day, on the most grueling climbs. No wonder she didn't want to do it. That's just not —

0:41:41 Debra Schwartz: You didn't really segue her in gently high, it was just —

0:41:43 Wende Cragg: No, and it just was not fair. We did that to a couple other women. You can't just do that. You can't just jump in there and expect someone to just come to the place where you are, automatically. So they quickly dropped out, but Denise was one of the few because she was with Charlie and he just kinda eased her into it and she became a really good fellow female cyclist, and she was also a roadie with me too so she was —

0:42:18 Debra Schwartz: You're using the word "roadie" — because Charlie Kelly was a "roadie" for Sons of Champlin, so there's the rock 'n' roll roadie —

0:42:24 Wende Cragg: Oh, right, right.

0:42:25 Debra Schwartz: But you're talking about road bike?

0:42:27 Wende Cragg: Right, road bikes.

0:42:28 Debra Schwartz: What were the challenges of being the only woman in a male-dominated group?

0:42:37 Wende Cragg: Well, first off, I didn't have the strength that they were capable of; that was pretty obvious. As I did get stronger I could keep up with some of the weaker ones, but in general, the hard core guys — I mean, the Gary Fishers and the Charlie Kellys — they were miles ahead of me, but they always waited, they were always so patient, they were always such — it was almost like a brotherly kind of affection. And we really became a close-knit tribe. There were so few of us at the time and we're talking mid '70s that we pretty much knew all the mountain bikers in Marin County. And we had like little clusters. There was the Ballooners in Mill Valley, there were the Cruisers in Larkspur, the Larkspur Canyon Gang, and then there were the Clunkers in Fairfax, but we're all essentially doing the same thing without totally being aware of the other little groups. If we did encounter anyone, we pretty much knew them. But within a couple of years, it kinda started to spread. Well, we were also road racers, you know, road bike racers, so we'd kinda bring a mountain bike with us to a race and we'd kinda just lean it up against a fence or something and watch that, the interest. And it was very provocative to see because a lot of the guys at the time were kind of snobbish.

0:44:22 Debra Schwartz: You mean the roadies?

0:44:23 Wende Cragg: The roadies were very snobbish. They thought that this was a,

you know, “I can’t take this seriously.” But then gradually they started to ride it. They’d just ride it down the road or something or ride it off road a little bit and they’d come back and say, “Wow! This has got some potential.” So gradually you could see these little sparks going off everywhere. It’s like, “Wow! Okay, maybe you got something here.” We actually introduced a couple of musicians back in the day since Larry worked at Prune Music. One of them was Lee Michaels who was a local guy. We took him up on the mountain a couple —

0:45:03 Debra Schwartz: What band was he in?

0:45:04 Wende Cragg: He had his own band, Lee Michaels band. He was intrigued by it. A couple others that were just not real cyclists, we’d put them on a bike and they —

0:45:15 Debra Schwartz: Well, I used to live down the street from Bobby Weir many years ago and I remember seeing him on his bike, mountain bike. He got into it. He’s quite strong.

0:45:23 Wende Cragg: Yeah, he got into it very heavily. Yeah, there are a couple — Sammy Hagar’s into it. But the people, it seemed, that got into it, really got into it, it became a lifestyle for them. Because if you look at the full potential of the mountain bike, it’s off-road and pavement. I did all my errands on my bike and I live at the top of a very — one-mile climb to get to the top. I do everything on my — I had a backpack. I would never take my car down the hill unless I had to or I was going on a bike ride where I had to drive. We always had to drive to Point Reyes or wherever.

0:46:07 Debra Schwartz: This is an interesting commentary you make because in all my interviews with various other biker folk, the lifestyle issue — because when you think of road biking, it’s specifically a sport, but the mountain biking takes a sport into the day.

0:46:28 Wende Cragg: Right.

0:46:28 Debra Schwartz: Into the daily life.

0:46:29 Wende Cragg: Yeah, it’s utilitarian as well as recreational. I think that was the biggest compliment to the whole cycling world, was that it had — you could actually use it. A lot of those road bikes, you didn’t use them for function. They were out there training on them and with the full intent of racing. But this was a brand new invention that served dual purposes.

0:47:01 Debra Schwartz: So how long did your time in the biking world continue? Are you still riding?

0:47:08 Wende Cragg: Thirty years. Three decades. And I commuted to every single job I had. One was in Bel Marin Keys, that was 30 miles round trip and I also had a job in Sausalito. So everywhere I went I pretty much commuted on my bike and, like I said, it become a lifestyle for me. I didn’t really think about going anywhere unless it was

accessible on a bike.

0:47:38 Debra Schwartz: Did you have a car?

0:47:39 Wende Cragg: I have a car, yeah. Well, I use my — to the utmost potential, I use my mountain bike. If there was any reason to take the bike over the car, absolutely. Yeah.

0:47:53 Debra Schwartz: When you look back on that time in Marin County and with friends, now with the wisdom of age, how do you perceive it?

0:48:14 Wende Cragg: It almost seems dream-like to me because we were so caught up in the moment and we had no clue as to what we were really doing or if we were gonna have any effect. It was so serendipitous that, looking back, if I'd only known. I always wish that I had been more cognitive. I could have been aware of where this could have gone and maybe been more, instead of — sometimes I feel like I had been an onlooker instead of an active participant. 'Cause I wasn't really involved in any of the manufacturing, the technology or any of that part of it. I didn't really care that much about getting the new components and all that. I just wanted to ride and have a whole day without getting a flat; that was my whole goal in life. And, like I said, I always rode with my both fingers crossed so that I didn't have any kind of mechanical breakdown, no flats, nothing. If I had a good five hours out there all by myself, I was in seventh heaven. There was nothing like it. You could ride literally all day without seeing another person. You might run into an occasional hiker but it was so rare.

0:49:44 Debra Schwartz: How about animals? Have you ever run into any?

0:49:46 Wende Cragg: Oh sure, oh yeah, oh yeah. I've seen my share of foxes, bobcats. I've never seen a mountain lion, it's on my bucket list. But ospreys, just — those little delicate creatures that you don't always see out there. So yeah, I've had plenty of encounters. In fact, my most vivid encounter was I was riding up near the Meadow Club in Fairfax, and I was riding on an illegal trail right through the center of the golf course, and I happened to run right through this little area where there was a manzanita bush and I accidentally flushed out a whole little family of quail. They flew right in front of me, and just at that moment, a red tail hawk swept down and he picked up a quail right in front of me. It was five feet in front of me, right in front of my face. Talk about a nature encounter that you could not duplicate anywhere. I felt so bad. But, at the same time, it could have been anything that could have disturbed that little —

0:51:07 Debra Schwartz: What has Mt. Tam been for you? In this area, what has this area given to you?

0:51:18 Wende Cragg: Oh, Mt. Tam has been my salvation, it really has. I have been through my share of emotional difficulties. Death of all my siblings pretty much, except I have a brother and a sister. Everyone else is gone, yeah. So I had to deal with that kind of death. Some of them were a lot younger than 50, so I had to deal with that when I was

just — my brother died in '77 and I had just pretty much started riding. I'd been riding for two years. And that affected me so deeply. It was almost like I hunkered down into my mountain bike world and I used that as my time of solace, to grieve in that way. It was so insightful for me to have that personal time where I could actually just kind of reflect. And then I did that when I got divorced; I used my mountain bike. I used it when — for a short period of time my house was being remodeled and I didn't really wanna be there.

0:52:36: I think that was the time when I rode 76 days in a row. I couldn't deal with all the unsettled disturbance. And it just, it was my rock, literally. If I was on that mountain bike the world was fine. My whole little world was rosy and glowing. It settled my soul. It just made me feel like this is — it's so simple, this is all I need. This is all I need is to just be out here with Mother Nature and feel the wind in my hair, hear the sound of the birds, and see the leaves twinkling in the light. And being on Mt. Tam in this special spiritual place — I've never been religious, but I'm very spiritual. So I knew this is a special place. And I didn't even know that much about the history of the mountain, but I knew — I could feel it, I could feel that energy. I could almost feel, when I'd ride some of the trails, I could feel the connection that the Native Americans had. I almost felt like I'm riding on their path. I'm riding over their footprints. I'm connecting in a completely different way, but at the same time, it's just the genuine article.

0:54:16: We were so unbelievably blessed. You could ride all of Mt. Tam, all the way to the top, all the back side, all those, what are now illegal trails, and you could just connect everywhere. So we had so many options, it was almost like there were too many options, including the water district in Tamarancho, which is where I live. The most difficult decision you'd have to make when you woke up was, "Where am I gonna ride today?" You could not ask for a better day than that. My biggest concern all day is gonna be, "Where am I gonna ride?" [chuckles] Yeah. Truly, that made it for me. It was like that succulent little, maybe first five years, before we became illegal. 'Cause I think around the '80s, the early '80s, is when they started to crack down, and realize that maybe it's too popular —

0:55:29 Debra Schwartz: Too hard on the mountain, all of the —

0:55:31 Wende Cragg: It just has the potential to be damaging to the environment, and the ecosystem, and all that. But those first five or six years were just this nugget of total bliss. And we had Loma Alta, everything. It wasn't just Mt. Tam, although that was a big attraction, because obviously you wanted to get to the top.

0:56:01 Debra Schwartz: What would you say to young riders now? The mountain's different for riders. What would you say to people, young people, getting on their first mountain bike?

0:56:15 Wende Cragg: Well, it's kind of funny, because I have a cute little story. We had neighbors who, for five years or six years, lived in Fred Wolf's old house. So there was some kinda, let's say, a little psychic rub off. It was a family of four, a man and a

woman, and they had two daughters. And Alex, when she moved in, she was always kind of athletic and outdoorsy. She was introduced to the mountain bike.

0:56:49 Debra Schwartz: And this is the mother?

0:56:50 Wende Cragg: No, this was the daughter. The daughter. She was probably 12 at the time. And, I mean, the mom and the dad really wanted to — because we have access to Tamarancho and everything, and they wanted her to get involved in the mountain biking thing. She was kind of hesitant, but she did get involved. She got into the mountain biking thing. And she even got on the Drake High team, which is a very esteemed mountain biking team, and still — well, she broke her ankle, which put her at odds with the bike, in general. She saw it as a potential harm, and she was hesitant to get back on it. But she eventually got back on it, rode with the team. It was last year, she did the Appetite Seminar. Part of it. She couldn't do the whole thing, 'cause it's pretty grueling, so she did a portion of it. That was on a Thursday.

0:57:51: The following Monday, she did the whole thing by herself. She went out early, early in the morning. I guess she had so much gumption, and she felt so bad that she wasn't able to do the whole thing. She went out there, and she did that whole loop by herself. Not only did she do the loop, she did it faster than her team had done it. And I saw her about an hour after she'd gotten back. She was all freshened up. She came running out of the house. I swear, that girl was on fire, her eyes were like — you could see this fire emanating from her. She said, "Wende, Wende, I did it, I'm so excited." She said, "I think I understand now what you were talking about." She said, "I am so stoked."

0:58:45: So she went on, and from that day, I mean, I visibly saw the passion just instilled in her. She did 22nd in the whole state after that. She raced in the regionals, and then, the state championships. It was like this spark. And it was such a visual thing for me, I was like — she caught me on fire, too. She just inflamed my passion. It was like, "Wow, I gotta get back on my bike now, too, you can't have all the fun." [chuckles]

0:59:21: It's so exciting to see that in such a young person. And to this day, I mean, the best thing I can possibly see in my life now, I wanna say it's a young boy on a mountain bike, but it's actually a young girl on a mountain bike. That brings the biggest smile to my face. And I'm so thrilled with this Share the Road, and the Safe Routes to School, and all that because you see these hordes of little girls on mountain bikes. And I'm in awe, I'm so elated to see this kind of passion at such a young age. And because I walk every day at Tamarancho, too, I run into cyclists, mountain bikers all the time, and I have occasionally run into this man with his young son, Max. I've run into them maybe four times over the year, last year-and-a-half, and I've seen the evolution of this little kid who was six at the time. The last time I ran into them, I actually stopped him at this intersection and I said, "I gotta tell you. You are one of the best parents for getting your kid out here." And he said, "I gotta tell you, I'm having trouble keeping up. I can't keep up with him anymore because he just — he's a live-wire." And while we were speaking, the kid, Max, is like gesturing to his dad, "Come on! Let's go!" [chuckles]

1:00:54: They were on their way up to the flow trail, which was still a ways, you know? They had quite a climb to get up there, and this kid, he wasn't waiting, man. He was like dragging his dad, "Come on, I wanna go!" So for me to see that passion in a young kid, there is nothing better, unless it's a young girl. And even seeing the young women out there in groups or just alone, I feel this certain sense of — I don't know, it's almost like a pride kind of thing. To see them get that passion at such a young age, 'cause once it's instilled, it doesn't go away. You know, if you get that bug, it's gonna stay with you for the rest of your life. So to see them at such a young age and to see that they are just so enamored, it just blows my mind.

1:01:54: So I think that is probably the nugget that I take from this whole experience, is to see this population of young, and the younger the better, because they are starting out really, really young, you know, 6, 7, 8 years old, which is perfect, and they do it as a unit with their family. And I mean to see a mom and a dad and a kid or two out there, that makes my day, it makes my week, it makes my month, it makes my whole friggin' year to see that. You know?

1:02:28 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

1:02:29 Wende Cragg: I mean, it started right here, but boy it just — you know, I never ever imagined that it would have the effect that it's had. You know even to think globally how it's affected people's lives and eased some of their stress. I don't know if you were able to see the *Repack to Rwanda* show, but I mean that was — they're building these custom bikes where — they're helping people in their everyday lives. I don't know how to say it, it's just, it's improving their living conditions, so that they don't have to live like they did. It just increases their mobility in ways that I never —

1:03:21 Debra Schwartz: Expansive.

1:03:22 Wende Cragg: Exactly. I mean, I think it was Tom Ritchey — but I'm not quite sure — he built this bike where they can transport bags of, you know, poundage of coffee instead of carrying it. Or their water, you know, they can put the water on the bike and get there in a quarter of the time. They'd spend all day walking for their water source, you know, and now [they] get on the mountain bike, this specially designed mountain bike to hold water. I see these women in Fairfax, especially, with these — the bikes that are accommodating the little kids, so they cruise around town with their little kids and they do their errands and they take the kids to school. I mean, what could be better? What could be better? So slowly it's evolving into a more, you know, utilitarian — they're seeing the potential of the mountain bike, and it hasn't been that long in the forming, 40 years or 45 years, that it's just evolving more and more, and even the new technology just blows my mind. I can't keep up with it because it just, exponentially just keeps going up and up, so —

1:04:37 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so I'm going to ask you one more question. Is there anything that we haven't talked about in this interview that you'd like to mention?

1:04:55 Wende Cragg: Well, I've been a textile artist for decades. I started doing my textile art before I discovered the mountain bike, and I have to be honest, when I got introduced to the mountain bike, I had a real internal conflict. How am I gonna do both things at the same time, you know? I have to be in my studio with a sewing machine, and how in the world am I gonna — so for a long time I did my projects, I'd take them in my backpack and I'd take them out to a remote spot and I'd sit out there and I'd do a little hand-basting for a couple hours, and that way I got to do both. I had the best of both worlds. I got to feel like I'm creating something not —

1:05:52: I always felt like I wasn't wasting my time, but at the same time I felt like I'm not really doing something productive, you know? This is a very selfish recreation that I'm doing. It only benefits me. But at the same time, I really needed to enjoy my creativity. So for a short period of time, I did combine the two and it was really pleasant. In fact, at one point I was thinking, "Is there a way to get my sewing machine out here with a generator? I could then rig up a little trailer to pull it out?" No, not. [chuckles]

1:06:35: But I always had that conflict until I realized I can balance the two. I can spend a couple hours. I have Tamarancho, I can go out there and do a two-hour ride, three-hour ride. There's still plenty of time in the day to do both. But, they were both so high on my list of all-consuming passions that it was hard for me to divide that. So, that was my only conflict, "How am I gonna combine the two?" So I did find a way to do that.

1:07:10 Debra Schwartz: You did. [chuckles]

1:07:11 Wende Cragg: But it was a little difficult in the beginning. And I can't think of a single regret that I have unless I consider the lack of sunscreen. Now I would really emphasize that. [chuckles] There was no sunscreen back then and we were all standing on the peaks of Mt. Barnabe or of Mt. Wittenberg or Mt. Tam for an hour or so, and that's not even taking into account being out there and climbing or riding or whatever. So that was my only regret, no sunscreen.

1:07:53 Debra Schwartz: Wow. Well, the last words, last wise words from the vanguard of the female bike riders, put your sunscreen on, riders and young people.

1:08:02 Wende Cragg: Put your sunscreen on, yes, yes.

1:08:06 Debra Schwartz: Wende, this has been a wild ride. Thank you so much for sharing your story. I have one regret with this interview.

1:08:13 Wende Cragg: What's that?

1:08:14 Debra Schwartz: I'm just sorry that the people that are going to listen to this interview aren't able to see the fire in your eyes that I've been witnessing, that when you tell your story, the way you light up, and it is in you. It's so obvious to see.

1:08:34 Wende Cragg: Well, you know why, it's because I think if it hadn't been for the mountain bike, there's a good chance I wouldn't be here, seriously. I've had some major bad addictions in my life, alcohol, drugs, whatever. This was the best addiction I could possibly have imagined for myself. It satisfied every single need I had, every single need. I didn't need food or anything. I didn't need any of that extraneous stuff. As long as I had my mountain bike, the world was just completely rosy and all right with me, my own personal world. I didn't care really so much about the rest of the world because I had essentially what I needed in it. Just, to this day, I'm so convinced that if it hadn't been for the mountain bike, I don't think I would have —

1:09:36: When I came to that fork, I probably would've taken a less healthy — I can't even imagine what my life would be like if I hadn't been introduced to the mountain bike. I just can't. It opened up so many worlds to me. I think it made me realize that you can balance the physical, the emotional, and the mental just by getting out there and experiencing Mother Nature via using your body, 'cause I think, I really think, the body was meant to be used and people just, they have a disregard for that. They don't appreciate the fact that if you've got your legs, you need to use them. You really, really need to use that body. It's gonna atrophy, and along with your mind, it's gonna atrophy if you don't keep it up, if you don't use it. So I am so grateful to the mountain bike for changing my life and giving me this opportunity to explore and just empower myself. It seriously empowered me as not just a human being, but a woman. And I had that option of taking that power and using it to my benefit. So, I'm so grateful for that. [chuckles]

1:11:03: And the people that have made me who I am, I still have in my life today 40-something years later. Those are my friends. My mountain bike tribe is my family.

1:11:17 Debra Schwartz: They're your people.

1:11:18 Wende Cragg: And they are my people all the way to the core. In fact —

1:11:22 Debra Schwartz: 'Til that last ride, huh?

1:11:24 Wende Cragg: Yeah. And in fact I wanna take this moment to tell you about Charlie Cunningham, the guy, Jacquie's husband, who had this serious bike crash, 'cause a friend of ours put a GoFund account up for him, and —

1:11:43 Debra Schwartz: On the museum site, on the —

1:11:46 Wende Cragg: Yeah, and in less — or it's been a week. It's been one week, and we have raised \$50,000, half our goal, and not only that —

1:11:57 Debra Schwartz: And that's just in the biking community?

1:11:58 Wende Cragg: That's just in the international biking community. Not only that, but I have a Facebook page for my rolling dinosaur archive thing, and I also belong to all these Facebook groups, and I put out the word and there have been offers for re-

doing his home, for ramps making it — all generous offers. I mean, the mountain bike tribe, they really hold dear our folk, especially if it's someone like Charlie Cunningham who is so instrumental, he's a creative genius and probably one of the nicest human beings on the face of the Earth. Seriously. He's so humble, he's so quiet, he's very reclusive. He's become reclusive over the years, you don't even see him anymore, really. One of the more original human beings. He's just this flash of creative genius. [chuckles] So the rallying behind him is not — it doesn't surprise me at all.

1:13:18 Debra Schwartz: Well, then we will close with the goodness of community, friends, support and all the goodness that love and passion can bring.

1:13:28 Wende Cragg: Yeah, yeah. It's pretty evident, too. The folks that got in at the beginning, you can see that it hasn't waned. Their passion, if they had it then, it's still alive and glowing in their eyes, too. I see it all the time and it just sparks the renewed, "I gotta get back on my bike." [chuckles] It's been 10 years and I don't know what I'm waiting for seriously. I don't know what I — I think I kind of got burned out, because I was so obsessive about it. It consumed me. Everything was mountain biking, everything and then I kind of lived my life around that.

1:14:15 Debra Schwartz: Well, thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate hearing your story.

1:14:19 Wende Cragg: You are welcome. This was a pleasure for me too. Kind of rehashing the old ride down memory lane, or down the old dirt trail. [laughs]