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**DOROTHY KILLION**

**An Oral History Interview  
Conducted by Joan Murray in 2011**

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In this oral history, California native and longtime Mill Valley resident Dorothy Killion recounts with laughter and depth some of her wide-ranging life experiences, along with her memories of the wilder, less-developed Mill Valley of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Oakland, California in 1920, Dorothy grew up in the East Bay and completed a degree in political science at the University of California, Berkeley in 1941, the year of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Subsequent involvement of the United States in World War II opened up the job market for women and altered the trajectory of Dorothy's professional life, which took her to places as far apart as the nation's capital and the San Francisco waterfront. As a resident of Mill Valley from the 1950s onward, Dorothy became a founding board member of the Mill Valley Historical Society. Dorothy's time raising her family in Mill Valley brought her closer to nature, and she spent much time outdoors developing a keen sense of the landscape beyond the official city limits. Dorothy recalls the construction of Highway 101, the gradual development of what became Enchanted Knolls and Shelter Hill, changing businesses, and famous family homes. Dorothy also fondly discusses her children, Paul, Tom (a famous local artist and woodblock printer) and Ann.

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## Oral History of Dorothy Killion

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**Oral History of Dorothy Killion  
October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Editor's note:** This transcript has been reviewed by Dorothy Killion, who made minor corrections and clarifications to the original.

**Joan Murray:** Hello, this is Dorothy Killion and Joan Murray. We are recording one of Dorothy's oral histories on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011. We are specifically going to focus on certain areas of Mill Valley, but lots more will come up. So, what I wanted to start with is, Dorothy, if you will just tell us your name, your birthday, if you are comfortable doing that, and where you are from originally.

**Dorothy Killion:** Well, I was born February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1920 in Oakland, California, so I am a native Californian. My mother was a native Californian, born in Eureka, and I grew up in the East Bay, in Oakland and Piedmont. I went to Piedmont High School and still have many, many friends from there. Well, there are only a few alive, but we kept over the years, from seventh grade at Piedmont, a whole group of friends. Which is great, because we are in the same area. There is only one now in the Bay Area who lives in Sonoma. Of course because I can't drive, she comes down to see me, and she is one year older than I am.

**Joan Murray:** Well, that is wonderful that you have stayed in touch.

**Dorothy Killion:** Yeah, we are in touch all the time.

**Joan Murray:** Good. When did you come to Mill Valley?

**Dorothy Killion:** I came to Mill Valley on October 1, 1952. I graduated from Berkeley, from Cal, in 1941, right on the eve of World War II.<sup>1</sup> I had transferred to Berkeley from the University of Colorado where I started college, although I grew up here. But I had a best friend at the time, all through high school, and we both decided to go to Boulder together. Her name was Peggy McNamara and she was the younger sister of Bob McNamara who became quite famous as Secretary of Defense. We were very close for years and then we both transferred back to Cal — we both pledged Alpha Phi, lived together in the sorority, and transferred back to Cal together. But I had a very serious boyfriend in Boulder and I went back to visit him at his graduation in May of '41 and came back with a diamond engagement ring and went through all that. My parents were not really happy about it, but they put the announcement in the papers and we had the whole rigmarole, you know, the engagement, and we were supposed to get married in the spring of '42. And of course you know what happened in 1941: everything.

However, I had taken a civil service exam as part of my political science program — that was my major at Cal. So our professor Samuel May suggested that all of us in the public administration part take the civil service exam. I took it in January of 1941. In that

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<sup>1</sup> "Cal" is colloquial name for the University of California, Berkeley.—Editor.

summer — when I was only thinking of getting married, having showers, everything, probably looking for some little job — I did have a very temporary job at Transamerica in San Francisco.

But anyway, I kept getting all these job offers all over the country. 1941 was the perfect year for women to graduate from college, because all the men — most of the men in my class got a commission with their diploma because they took R.O.T.C., because it was a land grant college. Anyway, there were lots of jobs for women and I kept getting these job offers and one was from El Paso. They were from awful places and I would just laugh and toss it aside. Then I got one for Washington D.C. and I had always dreamed about going to the East Coast, where I had never been — and you know, nobody did that in those days. Some families who had ties in the East Coast did, but they had to go by train or car, it was a long trip. As I say, my family had no ties there. My ties were either in Colorado or California. So anyway, I accepted. I sent my boyfriend in Denver a telegram telling him I was going to do this, then I got a telegram on the train that he was going to be driving out up to Laramie when the train went through at 6 o'clock in the morning. I think he thought I was going to get off the train and go back to Denver with him, but I didn't and that was when the whole direction of my life changed.

Anyway, to make a long story short, I was three years in Washington working for the War Production Board and I went right into a really great job with my own secretary. (I had been determined that I didn't want to learn to type.) I didn't intend to type, and lo and behold, I didn't have to. [chuckles] I sure found out after the war that I should have. [laughter] But I was an administrative assistant for one of the branches and I did other things, but you don't want to hear all that. We're talking about Mill Valley. I broke my engagement because I had fallen in love with another man in Washington. And then he went into the Marines and went to Iwo Jima. And when he went off to the South Pacific, I decided to join the W.A.V.E.S.<sup>2</sup> The W.A.V.E.S. turned me down because of my vision — they didn't take people who didn't have 20/20 without glasses, including women who never went overseas, but the Coast Guard SPARS did, so I was an officer.

I went to the Coast Guard Academy in New London for six weeks, which is where I was on D-day 1944. Then I was hoping I would be sent to either San Francisco or back to Washington, but I got the First Naval District, which was Boston, and of course it was a wonderful experience. I was there for a year and then I was transferred back to San Francisco in 1945 after V.E. Day. I was in Boston V.E. Day and in San Francisco on V.J. Day. I was supposed to go to Salt Lake City to become the recruiting officer for the Rocky Mountain Area for the SPARS and of course the war was over. I did go to Salt Lake for maybe two months, no more than that, but right back to San Francisco. But I had to stay in the service until 1946, because I was a commissioned officer and my commission was for two years. So I didn't get out of it until June of 1946. Then of course the first thing I had to do was go back East, see all my friends and of course we had that wonderful little insurance policy that every employer had to give you your old job back. I don't know whether you knew that.

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<sup>2</sup> United States Naval Reserve (Women's Reserve), also known as WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service).—Editor.

**Joan Murray:** Yes, I was aware of that.

**Dorothy Killion:** Yeah. So I went to New York. First a long, long stop in Davenport, Iowa where I had some good friends and my first real experience with the Midwest. I loved the summer in the Middle West and the East. Everybody else hated them, but I loved them. Having grown up here, I had never known what a real summer was until I went there. Anyway, I did finally go back to Washington, take my old job back, but it wasn't the same as it was during the war. It was very boring and I definitely knew I was going to come back here, so I did, I came back.

**Joan Murray:** In the meantime, where is this Marine that you had fallen in love with?

**Dorothy Killion:** Well, he was not killed at Iwo Jima, but he came back suffering from trauma. I went down from Boston after he called and wanted me to come. He was in the hospital in Cherry Point, North Carolina, and I went down to see him and he was suffering from the trauma. At least I think it was the trauma. He said he had hepatitis, but it was a lot more than hepatitis. He was really a different person. But I did want to see him again. Then of course I went to San Francisco and I was gone for a year and then I came back — and that was the main reason I came back — but it just didn't work out, it wasn't the same. I came back to San Francisco, got a job at, well, I didn't know what I was going to do, as most people don't know.

**Joan Murray:** The job market probably wasn't quite the same for women as it had been.

**Dorothy Killion:** Of course, all the men were back. But the thing was, I had a very good friend who said, "You should do what I did. Go to a temp agency." So that's what I did. I went to a temp agency and lo and behold, you had a job all the time. I just wonder if they still have those and if people do that now.

**Joan Murray:** They certainly do.

**Dorothy Killion:** They could do that, couldn't they? You know, it's a good way to find out where you really want to work and what you want to do. My first job at the temp agency was with the wine institute — it was just a summer replacement job — but it was fascinating, just fascinating. You met a lot of those people from the wine industry. It was just the beginning of the big surge in the wine industry. Then Wendy Hepperle came back and that was the end of my job. I went to the agency and the next place they sent me was to the Waterfront Employers. Well, if that wasn't the perfect fit for me! My dad had spent his entire business career at the Hawaiian Pineapple Company and as I said, he was a staunch Republican and Harry Bridges was the devil incarnate. And here I was, going to be working for the Waterfront Employers. Daddy just thought that was fantastic. But I worked for the man who was the head of it. I guess they called him executive secretary because he wasn't a Waterfront Employer, but it was Al Gatov. Do you remember that name?

**Joan Murray:** I don't.

**Dorothy Killion:** You don't? Well, Libby Gatov,<sup>3</sup> his wife, was a big power in the Democratic Party in Marin. This all happened later. In fact, she was the person who signed a lot of the treasury notes. She was, you know, what do they call it? Anyway, she wasn't the postmaster or anything like that, but she signed a lot. Anyway, Al Gatov was a wonderful man and very nice to me and gave me opportunities in there to do things. I met a lot of the reporters that came around, you know, because the waterfront was booming. Shipping was beginning and it was a perfect time to work there. Actually, I met people there who told me that there was a little paper — of course I knew the paper too, working there — called the *Daily Commercial News*. This one man said to me, "Why don't you come over and work for us?" So, he took me up to see the big boss, who was Frank Kilby. The publisher was The Recorder Publishing Company, the same company that published *The Recorder*, the legal paper. Anyway, they approved. My salary was infinitesimal. Right then, I was living at my parents' in Piedmont and commuting. But then there was so much going on and — it was a great job. I could go on for pages and pages, but you want to talk about Mill Valley.

**Joan Murray:** Yeah, I want to get to how you got here.

**Dorothy Killion:** Yeah, that's when I met Leo, when I was in San Francisco. Then we started going together.

**Joan Murray:** Leo was your husband.

**Dorothy Killion:** He was an attorney.

**Joan Murray:** He was an attorney. Where did you meet him?

**Dorothy Killion:** I met him through a friend. His office was on Montgomery Street and I was at 220 Battery, right at California. So we saw a lot of each other. He was divorced. He had graduated from Boalt<sup>4</sup> in 1935 and had been married for about eight years and got divorced right after the war, in 1945. So anyway, we got married in April 1951.

Our first home in Marin was in Sausalito but then Leo decided that — he was given this offer by the senior partner in his law firm, that wanted him to come down to Monterey — because Mr. Hogue had had a heart attack and his home was in Pebble Beach and his wife didn't want him coming up to the city for the entire week. So we did that, and I really loved living in Carmel, but I had to quit my job then, you see. I worked at first when we were living in Sausalito; we commuted together. Then I had to quit my job and when I got down there, I didn't really push it. I didn't really look hard enough for a job. But it turned out that we didn't stay. Leo decided that he didn't want to. He was on the

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<sup>3</sup> Libby Gatov was U.S. Treasurer under John F. Kennedy, 1960-1962.—Dorothy Killion.

<sup>4</sup> Boalt Hall is the location of University of California, Berkeley School of Law.—Editor.



road all the time. There wasn't enough business in Monterey County alone for the firm, so he was spending all his time up in San Jose, in Santa Clara County.

So we came back and looked in Sausalito and there wasn't anything. Things had changed so much and we were just going to rent. I came to Mill Valley and went to put an ad in the *Independent Journal*, which had an office right on East Blithedale. Remember that little office, right next to it was the realtor?<sup>5</sup> So I thought, "Well, I'll just go ahead and see if they have any rentals." So I went in and it was fate! This woman had come in just that morning to put her house on the market for rent because she didn't want to sell it. Her name was Jo Seligman and she and her husband were going to move to Eureka. He was already up there; he was a teacher. So it couldn't have been more perfect. I had come up alone looking and I just said without hesitation that we wanted it.

**Joan Murray:** Where was it located?

**Dorothy Killion:** 500 Throckmorton Ave. You undoubtedly know that little group of — they are like cottages and they are all sort of hidden away. Some of them are right on Throckmorton but most of them are between Throckmorton and Lovell, on the uphill side across from Eugene. I lived at 500. You couldn't see our house at all from the street. It was a long driveway up and we were tucked in there. There were others tucked away. Alice Long lived on another driveway. I would say she lived next door to me, but they weren't really next door. You couldn't see their house and they couldn't see mine. But we just loved that house. I loved that area. The little houses were all built by a man named Conrad Kett on his family property. He was an architect and they were built in 1939 to take advantage of the bridge.<sup>6</sup> They expected commuters and young people, single people, people without children. All of those little houses had one bedroom — great big living room with plenty of space for entertaining — but one bedroom and one bath. So we, I just loved it there, I loved Mill Valley.

**Joan Murray:** So what was the address?

**Dorothy Killion:** 500 Throckmorton, right across from the Klyce house at 501 Throckmorton. They were living there — Carrie Klyce. Harvey had died, the old Harvey Klyce, and Carrie Klyce, his widow, was still living there. Sylvia and Sam Newsom were living in the barn behind it and I met them.<sup>7</sup> Sylvia gave me the big pitch for the League of Women Voters. Anyway, it was perfect. I loved every bit of Mill Valley from the moment I came here and I never wanted to live anywhere else. I could never understand how my parents could possibly settle for the East Bay. My dad was a commuter his whole life, when he could have lived over here.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Next door was the x-ray doctor, father of Huey Lewis, the singer.—Dorothy Killion.

<sup>6</sup> The Golden Gate Bridge opened in 1937.—Editor.

<sup>7</sup> Chip Newsom, good friend of Jeannie Rorvik, still lives in Klyce Barn, her old house.—Dorothy Killion.

<sup>8</sup> Her Dad had friends in his office who commuted in 1930s to work in San Francisco - for example, the Ballentine's who lived on Alvarado by the tennis courts at Boyle Park. Also, a young couple, the Rydesedales, lived in small stucco house on East Blithedale. I remember visiting their little baby who died of burns from a steamer (like my accident).—Dorothy Killion.

**Joan Murray:** Of course Piedmont is a very beautiful area also.

**Dorothy Killion:** Yeah, but there is no comparison: the outdoors area, the wilderness, the mountains, everything that we had here. And everything is much smaller town here. You felt like you were living in a city over there, you know, houses were on a street with sidewalks.

**Joan Murray:** Right, very prescribed and organized and one block after another, whereas here we are more spread out.

**Dorothy Killion:** Of course they weren't in Piedmont. In the area of Oakland where I lived, they were not on a block, nothing was level, everything was hills. We lived on top of the steep hill. Actually, it turned out that we could see this school in the distance. When they bought the house when I was like three, I think, and my baby sister had just been born, my parents said the real estate agent said, "Well, your children can go to that school," pointing to Wildwood School. We were on one hill and then there was a canyon and then Wildwood was on the other. Actually it turned out that we couldn't go there when we went to school. We had to go to Crocker Highlands, which was really a much nicer school, but it was way out of sight. You had to go up and down and up again. Of course we walked, we all walked to school.

**Joan Murray:** Sure. And I'm sure your kids did too.

**Dorothy Killion:** Well, my boys did. But I took Ann to high school. But I did that because it was good for me. I took the dog and then we went on a long walk after. But I did take her every morning down to Tam.

**Joan Murray:** So you came here in '52. So, I wanted to ask you a little bit about what it was like then compared to what Mill Valley is like today and what are the differences.

**Dorothy Killion:** I have thought a lot about that and people say to me, "Oh, it must have changed." We bought our house on Cornelia in 1954, just in time for Tom's first birthday. Tommy was born in November of 1953 and so we moved into 81 Cornelia in 1954, so that was the same area as Throckmorton where we'd been living. We were half a block to Old Mill School and the Episcopal Church and two blocks to downtown. I mean, the library was right there on Lovell. It was perfect. Who would ever want to live anywhere else? But when I think about it, and people say, "Oh, you must have seen so many changes" — I say well, "There is an awful lot exactly the same as it was when I moved here." There have been a lot of changes of businesses, but the Outdoor Art Club was there, the Sequoia Theater was there. Let's see, what else was still there? The Depot was there but it was a bus depot, it wasn't a bookstore. The plaza was not there because the Greyhound buses came in and went out. My husband was a commuter at first and you know, he would walk down Throckmorton to the very convenient depot, and then even more convenient when we lived on Cornelia, although we had a really steep, steep driveway. Our house was between Cornelia and Tamalpais. You can't see it from Cornelia or from Tamalpais, anywhere. But I hated to leave it.

**Joan Murray:** I'll bet. When did you leave it?

**Dorothy Killion:** We moved — we sold it in 1993.

**Joan Murray:** Then where did you go?

**Dorothy Killion:** That's when we moved to Shelter Ridge.

**Joan Murray:** Okay, so let's start at Shelter Ridge.

**Dorothy Killion:** You want to start with that?

**Joan Murray:** Sure.

**Dorothy Killion:** Let's see. These notes. My trouble is, I can write notes but then I can't read them after I have written them. For one thing, my connections to this area — and I am talking about the area now of Camino Alto between Miller and East Blithedale on the east side. My first connection with it was that it was the city dump. And it was all a big saltwater marsh. But actually, as Alice Long said — she called it “the swamp.”<sup>9</sup> This whole area, it was the end of the bay and it was really unspoiled, no buildings — nothing was there. The only thing that was there was the PG&E power station and —

**Joan Murray:** Just below Enchanted Knolls, right?

**Dorothy Killion:** It is still there. Yeah. And the PG&E towers on Eucalyptus Knolls. Otherwise, nothing. The highway was not there. The main road from Sausalito to North Marin came up as far as Tamalpais High School. Then they turned, and Camino Alto, where I live today, was the main highway over to Corte Madera and Larkspur. And that is the road that everyone took.

**Joan Murray:** I should mention that we are talking from the Redwoods Retirement Center at 40 Camino Alto which is near the corner of Miller and Camino Alto and that right now from your living room we are looking over to Tam High. We can see the high school from here.

**Dorothy Killion:** That's right, I face Tam High School. Of course, the train used to come in too. I knew nothing about that. There were no trains. There was one train, a freight train came about once a month down Miller Avenue. You may remember that too because that happened into the '50s and it ended at the lumber company. It just went to deliver to the lumber company. I would say it was maybe not even once a week, once every two weeks, something like that. But I do remember that this was the main road and the highway was not built. Everyone thinks 101 was always there. The bridge opened in 1937 and the freeway was not completed until the 1950s. In fact, I took my little boy who

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<sup>9</sup> Before the 1960s, the whole Bayshore area was called a “swamp”; subsequently, it was referred to as “wetlands.”—Dorothy Killion.

was born in '53 and we went over there and we watched the building of the freeway. I had a big picture book that I bought that talked about all the road building equipment. I could still remember the names: the sheep's foot grader, the tamping and leveling finisher — and he can remember them all too. We watched for hours, you know, it is something that little boys just love to do, see those great huge road building machines. So that was the beginning of 101, although I guess the road was there but there was a stoplight at Tiburon Boulevard and it was not a freeway until the '50s.

My first memory of Mill Valley was visiting some friends with my family. I found out where they lived. Their name was Ballentine and I remember asking Katie Mills if she ever knew Betty Ballentine, because I thought maybe she might have. They had two girls and my parents had two girls, and my dad and Mr. Ballentine worked together at Dole. So we used to go over there on weekends and I just thought Mill Valley was a wonderful place, but I had no idea, really, until I moved here. I kept trying to think, "Where was that house? Where did they live?" When I was working in the History Room, I discovered all those old telephone books. So I looked for an old telephone book from the 1920s or '30s and there I discovered their name and what I thought was maybe up on Cascade or Throckmorton was instead Alvarado, you know where that is. So it was right on the edge of Boyle Park. Of course, it was much more open in those days and there were redwood trees. I realized right away that when I went to look at that house with the address that that was the place.

But then my next trip to Mill Valley that I remember was with the Camp Fire Girls. And we came over two different times, where we rented a house at Stinson Beach on Highway 1, right on the same side of the street as the store. You know, the store that everybody knows, but up a little bit farther, north a little farther.

**Joan Murray:** On Stinson Beach?

**Dorothy Killion:** Yes, I think it's still there, a brown shingled house. We just thought it was so great. It was a long weekend. It might have been Memorial Day weekend, but we girls would just go. We couldn't wait to go in the ocean — we all swam in the ocean. Of course we always had, we grew up with that. It was so freezing. My children never wanted to swim in it! But we never thought of that, it was just the way it was. I remember when I was in New London at the Coast Guard Academy, we had one weekend off during all that training. Well, one day we went to swim in the Sound and everyone looked at us like we were crazy. The only people out of our class who swam in the Sound were this girl from Oregon and myself. It did not feel cold at all compared to the Pacific.

**Joan Murray:** Right, that's funny.

**Dorothy Killion:** But the other thing about that Camp Fire Girls trip was, I always thought that we had gone over the Dipsea. We hiked from Mill Valley, and I always thought that we had gone over the Dipsea. I found out one day hiking with a friend who lived on Edgewood, walking out the Pipeline, and I thought, "*This* is the way we came, this is so familiar." We got up and I realized that the Alpine Club was the place where we

ate our bag lunches. We sat out on that long porch, you know, the screened porch that looked out over the valley. And somebody had made it possible who belonged to [the Alpine Club], some parent, probably. And then we went on down to Stinson Beach from there, so we really didn't go on the Dipsea.

**Joan Murray:** Close, you were close. So let's get back.

**Dorothy Killion:** Back to this area.

**Joan Murray:** Right.

**Dorothy Killion:** Okay, I have a list here of my connections to this area. The first one was the dump and I told you about that. Leo used to bring the boys to the dump and they brought back more treasures than they took. But we had things hanging out in the garage for ages that came out of the dump. One was a welder's mask that I always thought afterwards that if they only had kept it, it would have been a perfect costume for Darth Vader. But we let them keep all the stuff and they just loved all their junk. Then my second connection was the Tamalpais Nursery School. When my first child was born, we heard that that was a very good nursery school. This was Beverly Bastian's Tamalpais Nursery School. It was on Miller Avenue then. There is still a nursery school there called the Little School.

**Joan Murray:** By the Baptist Church.

**Dorothy Killion:** I think it was the Baptist Church when Tom went there. So when it came time for Paul to go — by that time they had had a big fundraising thing and had built this new nursery school in connection with the Methodist Church, on the Methodist Church property. I think it was there, probably, a while. Tom and Paul are almost five years apart; they are five years apart in school. I think it was before, but he went there in 1963. Well, Ann was born in '61 and Paul was three, so in 1964, I guess, he didn't go that first year right after she was born, but he went in '63 to Tamalpais Nursery school down at the Methodist Church. When Anne came along, she went there. He went there for just one year and then he went to Old Mill for kindergarten. Ann, who was the last child, went for two years. I think it was when Ann was there, when I was taking a car full of kids, we carpooled and I came down Miller Avenue, and made a left turn. We had a big Dalmatian then named Pepper, and Pepper jumped out of the window over my shoulder, out of the driver's window which was open into the intersection there, where the Safeway is, when we were making the left turn. It was just terrible. I could not do anything about it because I had all these kids in the car. So we just continued on. Pepper followed us and nothing happened to him. He followed us all the way around to the nursery school.

**Joan Murray:** And he was okay?

**Dorothy Killion:** He was perfectly okay. But he was a disaster in every way. We had him for only one year. He was our first dog. Then my next connection with, let's see, I went with Mrs. T, Mrs. Terwilliger. She had a little preschool group back in the days

when Ann was — before she went to kindergarten, and we went too. I remember her taking us to where the shell mounds were. You know, right there on Richardson Bay near Seminary Drive, right under that overpass. You probably know what I'm talking about.

**Joan Murray:** The Richardson Bay Bridge.

**Dorothy Killion:** When you go around from our side, around and under to the Strawberry Shopping Center, it is right there on the shore of the bay. Everybody was just fascinated by that. Of course they all remember every word that Elizabeth Terwilliger told them and quote her all the time and still do.

**Joan Murray:** She had a very vivid way of describing things.

**Dorothy Killion:** She did. She was a wonder. She was a very special person. I appreciate her so much. When Ann went to kindergarten — I guess it was when she went to first grade and was in school all day — I went on the Monday trips. So one trip was hiking, one was canoeing, one was bicycling, and one was a car trip. The car trips were way out usually, to Point Reyes or someplace like that. That was too much for me. I never could do the car trips because I was gone too long and didn't get back before the kids got home from school. But I loved it; I had some of the best times. My first experiences of what nature in Marin County was like — it was really wonderful.

**Joan Murray:** You know, I just thought about something I heard your son say at a library program. In reflecting on what you are saying about nature in Marin County, you might recall that Betty Goerke had a program where she spoke about her book called *Chief Marin*.

**Dorothy Killion:** Oh yeah, Betty Goerke.

**Joan Murray:** Your son Tom was there.

**Dorothy Killion:** Oh yeah. Oh, I was there, with him, at the library.

**Joan Murray:** He said, "I have been waiting for this book all my life."

**Dorothy Killion:** I know, I was there. [laughs]

**Joan Murray:** I was so tickled by that.

**Dorothy Killion:** She was thrilled. [laughs]

**Joan Murray:** I'm sure she was thrilled — how flattering. But what you say you are exposing your children to, through Mrs. Terwilliger and to the nature of Mill Valley — I mean, look at what your children do for a living and how they were inspired by how they were raised.

**Dorothy Killion:** Actually, you learn a lot through going along with your children and learning as they learn. I found that very much so. My mother was a great nature lover and practically a botanist. She knew everything about flowers and she loved them and she loved wild flowers and she knew all the names and everything. But I never got as interested in it as she — although I did, when I started living in Marin. Another very important thing for me in Marin was going to Herman Hein's gardening class at the College of Marin. That was one of the first things that I did. That was before Tommy was born, when we lived on Throckmorton. Oh, I just thought he was wonderful.

**Joan Murray:** I'm familiar with his name. I never met him, but I know that he was the man who was responsible for the median on Miller Avenue. Because there was a transition from when the railroad tracks came up, and then later the buses — all the Greyhound buses parked on Miller Avenue — and he is the one who transformed that.

**Dorothy Killion:** I'm not surprised. I didn't know that, but I'm glad you told me. He was an absolutely wonderful man and I don't think that he was as appreciated as he should have been. But most people — most women who had the time and were gardeners, loved gardening, took his class. It was in the evening. It was packed. A friend of mine who lived in Belvedere took me, said, "Oh, you've got to do this." And I certainly knew that I should.

**Joan Murray:** That's wonderful.

**Dorothy Killion:** That's another thing. When I go out in the country, I think of him and the things that he told me just as I think of Mrs. T. and the things she told me about plants and animals and the whole environment.

**Joan Murray:** I know we wanted to talk specifically about locations, but I can't help but think, you knew Mrs. Terwilliger and Herman Hein, who was certainly important here too. Tell me about some of the other people here who influenced you or who you thought were memorable characters.

**Dorothy Killion:** Well, those were two. Well, you know, sometimes I say I have a very good memory, but I often do forget names and then it comes back to me. Tell me the name of the woman who started the history program.

**Joan Murray:** Babs Dreyfus.

**Dorothy Killion:** No, no, I knew Babby, of course.

**Joan Murray:** Lucretia Hansen?

**Dorothy Killion:** Lucretia! In 1976, Lucretia got all these women together. Every community all over the country was doing this bicentennial thing for 1976. So we all did research on various houses and we were supposed to do research on our own neighborhoods and everything. Of course, she had all this material and she was the

foundation of the History Room and of the Historical Society. I was on the first board. Did you know that?

**Joan Murray:** No, I didn't.

**Dorothy Killion:** I was the recording secretary. Babby was the president, Babby Dreyfus, and I am trying to think of all the other people on that board. I know David Cross was on it, and he since died and Babby has died and Peter Dreyfus has died. I probably am the last one left out of that whole board. It was a wonderful experience for me, I just loved that. I have always been a writer — writing was what I did in all my jobs. I always wanted to be a newspaper woman and I was for a short time, but I did a lot of writing in the Historical Society, research on those houses. They were mostly the ones, you know, from the lot sale on Throckmorton and Cascade in that area.

**Joan Murray:** From the 1890s land auction?

**Dorothy Killion:** Yeah, the first auction. I thought all of it was so fantastic. All those German families. You know why they all loved Mill Valley — because it reminded them of home and they all were hikers. They had grown up hiking in the mountains in Europe and that is what they wanted. The Falches and — I am trying to think — the Barcans, Nancy Emmons' house was the Barcans' house.

**Joan Murray:** That was the “Can't Bust 'Em” man who invented the “Can't Bust 'Em” overalls who built that house on Throckmorton where Nancy lives now. Nancy Emmons, her old house on Throckmorton.

**Dorothy Killion:** Yeah, I think that Hans Barcan lived there first, but then he was a doctor at Stanford, and then he moved up on Cascade. Then Agnes Shonings's house where Myra Wise lives and where Al and Maxine White lived when he was mayor. You know that house?<sup>10</sup>

**Joan Murray:** Yes, next to the library, the current library.

**Dorothy Killion:** I could give you all of that a few years ago, but now, I've just — but I knew that Agnes Shonings — who I knew from church — lived on Ethel. It was her house, their house, they weren't the original owners, but they owned that house during World War II and they were interned in the Philippines. Her husband was an importer-exporter, and they were interned there. When the Office of Price Administration took over every empty building during the war they put in either shipyard workers or army and navy personnel and they took over that beautiful house and the shipyard workers from Sausalito were in it because it was empty. They had the right to do that, to take over your house and even trash it. It was terrible.

**Joan Murray:** Interesting, I didn't know that about that house.

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<sup>10</sup> The house was actually on Laurel at Throckmorton.—Dorothy Killion.



**Dorothy Killion:** And then the place where we lived when we were first married in Sausalito was — not Gianinni, but another Bank of America family, an Italian family — the Scattini mansion. During World War II, the navy took it over and turned it into apartments for naval officers. So it was still apartments when we got married in '51 and we got the apartment that had been the big kitchen and maid's room and bath. The kitchen was enormous with floor-to-ceiling windows that looked right out on the bay and the city. It is on Bulkley Ave., right across from the Alta Mira.

**Joan Murray:** Sounds wonderful.

**Dorothy Killion:** It is called the Ladera Apartments.

**Joan Murray:** Yes, I'm familiar with that. We walk up there sometimes. What about your move to Shelter Ridge and that area?

**Dorothy Killion:** Yes, I was telling you about the nursery school and then my next connection, well, really was — oh, I mentioned Mrs. T. Then my next connection and a very big and long one, was walking dogs. I came down to walk dogs long before there was a dog park. You know the dates of all these places. The Redwoods was built in 1971, the whole Shelter Ridge development was 1971, the Middle School was 1971 or 1972, I don't know. Anyway, Ann was in the very first class that went the whole three years through the Middle School. So that was — she graduated from Tam in 1979, so that would be six years before that, that would have been 1972. That was the Middle School; she was in the first class to go. There were two other classes that moved over there too, seventh and eighth graders, but they had already been in. So, of course, there was no community center then.

**Joan Murray:** But we did have that school building.

**Dorothy Killion:** A little community center.

**Joan Murray:** That we had actually moved over. It was a restaurant from 101.

**Dorothy Killion:** Oh, you know, that was just what I was going to tell you. Alice Long told me that the reason I got the date of that more or less right, is that they moved into their house on Longfellow in 1959 and she said they had been there a very short time. It was either '59 or '60 when they were awakened in the middle of the night by this tremendous, horrendous noise and it was moving that house. Alice said the city said the moving of a whole building could not be done unless it was in the middle of the night. So their house, of course, being on the lower slopes of Enchanted Knolls, got the full benefit of it.

But I remember that little building. I remember taking a CPR class there. There were all kinds of meetings there. Unlike the very fancy Community Center we have now, which has people there all the time. It is really well-used. I think it is wonderful that it is there.

Now let me see. Dog walking. Well, I walked the dogs, Ann had a dog that she just couldn't wait to have. She loved Pepper, but she was only about four years old when we had Pepper. I said, "By your tenth birthday — we will get you a dog for your tenth birthday, that is for sure." So I kept looking at all the ads. She was born in February 1961, so she was 10 in 1971.

We finally got this little black dog who was a mixture. She was part Lhasa Apso with the hair in her eyes. She was darling. We called her Caffie. Of course, Ann — as happens to all kids who get dogs when they are 10 or so, they get interested in other things, their social lives and everything. Poor Caffie was being neglected, but not by me. Of course I started feeding her. Ann did everything at first, she is the one who took her to the training sessions which were down behind that community center, the old one. She was very good about doing all the things she was supposed to do, but I gave Caffie most of the attention and we walked every day, long walks. We took long walks there. As I say, there was no dog park. We walked up over Eucalyptus Knolls — there were no houses on it, just eucalyptus trees. Then we walked down. I think Shelter Bay was built around then. I think it was built around the same time as Shelter Ridge or maybe before.

**Joan Murray:** I think it was before.

**Dorothy Killion:** It was probably built in the late '60s. They called this area Sunrise Pointe. You probably never heard that.

**Joan Murray:** I never heard that. That's interesting.

**Dorothy Killion:** Well, that is what the developers had named it. It was just this sort of little peninsula that stuck out with a little trail around it. That is now Sunrise Point with those enormous condos, yeah. Oh, and I have another story about this whole area. When the kids were very little, I just asked Paul the other day if he remembered this and he said, "Of course I do." I said, "How old were you?" He said, "I guess I was five because I still believed in Santa." Do you remember this? Ever going or taking your kids to see Santa come in his sleigh, with the bells ringing and everything outside of Sabella's at Christmas time?

**Joan Murray:** No.

**Dorothy Killion:** Well, we went to dinner and we had all three of the children. I don't know who pulled the sleigh. I think it must have been horses, I'm sure it wasn't reindeer, but it was a real big sleigh and everything. They had some artificial snow they had dumped. It was all sort of wild over there. Sabella's was on that frontage road right around where that hotel is now.

**Joan Murray:** Where the hotel is.

**Dorothy Killion:** Right near where Piatti's is now, that area, that side of the bay.

**Joan Murray:** That side of the highway, correct.

**Dorothy Killion:** Anyway, that was pretty exciting — they remember that. I had almost forgotten that. I kept thinking, “What was the name of that restaurant? Was it Tarantino’s, Alioto’s?” And then Paul remembered it was Sabella’s, of course. Let me see. Well then, to go back to the dogs, the dog walking was very important in my life. We had Caffie for a long time and Ann was down at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] when Caffie finally died. Then in 1989, my kids gave me for Christmas a beautiful golden cocker spaniel. You probably remember me with her because I walked everywhere with her; she was with me always. She was actually born on the day of the earthquake. She was born that morning. The earthquake happened early in the evening and she was born at five o’clock that morning. Anyway, so I walked every day, I would come down, really, because that is what everybody who worked did. We had a little group that came at 5 o’clock. I could have gone any time. We had such a wonderful group down here at what became the dog park but at first we had a big fight. The soccer people wanted to take over the field, the Friends of the Field, and we used to meet there on those little slopes, on the green lawns, and we all had our little plastic bags and cleaned up after the dogs. I do have a wonderful picture from there, one of these great big pictures that was taken of the whole group of us with our dogs.

**Joan Murray:** That would be a fun picture to copy for the history room.

**Dorothy Killion:** I should give it to the library, yeah. I’ll look for that. I’ll find it.

**Joan Murray:** That would be wonderful if you could identify the people.

**Dorothy Killion:** There was a whole group of people. I meet some of the women here, I remember you from the dog park. Most of us can’t see well. Do you know Kay White?

**Joan Murray:** No, I don’t.

**Dorothy Killion:** She had a daughter who was Tom’s age and I think an older daughter too. She still lives in her home in Homestead, but she comes to the Community Center and I play bridge there every Tuesday morning and she comes. She doesn’t play bridge, but she plays dominos or something. We remember each other from the dog park.

**Joan Murray:** The dog park, that’s wonderful.

**Dorothy Killion:** There was a woman here who recently died, Inez, and she also was there all the time. But we were very determined that we were going to keep our dog park. We didn’t keep the actual part, they put the fence all around there, the Friends of the Field, you know. We were essentially blocked out, we couldn’t go in there with the dogs, so we had to go beyond it. That whole area, the end of that peninsula, was wild and it looked just wonderful in the spring,. It was covered in lupine, do you remember?

**Joan Murray:** No I don’t.

**Dorothy Killion:** It was so beautiful. It was just a mass of lupine and poppies, it was just a beautiful spot. I loved to walk around it. Then they went in, when the Friends of the Field took over and they put the dog park beyond it, they planted grass for the dogs, so that was the end of the wildflowers. But they still have a dirt path all around the edge and the dogs still like to go in the bay and swim, which is really great for some of these big retrievers, they get good exercise.

**Joan Murray:** I know that the people have been very grateful to have that dog park, it is so well used.

**Dorothy Killion:** Oh, it is very well used. Of course, they do need more places for kids to play soccer. When we did move to Shelter Ridge, you know, it was right down the hill from us. Our house was on Kilmer, which is the last street towards Mill Valley, the one closest to downtown Mill Valley, right above the corner. Kipling, where you turn to go up Kipling when you come off the highway. That whole corner was covered with oak trees and it still is even though we were sure they were going to cut them down when they put in those million dollar houses right below us. They were talking about cutting down oaks. I went to the council meeting, one of the only times I ever went to the council meetings, to speak about cutting down the oaks.

**Joan Murray:** Good for you for doing that.

**Dorothy Killion:** Yeah, they didn't take as many as they were going to, but they took some. Anyway, I appreciate it every time I go past there coming onto the highway and I see that whole corner, those oak trees which are so old and they are still there.

**Joan Murray:** Really lovely.

**Dorothy Killion:** So that is great. That was also part of the Planning Commission cutting down the number of units he wanted to build there. This is Von Der Werth. They cut it back. I think there were only four or five houses in there, all of which sold for over a million dollars, of course. Anyway, I walked down from there and back and that was good for me too, to walk down to the dog park and back. And of course soccer came and took over so much of all of the parks. I think there were a lot of fights about baseball being pushed out.

**Joan Murray:** There still are.

**Dorothy Killion:** There still are?

**Joan Murray:** It is very controversial. Right. And the neighbors. The neighbors want to be able to have Sundays free. Maybe at this point, I would love to talk with you about that, but I don't necessarily want that to be part of your oral history, but it is interesting what you say about the development of this part of Mill Valley going east of Camino Alto because there was really nothing, nothing. Enchanted Knolls had just been built.

**Dorothy Killion:** It was a wonderful wild land. In a way, it should have been kept that. Also, I didn't mention the Public Safety Building. I think that is a disaster to have it over there. All of the fire trucks. I have been right in the traffic when one of them comes to answer a call uptown in Mill Valley. Of course there are still fire trucks uptown, but if it is a big fire, they need to go. It is really terrible, that turn there. Another thing that I remember very well is that corner where the Cantina is. I don't know what that is called, that shopping center.

**Joan Murray:** Blithedale Plaza.

**Dorothy Killion:** Is that what it is, yeah. I remember there was a Purity.

**Joan Murray:** There was a Purity store.

**Dorothy Killion:** Purity, and an old Quonset hut.<sup>11</sup> I think all those Quonsets were surplus war material, weren't they? One was the one on Miller where Whole Foods is, or right behind it, where Mr. Dingwall used to have his decorated — he did slip covers. That was a Quonset. Then the Purity was a Quonset.

**Joan Murray:** Of course that is built on fill.

**Dorothy Killion:** I was talking to Alice about this whole thing and I asked her if the Purity was there when she moved and she said yes. So the Purity was there in 1959 and for several years afterwards. But the thing I remember about that corner was the Upstart Crow.

**Joan Murray:** Yeah.

**Dorothy Killion:** Do you remember that?

**Joan Murray:** Yes, I do.

**Dorothy Killion:** It was such a wonderful center.

**Joan Murray:** It was a wonderful bookstore. There was a little café.

**Dorothy Killion:** I used to love it. I went with friends all the time. We bought books and we sat around and talked about books. It was just, it was the kind of place that I thought every community needs. Then all of the sudden it disappears.

**Joan Murray:** Right, they went bankrupt, unfortunately. Well, I think we can stop. I still want to talk with you some more, but I think we can stop this part of the recording about this area of town, so thank you very much for that.

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<sup>11</sup> Quonset huts were semi-circular, prefabricated structures used by the U.S. Army during World War II.—  
Editor.

**Dorothy Killion:** Well, you are certainly welcome.