

**Mill Valley Oral History Program**  
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**BETTY GOERKE**

**An Oral History Interview  
Conducted by Debra Schwartz in 2014**

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TITLE: Oral History of Betty Goerke  
INTERVIEWER: Debra Schwartz  
DESCRIPTION: Transcript, 28 pages  
INTERVIEW DATE: November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014

In this oral history, professor and author Betty Goerke recounts a full and joyful intellectual and family life that is at once firmly rooted in Mill Valley and international in its travels and fieldwork. Born in 1931, Betty grew up in Illinois. She begins this account of her personal history with a family genealogy that goes back to her English and Scottish ancestors who came to America in the 1600s and were among the First Families of Virginia. Betty attended college at Radcliffe, where she studied classical archaeology and music. She received a master's in history from Northwestern and later studied anthropology at San Francisco State University. Betty moved to San Francisco with her husband Jon in the early 1950s and taught history at Branson in Ross for a few years that she remembers fondly in this oral history interview. After sojourning in Germany and Boston, Betty and Jon settled down in Mill Valley in 1962 with their three children. Betty evokes the pleasure of their regular hikes on Mt. Tam over the decades and recounts a number of wildlife sightings that left an impression on her. In 1971 she began teaching anthropology at College of Marin and started studying the Native American history of Marin County. The research she conducted with her students over a few decades culminated in several academic and popular publications, including her books *Chief Marin* and *Discovering the Native People of Point Reyes*. Betty recounts her participation in numerous archaeological digs from Mill Valley to Colorado to Kenya (where she worked with Richard Leakey) as well as trips she led to Europe giving her students a rare opportunity to see Paleolithic cave art. She also describes her prolonged involvement in the Mill Valley Historical Society. Throughout this oral history she emphasizes the good fortune that has blessed her life with happiness, and praises the natural beauty of Mill Valley and the remarkable tolerance of its community.

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## Oral History of Betty Goerke

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**Oral History of Betty Goerke**  
**November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Editor's note:** This oral history transcript has been reviewed by Betty Goerke, who made corrections and clarifications. The audio recording is not available.

**Debra Schwartz:** Here we go, we are now live. Deep breath. All right, so today is November 18<sup>th</sup>. It is 10:52 a.m and I am sitting here with Betty Goerke and we are doing our Mill Valley Historical Society interview. Betty, will you please state your name and your address?

**Betty Goerke:** Betty Goerke, 145 Marlin Avenue, Mill Valley.

**Debra Schwartz:** Okay, so thank you for talking with me today.

**Betty Goerke:** My pleasure, Debra.

**Debra Schwartz:** I look forward to talking about much of the work you have done and your experiences in Mill Valley. This is a real opportunity. I am very glad to be here today with you. So let's go back with some personal family history if we can. Maybe you can tell me a little about your family, where they originated from, and where they lived in the United States and how you ended up in this area.

**Betty Goerke:** I grew up in Illinois. My parents were from Missouri. Our family history goes back quite a ways. My last name, my maiden name, was Bagby. There is an account of Bagby in England. It is in the Domesday Book of 1086, and so we know the manor house where the Bagby family lived. It is a small house but it is called a manor house. So that was very interesting.

My family has always been interested in our history. My dad retired so that he could write a family history. My brother, age 27, retired at the same time so that he could help him do the history. When it was over, both of them went back to work again. So we have a strong interest in history. My mother also had a strong interest in history. She is of Scottish descent. You will see in my hallway here [she points out a photograph], I am wearing a kilt as a child and my brothers had to wear kilts too, because she stressed our Scottish descent.

I grew up in a big house with pillars. Although the War Between the States<sup>1</sup> was over in 1865, it was still very alive in my house because my family settled in Virginia before moving to Missouri. We had a picture of Robert E. Lee hanging in the upstairs hall. We had a hitching post out in front of our house. It is embarrassing to say all these things now, but I grew up in a house that looked like a southern mansion, but much smaller, because now I have been to the southern plantation house after which my house was

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as the Civil War.—Ed.

copied, and it is a very, very small rendition of a big house in Mississippi. I was told that the War Between the States had nothing to do with slavery; it had to do with states' rights. I really knew very little about northern history until I went off to college at Radcliffe and found that riding around with a little Confederate flag was not who I wanted to be. It was just a complete shock and my parents were very disappointed with me. After just one semester I had learned about the northern position in the Civil War. Oh, my gosh, it was such an eye opener! I loved learning, you know, the real history, but it just shows you how you can get caught up in your family lore and you of course accept it because your mother has told you that. The grade school I went to was Lincoln School, so I knew about Abraham Lincoln, but I didn't really understand the history behind the war. It was a war of course between the states and it was about states' rights, but it was a lot more than that and it didn't take me very long to catch on.

**Debra Schwartz:** How did your family reconcile those subtle differences about the other stuff?

**Betty Goerke:** My father took it pretty well. My mother was very upset when I talked to her about the environment and how important the environment was. I was beginning to understand about black people and the environment that they lived in, and she was very angry with me. So we argued a lot as I began to understand the prejudice within my early life.

**Debra Schwartz:** So you were born what year?

**Betty Goerke:** 1931.

**Debra Schwartz:** And your parents, both sides, when had the family actually made the trip over to the United States?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh, in the 1600s.

**Debra Schwartz:** In the 1600s. Can you tell me a little bit about their journey?

**Betty Goerke:** We know very little because some of the records that my father was looking for when he took the time off to do the family history were burned during the War of 1812, so many of the records in Virginia went up in flames. But I was always brought up that it was a very important family history. My mother said that we were related to Edmund Pendleton, who was the governor of Virginia. So when I was asked to speak at the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution], and they were talking about their history, I stood up and said that I am a member of the FFV, First Families of Virginia. "Oh," those people said; they were interested in FFV, and, "Who are you related to?" I proudly said, "Edmund Pendleton." "Ooh," the crowd said. In Marin County, there are people who know their Southern history. So I came home and I asked my brother, who was still living in the family house, if he could look up Edmund Pendleton and tell me something more about him. My brother went to the books and looked, and it didn't look to him as if we were related to Pendleton after all. Well, all the

kids — having been brought up by my mom about how important this family was — we were all in hysterics. We just loved this story. So he either had an illegitimate child or it was another Edmund Pendleton who lived later, who was born in 1800, so that was a very interesting story. Also just another little link to what the real history is and what I was taught growing up. So that's the back history.

**Debra Schwartz:** Okay. So you lived in a mini-plantation, kind of a reasonable facsimile, plantation-like.

**Betty Goerke:** I can show you the house. With the pillars.

**Debra Schwartz:** Let's get some photographs.

**Betty Goerke:** It's very embarrassing. Oh, I was so embarrassed to have people come to my house.

**Debra Schwartz:** You mean, as a child?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh yes, yes.

**Debra Schwartz:** Even before Radcliffe?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh yes. I was ashamed.

**Debra Schwartz:** Were the other houses around your neighborhood different?

**Betty Goerke:** Smaller, and I had friends who lived in apartments.

**Debra Schwartz:** Where in Chicago?

**Betty Goerke:** Evanston, by Northwestern University, and that was a big part of my life growing up.

**Debra Schwartz:** I know Evanston. So growing up it sounds like you were raised in a cultural environment.

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, yes.

**Debra Schwartz:** So your father retired and your brother retired at 27.

**Betty Goerke:** Well, they both went back to work. They had to work.

**Debra Schwartz:** And your father did what?

**Betty Goerke:** He had his own engineering company, Bagby Engineering. I am deep into his history, because I am writing a book about him right now and his participation in

the Transcontinental Air Race in 1919, and what he did in World War I and World War II as a pilot. We were not wealthy but we had the appearance of wealth exemplified by a house bought during the Depression. My mother had seen that house and she knew she wanted it and when it came on the market — 1935 or so — she walked in the front door and said, “We’ll take it.”

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow, and sometime I guess she figured the rest would come. Okay, so, you studied at Radcliffe. What did you study?

**Betty Goerke:** Well, I was supposed to be there as a music major but I really didn’t want to do that. I wanted to study archeology. So I did ancient history and music, sort of a double major. They weren’t called double majors then but that is what it was. Originally I wanted to study Egyptian history, Egyptian archeology, but in order to do that, I would have had to have a private tutor provided by Harvard and I would be the only student, and that just put me in a panic. I said, “No, I’ll do something different.” So my dad talked to me about how hot it was in Egypt. He had been in the African campaign during World War II, and [said] that I should pick a country that wasn’t quite so hot, so I chose Greece instead. My dad brought us all up on Greek history. I knew all about Pericles and different wars and so I was already primed, and studied classical Greek history and archeology.

**Debra Schwartz:** Okay, let me pause this one second. [pause in recording] Okay, that’s good.

**Betty Goerke:** My dad was considered a hero, a World War II hero.

**Debra Schwartz:** His name again was?

**Betty Goerke:** Ralph Bagby, known as “Baz.” On D-day, he parachuted with the Pathfinders into German held territory in France. They set down flares for the air invasion of paratroopers followed by gliders hours before the land invasion on the Normandy beaches. My dad was on Eisenhower’s staff and he went AWOL to do this. He was a colonel and talked to majors and they allowed him to get on a plane. He had never jumped before. The Pathfinders were not thrilled to see a man, 51 years old and who had never jumped, on their line. So he was put at the end, of course, so he wouldn’t mess things up, and he jumped. When he got back to England, he was reprimanded and then given a medal.

I am going to tell you about my mom. My mom, at age 19, wanted to be an actress. She went to Washington, DC, and the director of a play that she was in hit on her, causing her to drop out and get a job at the *Washington Herald*. She was called the Assistant Women’s Editor, and went to all these wonderful events and described what people were wearing. She wrote for *Washington Wear Daily* — is that what it is called? I don’t know, what is the newspaper in New York City, *Women’s Wear Daily*? She would go to these events and describe the clothes that people wore. She would even describe the designs of

the stockings that they wore. Of course, this was at a time that fashions were changing, so it was very interesting for her and for the public to read about.

At her suggestion she became the “advice to the lovelorn” columnist. She said she would write advice. She was a great advice-giver; she never stopped giving advice, even in her 90s. People would write her letters at the *Herald* and she would answer. I have these; I saved these. She took the name of Virginia Lee at the newspaper, because of Virginia, her state, and because of Robert E. Lee, hence she became Virginia Lee. One of the things that really upset me was that she told me a young, unmarried pregnant woman came in and she wanted to see her personally; she didn’t want to just write her a letter. And my mother’s advice to her, which my mother told me later, was to go read the Bible. My mother realized that she had not done a good job there. But otherwise she was handing out advice. Because of her experience in Washington as the society page assistant — there were only two of them, making her the assistant; and by then she was 20, I guess, 19 and 20 — she felt that she knew all the correct procedures for every event, teaching us to stand up, sit down, say this, say that, how you introduce people, what kind of clothes you wear in different circumstances, how you talk to people correctly. My dad was just exactly the opposite. He came from a family who had a tree nursery, on the Missouri River, in a very small town. I guess I took after my dad instead of my mom.

**Debra Schwartz:** Okay. So now, you were raised in that environment which is very interesting, but then you ended up over here. You went to Radcliffe, and did you go to grad school then next after that?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, I went to grad school at Northwestern, went home for graduate school at Northwestern. By then, that year I met my husband, who was a student at Yale.

**Debra Schwartz:** And your husband’s name is?

**Betty Goerke:** Jon. And he was a student at Yale.

**Debra Schwartz:** Medical student?

**Betty Goerke:** He went to medical school after graduating from Caltech here in California, and a romance began. I was on a dig that summer.

**Debra Schwartz:** You were studying in graduate school, what?

**Betty Goerke:** I was studying history and getting a degree in education because I wanted to be a teacher. I forgot where I was.

**Debra Schwartz:** The two of you met, fell in love.

**Betty Goerke:** Okay. I met him through my college roommate and he pursued me on an archeological dig where I was working in Colorado, in Mesa Verde, a fabulous dig. He flew out in little planes and landed on dirt strips and hiked up to where we were at 4,000



feet. And he said if he ever got married, he had to go to Greece. Well, I had been a student in Athens so he knew I was taken with anything having to do with Greece, and pretty soon we were engaged and then married very shortly afterwards.

**Debra Schwartz:** So then how did you end up here in California? You were coming west slowly.

**Betty Goerke:** Very slowly, okay. Jon had been out here working while he was in medical school; he wanted to come back to San Francisco.

**Debra Schwartz:** Was it UCSF [University of California, San Francisco]?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes.

**Debra Schwartz:** And his specialty is what?

**Betty Goerke:** Cardiology and physiology. He wanted to find an internship, and he came out here in the car and looked at San Francisco, L.A., Seattle, Portland, and Madison.

**Debra Schwartz:** What year is this now?

**Betty Goerke:** 1953, I think, no, 1954. I knew I could live in all those places except for San Francisco because we stayed in a motel in Daly City and I had to sit there in the fog while he was being interviewed. Naturally I said, "Any place but San Francisco," but of course that's where he wanted to go, and that's where we went. I am not so acquiescent now, but anyway, that's what we ended up doing.

**Debra Schwartz:** But you are not in Daly City.

**Betty Goerke:** Pardon?

**Debra Schwartz:** You are not presently in Daly City. You did end up here [in Mill Valley].

**Betty Goerke:** [laughs] No, that's right. At first we lived in the city. I didn't like that either, because I don't like fog and I felt so sorry for the children that had to wear jackets in the summer. I grew up on a lake and there was no lake nearby. I could get to the ocean. I would go to the ocean and it was so cold. I would lie down in the sand dunes to try to find some warmth.

**Debra Schwartz:** How old are you at this point?

**Betty Goerke:** I am 21, I guess.

**Debra Schwartz:** 21, okay.

**Betty Goerke:** And fortunately I had a job at Katharine Branson School here in Ross. I had arranged it before I ever came out.

**Debra Schwartz:** Katharine Branson School? Branson? Oh, okay.

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, then called Katharine Branson. I just loved it there. I had been teaching at a private girls' school in New Haven, all kinds of history: ancient, medieval, modern, American, and got this job out here and I just loved Branson. The students were exciting and eager and they were happy to have me because they had a lot of old fuddy-duddies and then I came in at age 22 or whatever I was. It was very nice. I still have contact with many of those students. For my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party, which my daughter had for me outside in our garden, there were lots of students I could have invited, but there wasn't enough room and I just invited one. But there were many, and I kept in contact with them. They were really fabulous. I was very happy being there. At the same time the students were not happy about being at Branson, particularly the boarding students: [there were] sad stories there too about their lives and how I tried to help them and the school didn't believe anyone had any psychological problems. I don't want to get into that, but I did what I could to help in some very sad cases. I enjoyed my two years there greatly. And then Jon had to go into the service in the Medical Corps, so we moved to Germany, and that's where I had my two oldest children. We came back and went to Boston where Jon worked at the Boston VA for clinical training, and Harvard Medical School for research, and we had our third child, Robin, who is making the noise downstairs [laughs].

**Debra Schwartz:** A girl, obviously. And then you somehow managed to find your way back to Marin County.

**Betty Goerke:** Jon then received a fellowship at UCSF and we moved to Marin where I had a job teaching at Branson. I could have stayed there forever. I absolutely loved the school. I loved the students because I had gone to a private girls' school myself, so it all felt very at home. I had taught at another girls' school previously in New Haven, with students who were all very academically oriented and they all went to different Eastern schools. At Branson, it just seemed like a much healthier environment to me, but of course, the girls are now telling me years later that it wasn't a healthy environment. "We were unhappy. You were the only happy part of our lives here."

**Debra Schwartz:** So where were you living prior to actually moving here, and what was the event that precipitated your move back?

**Betty Goerke:** Jon wanted to come back to UCSF. He didn't want to stay in Boston, which was fine with me, because by then I knew what California was like, and I didn't like the cold either. When we came back, one of my students' parents who lived in Mill Valley found us a place to rent for the summer. It was a little hard to unleash ourselves after we had set down roots in this rental house in Mill Valley on Millwood, right around the corner from a drugstore.

**Debra Schwartz:** Lockwood, I think, was it?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, I think that's the name.<sup>2</sup>

**Debra Schwartz:** So what year are we now, the late '50s, maybe?

**Betty Goerke:** We arrived back in California in '62. So we have been here in Mill Valley since '62.

**Debra Schwartz:** So because we are doing this interview about Mill Valley, you had been living in Ross prior and now you are in Mill Valley.

**Betty Goerke:** Living in San Anselmo.

**Debra Schwartz:** In San Anselmo, right there, and now you are in Mill Valley. What were your first impressions of Mill Valley? What was Mill Valley like?

**Betty Goerke:** My impressions were completely colored by Dr. Robert Aird (with whom Jon had worked at UCSF) and his wife and their daughter. Their daughter went to Branson, and they came to visit us when we were living in Germany. When they heard we were coming back, they were the ones who arranged for us to have a rental in Mill Valley and they were warm, welcoming people. Eleanor Aird did anything she could for anybody. She was watching people at the hospital; she was involved in everything that was a helping association. Of course, she would take on our family and find us a place to live. Our association in Mill Valley had to do with her family. They lived on Summit; they were well-known. We didn't choose it originally because of its beauty, but I grew up in Illinois where it is flat, so to look out and see a mountain, it is just incredible. We are really blessed that we are here. We live across the street from a fire road and I like to hike every day. It was just the perfect place.

**Debra Schwartz:** So what was Mill Valley like in the early '60s?

**Betty Goerke:** Well, it is hard to say because I was raising three little kids and I was at the park all the time.

**Debra Schwartz:** Boyle Park?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes. I loved playing with my children. They were my life, and a wonderful life it was. I was at the park with them, or teaching them how to ride bicycles, or walking with them. We went on hikes all the time, camping with them. I didn't really pay too much attention except for the fact that we were up on the fire road all the time. I didn't have a sense of what the downtown was like; I didn't pay too much attention to the downtown. It was our little home.

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, the drugstore was called Lawson & Dyer.—Betty Goerke.

**Debra Schwartz:** Were there a lot of families around you? Were there a lot of young families in your neighborhood?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, there was another family, the Dennis family. You know the Dennises from the Mill Valley Historical Society. Nona Dennis is a guide every year and her husband taught at San Francisco State. They had a child, a little child, the same age as our middle child – both named Katie, both conceived in Greece. So there was immediate connection there. We were with that family a lot of the time.

**Debra Schwartz:** And you are actually very close to downtown.

**Betty Goerke:** We are. But really, we didn't discover that till our children were much older and Jon and I would walk downtown and have dinner and go to the movie theater, but that didn't start till the '90s. We paid very little attention to downtown.

**Debra Schwartz:** So at that time, downtown, it had been a depot at one point. I believe the tracks were still running to the center of town along Miller.

**Betty Goerke:** I think they were.

**Debra Schwartz:** Do you remember, was it buses in the town, do you remember anything about the square at the time?

**Betty Goerke:** Very little.

**Debra Schwartz:** That was not where you were.

**Betty Goerke:** I did take part in a grand experiment in the 1960s, opening a preschool and kindergarten. It was called the Pacific Day School, and had two talented teachers, Maggie Kelly, who lived in Homestead, and Jean Raible. It attracted kids from Mill Valley, Tiburon and San Anselmo, children of my friends. The first year we met in the Baptist Church Sunday School class rooms on Miller Avenue, and the next two years the small school moved to a home on Shell Road, which the parents helped to fix up as a school. Now it's the Islamic Center of Mill Valley. The school had a very free atmosphere. For those who were ready and interested they learned how to read, and do simple math problems. Field trips, including trips to the beach, were an important part of the "curriculum." Three years later when my youngest graduated from kindergarten and was ready to go to first grade at Park School, I lost interest, and by then the teachers were worn out. Some students who met there are still close friends over 40 years later. When my kids went to Park School I would walk them to school, and became familiar with the Park School environment. However, as soon as I began teaching in '71 at College of Marin, I was completely linked in with the college, and am not a good one to ask about downtown Mill Valley.

**Debra Schwartz:** But you have other things. I mean, the trails, for instance, the park, the ambiance of those places.

**Betty Goerke:** Oh yes, absolutely.

**Debra Schwartz:** Was there a lot of traffic on the trails, were people using the trails?

**Betty Goerke:** No, it's amazing. This trail now is used, so I feel safe walking on it all the time, but after the incident, what was he called?

**Debra Schwartz:** The Trailside Killer.

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, the Trailside Killer.

**Debra Schwartz:** That would have been the late '70s.

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, okay. Then I was much more careful and would make sure I'd walk with my dog and be alert to what was happening.

**Debra Schwartz:** But in the '60s, the mountain, no worries, you just went on up.

**Betty Goerke:** No, nobody was walking along here. We can walk from our house to the top of the mountain. We have walked from here to Samuel P. Taylor.

**Debra Schwartz:** You have walked that?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes. You know, I always wanted to live an outdoor life but when I was a child our family didn't have picnics, we weren't a family for picnics. So to do all these outside activities here was just incredible.

**Debra Schwartz:** How about the wildlife out there, what did you encounter back then?

**Betty Goerke:** Rabbits and, more recently, bobcats, a mountain lion when I came back from working in Africa, the first day up our hill.

**Debra Schwartz:** From this house here?

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, and toward the water tower, and there was a long, long tail of a big animal. I just thought, "It's some kind of a cat." It wasn't until I got home that I realized I had seen a mountain lion.

**Debra Schwartz:** What year is this about?

**Betty Goerke:** Let's see, I came back from working in Africa, probably early '80s. And then I talked to people and yes, there had been a mountain lion drinking from someone's swimming pool up there. And bobcats, our previous dog treed<sup>3</sup> a bobcat.

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<sup>3</sup> The term "tree" (past tense "treed") means to force or chase up a tree.—Ed.

**Debra Schwartz:** She ate a bobcat?

**Betty Goerke:** Treed one.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh, treed.

**Betty Goerke:** I went and got her. I was so angry at our dog. The bobcat was right above me. I pulled the dog away and then it got away.

**Debra Schwartz:** So you come to Mill Valley, if I've got this right, you come to Mill Valley basically a child of the city, a bit from the city, and suddenly you are in —

**Betty Goerke:** Heaven: trees, mountains, wildlife, nonstop hiking possibilities, just incredible.

**Debra Schwartz:** So that was very nurturing for you.

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, and our kids enjoyed it, too. Robin had a little nature club when she was in school and once a week, she would bring her friends up and they would have nature walks and she would lead them.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh, how sweet. But there is also an era of the hippie world going on then. Now we are getting into the late '60s; you came here in the early '60s.

**Betty Goerke:** I was completely unaware until I went to the College of Marin.

**Debra Schwartz:** So you were completely separated from all that activity going on in San Francisco. By the '60s, there were some rock 'n' rollers moving into the area.

**Betty Goerke:** Oh, I liked the music, yeah. I listened to the music. I liked the music a lot. And our son came home — he is the one who brought the Beatles to our family with "I Want to Hold Your Hand." And of course I played the piano, and I would sing in here and put on plays in our living room. I always played to them and made up songs for them. I haven't talked about music, but that was a great part of my life for a long time. Naturally we had musical events here.

**Debra Schwartz:** And your home here, you were mentioning earlier to me about the environment you created versus the environment you were raised in. Maybe you could just — for the benefit of those listening, the distinction you chose to incorporate in your life — say something about the differences.

**Betty Goerke:** Well, I wanted rugs that they could walk on. I wanted it to be an open house for kids, which always welcomed them. And then I started teaching, my students were welcome here. I wanted it to be casual and welcoming and non-breakable — they didn't have to worry about breaking anything, because everything — you had to be careful in my [childhood] home.

**Debra Schwartz:** When you were growing up?

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** And now all of a sudden you have got a rather liberated life on so many levels. You can go outside and be free and you want to be inside and be free as well. Because your environment here with all the wood, the beautiful art, the books, the indigenous influences, the sunken living room, which is —

**Betty Goerke:** That is a clue that it was the '60s.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did you build this house?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, in a sense. We bought the house. It did not have a sunken living room. We came in, lowered the living room. We put the stairway in so we could have access to downstairs. All of that is new, from that part behind you. So we put in the upper living room where we could have a piano, and this is where the kids were going to do their theatrical performances and music performances. And we opened up the downstairs to have access there. At one point we thought we might be taking care of Jon's sister's kids, she had five kids, and each year one of them would be sent out, but they managed to grow up on their own without us and we were not taking care of them after all, except every summer we would have one.

**Debra Schwartz:** Although without saying your actual address here, I will say that you are hovering above Park School and contiguous to open space right here.

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, absolutely, yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** Okay, this is wonderful. Did you feel when you moved here — I mean, you are describing, and correct me if I am wrong in my interpretation of this — how you grew up in an environment that had a little bit of a conflict of who you were versus who you were raised to be. When you moved to Mill Valley, did you feel that you were amongst your own? How did you feel in Mill Valley itself when you came here? Did you feel connected to people, did you feel apart from people, if you can think about that?

**Betty Goerke:** It is an interesting question. I don't know how well I can answer that, Debra. As I said, life was centered around my kids. One night a week I would go to school and I got my master's degree at San Francisco State in history. I had an intellectual part of that, and the rest was children and music. I thought I might have a career as a harpsichordist, and I was practicing and taking lessons. It was just a very full life.

**Debra Schwartz:** You felt you were in your space.

**Betty Goerke:** I felt very, very fortunate, and I still do, that I was here in Mill Valley. I began to understand and know the community, and its tolerance. Oh, that was a big, big thing: its tolerance to people of all types. In the late 1960s, before I was teaching at College of Marin, I set up a teachers' aide program at Manzanita School, then the grammar school for Marin City. A number of friends joined to help out one day a week in different classrooms. A friend, Gloria Neumeier, set up a program of aides in the library. I think these programs lasted just over a year. Much later, beginning about 2005, I participated in the "Bridge the Gap" program in Marin City to help 3<sup>rd</sup> graders with their reading. I haven't had time to continue that since joining the board of the Mill Valley Historical Society; I volunteered to teach about Coast Miwok Indians in every 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class in Mill Valley. That was more tiring than I had anticipated, since we were on our feet, acting out the movements of birds, and keeping rhythm to Indian clapping sticks.

**Debra Schwartz:** When did you join the Board of the Mill Valley Historical Society?

**Betty Goerke:** I became acquainted with the Board when I approached them to sponsor a bronze plaque that I had designed about Chief Marin. His birth place was in Mill Valley. I showed them the design of the plaque and explained that it could go on the sidewalk at 48 Locust where a new house was going up after the archaeological survey and excavation was completed. I knew little about the MVHS, except that my friend Chuck Oldenburg was on the Board. After the plaque was installed they asked me to join the Board, and then supported a ceremony on Locust Avenue for the installation of the plaque. The city closed the street for some 150 guests, including the tribal chairman and members of his council. That is when I was made an honorary tribal elder, a surprise. This past year there was a second plaque and dedication for John Reed's home on the corner of Locke Lane and La Goma.

**Debra Schwartz:** What was your role in that?

**Betty Goerke:** I designed the plaque, my husband did the drawing, I wrote the text with input from other members of the Board, located the boulder in Santa Rosa, and made arrangements for the plaque's production and placement on the boulder. We had the full cooperation of Denise Andrews of the Dept. of Public Works. I invited tribal members and descendants of Reed to the dedication. After the ceremony the MVHS had a lovely lunch at the MTC [Marin Theatre Company], an easy walk down the hill.

**Debra Schwartz:** So your socially conscious programs, how did they work out?

**Betty Goerke:** Not as well as we had hoped. But what I found, what I loved about it was that everybody wanted to do something, they wanted to be helpful. That was encouraging to me, that I had good friends who wanted to help and do something in the library or as a teacher's aide. Being a teacher's aide is not being a teacher and a lot of these people had been teachers and that was hard for them. They wanted to run the classroom, understandably.

**Debra Schwartz:** So these are mostly parents and mostly women, or men too?



**Betty Goerke:** Women. Either parents that I had met through Park School and my neighbors and friends from other towns as well. Everybody wanted to help out.

**Debra Schwartz:** Do you remember the principal's name at Park School at that time?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, he later became handicapped, he fell and injured himself, was paralyzed, Bob DeVilbiss. His wife worked at a school in Kentfield and all her neighbors took turns taking care of him. Every day, another neighbor, one would have the morning, another the afternoon. This is a loving and warm community, you know.

**Debra Schwartz:** Okay, so I think we are going to stop here and we will continue with that beautiful last sentiment. We will get back to this on Thursday.

**Betty Goerke:** It is going to be never-ending. There will be Friday and then next week. You better be careful. [laughs]

**Debra Schwartz:** That's fine with me.

[Editor's note: November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 interview ends, and December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 interview begins.]

**Debra Schwartz:** Today is December 5<sup>th</sup>, I do believe. We are out of November. My name is Debra Schwartz. I am here with Betty Goerke. Today we are going to be talking about your professional life. So let's just start with, we know your education, how you were trained, in what fields you were trained in. Why don't you tell me a little bit again about that and then how it was that you made your way into teaching?

**Betty Goerke:** Okay. Well, I majored in ancient classical archeology. I suppose I should just say classical archeology, with an emphasis on Greece, and my minor was music. My first teaching job was in Prospect Hill School in New Haven, Connecticut, where I taught ancient history, modern European history, medieval history, and American history. I also was supposed to be the teacher involved in sports, and I was to train students to be basketball players and hockey players. It was a small private girls' school. I was also to be the editor of the school newspaper.

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow! Did you know how to play hockey and all the others?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh, yeah. I played hockey in high school, and I loved basketball. I played basketball in high school. It was a very nice, perfect job for me. It was a private girls' school, very similar to one that I had gone to, except these students were much better prepared. They were all heading toward competitive colleges. I had an easy job in terms of training them because they all wanted to know everything, which is wonderful. That's how I got started. My husband was a medical student in New Haven, Connecticut, and I taught for two years there at Prospect Hill School, and then two years at Katharine Branson in Ross, same sort of thing, sports and history.

And you want to know how I got into teaching? I found that a lot of fun. When my kids were older and I had a chance to do some archeology in Holland when my husband went to Holland for a year's sabbatical, I did some archeology there and got involved in thinking about archeology as a career. I should go back a little bit and say that when my kids were younger, I had a chance to teach at Park School, which was so much fun. I taught a class in archeology to third and fourth graders. It was only for gifted students, which wasn't exactly fair because there were lots of other little kids who would hang around the door and want to come in and listen to what we were doing. I was asked to teach because the previous teacher for these gifted students was teaching them myths and the kids did not like myths. Soon they wanted another teacher to come in and I said, "Yeah, I'd be glad to teach kids if I could do archeology," and it was decided I could teach archeology.

**Debra Schwartz:** And this was on a volunteer basis?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh, yeah. The first thing the kids wanted to know: Was I going to teach myths, and I said, "Absolutely no myths at all." So many months later when I told them a myth, they were very interested in the story, but when I said that it was a myth, they threw their pencils down. They were adorable. They were so enthusiastic that anybody could have taught these kids. When they would see me coming down the street heading towards the classroom, they would call out, "She's coming; she's coming." They were just adorable. Some would turn out to be archeologists and teachers. This must have been 1969, I guess, that I was down there at Park School.

Once or twice a week — I don't even remember how many days a week I was down there, but we did fun things. We went out to where the Middle School is today and we stood in the four corners of where the Great Pyramid is so that they would see how big it was, and lots of room to spread out. It was really astounding to me, as well as to them, how vast this pyramid was. They made mummies and they wrapped them up with jewels. I took them on a dig that Charlie Slaymaker was doing at Miller Creek School. They were so smart. I had taught them about the difference between obsidian and chert so they would recognize the tools. I showed them what the beads would look like so they knew what they were looking for. They could pick up a clump of dirt and if there was just a tiny corner of a stone flake showing through, they would know right away what it was, whether it was a flake, whether it was a projectile point, and they were intuitive and bright and eager. Charlie was amazed when he saw these kids at work, how much they knew and what they contributed: enthusiasm and knowledge.

**Debra Schwartz:** Charlie is who?

**Betty Goerke:** Charlie was the archeologist in charge of the dig on Miller Creek. He was then getting his graduate degree at San Francisco State and was in charge of a dig. He was quite a personality of his own. That was fun. Anyway, that's how I got back into teaching, with wonderful third and fourth grade groups of students to whom I taught archeology. Then we went to Holland and I dug on a dig in Holland up in Friesland and

came back to the States and decided I would get a degree in anthropology. Did I get that right? Yeah, got a degree in anthropology. So I went back to school and started studying anthropology, and went to visit one day at College of Marin. I don't even know what propelled me to go there, but I visited and introduced myself to the instructor who was teaching an anthropology class, and we got to talking and he invited me to teach his class the next semester on the basis of, I'm not sure, my enthusiasm?

**Debra Schwartz:** You were at San Francisco State at the time?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, taking class, one a semester. He had gone to State himself. My husband and I had taken a class in Native American preparation of foods, so he knew I had my hand, or foot, a little bit in this native life. So he asked me to teach a class in archeology and I said sure, I would. And then after I was signed up to do that, a day and a half before the semester began, he asked me if I would teach a class in Native American arts. Now, although I had dug in Colorado at Mesa Verde, which is an absolutely incredible, wonderful place to be, I did that with the University of Colorado while I was a student at Northwestern for graduate school. I've lost my train of thought, where was I?

**Debra Schwartz:** You were asked to teach art class. Let me just pause this for a second. Okay, so he asked you to teach an art class the day before.

**Betty Goerke:** So my only experience with Native American art was on the dig in Colorado where I was put in charge of pottery. The pot shards would come in and I'd arrange them. I knew nothing about pot shards when I was given this job. And I didn't, I really didn't do an adequate job.

**Debra Schwartz:** With your first class?

**Betty Goerke:** No, not the class, I am talking about when I was on the dig in Colorado, when I was put in charge of the pot shards. So that was my only connection to Native American art, only connection. But I said, "Yes, I would teach the class." I came home, fortunately, and found an incredible book by Franz Boas about Northwest Coast art in the United States and I read that book and learned so much. I found the subject absolutely fascinating. A day and a half later, I began the class.

**Debra Schwartz:** You read the book in a day and a half?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh, no. I read the book that night when I got the job. I read the book all that night. The next day, I began reading more things. Really, Boas was an anthropologist who wrote this book on primitive art that inspired me and impelled me to go on and learn more. So the class began. I explained to students that we were learning together because I was not a Native American and my knowledge of the art was minimal. We were going to do it together. They all became experts in different fields. Everyone had an area that they were going to pursue and present. It was a very exciting class; I loved it. The students were moving along and learning about their different projects. One of the things I had been assigned in a class at Harvard in classical architecture, was to make an architectural

model. In college, I had made a large model of Tell el-Amarna, which is Akhenaton's home place on the Nile. I found that valuable and fun, so I decided that my students should make things too. Their major project was to make something, a replica of some kind of Native American art, which they all did. I have these objects around my house still today and I have used them for teaching for years. Of course, each semester people would make things and we could use them in the classroom. Where was I? How did I get into teaching? Anyway, that's how I started at the College of Marin.

**Debra Schwartz:** This is what year?

**Betty Goerke:** 1972. I guess it must have been spring of '72, yeah. And then the anthropologist who hired me — a really wonderful guy, a very casual and sweet person — was going up to IVC [Indian Valley College] and there was going to be an opening at College of Marin. He told me to apply. And I thought, "Well, I'm really not capable of doing that, but yes, I will apply," and I got the job.

**Debra Schwartz:** Had you finished with San Francisco State by then?

**Betty Goerke:** No, I never finished. I had my master's in history. I was studying at San Francisco State to get my MA in anthropology, and I started teaching and there wasn't time to do both. I couldn't teach and study. I did everything but take the language exam and the last two classes.

**Debra Schwartz:** For your second master's.

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah. And I talked to my anthropology professor, Mike Morato, there, and he said, "Betty, all you have to do is publish something in archeology and that will be fine. You don't have to have another master's degree." I did finally write *The Pacheco Site* published by UCLA in 1983. So armed with that knowledge, I interviewed for the job and I got the job, which is quite amazing in itself. All of a sudden, now I not only have to teach about archeology but I have to teach about physical, biological anthropology. Fortunately I had a class at Harvard from, of course, a famous instructor, so I knew something about that. But before I started teaching, I went and took a summer class at San Francisco State and learned a little bit more.

The beginning of this interview today, Debra, should begin with the fact that I have been very lucky and everything that has happened to me has just been incredible luck. I have been at the right place at the right time. All these things, you know, I just happened to go into a class at College of Marin and John McBeath offered me the job. And I have a friend who had gone to Africa and had met Phillip Tobias, who was Richard Leakey's advisor in East Africa; and he came through the summer before I was going to teach the class in physical anthropology at College of Marin and I met him. We went out to dinner together, and in the car, he and I sat in the back seat, and the other couple, the Sperreys, and my husband — somehow all five of us are in the car, and I interviewed Phillip Tobias, this famous anthropologist from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, all the way to the restaurant, at the restaurant, and all the way back. At the end of that, I

had a graduate — well, more than a graduate degree, I had the most up-to-date information on archeology that anybody could have provided because Phillip analyzed the material that Richard Leakey had dug. He was a friend of Louis and Mary Leakey's. He was a professor of anthropology at Witwatersrand in South Africa. So I knew a ton of information. I walked into class not feeling quite so dumb because of this incredible opportunity, just by chance that my friend had gone to Africa, to Nairobi, met Phillip Tobias, they became friends, etcetera. So that's how I got started in anthropology at the College of Marin.

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow. That's a great story. It is inspiring for a lot of us that are winging it trying to go forward, feeling, "Oh can I, should I do this?" You went for it, is what you did.

**Betty Goerke:** Yes. And that's what I taught my students all the time, you know, "Don't miss out on any opportunity that may come up, and don't set a trajectory that is definite. Realize that you can take detours here and there and some of them may turn out to be incredible. And never take 'no' for an answer." So when my students were going to go to Egypt, I would say, "Go out early in the morning; climb that pyramid if you can." By then, I had gone to Egypt with the University of Chicago. In Luxor, they have a school and facility for archeologists that are coming to Egypt. So I got involved with them and they opened doors for me and told me where I could hike by myself in the Valley of the Kings to look for stone tools, which I was interested in, which I did. I was able to share all these things that had happened to me. I was able to impart this desire to find out things on my own to my students, particularly my older students, women who were coming back to school, who hadn't been in school because either their husbands didn't want them to go to school or their fathers had said, "Well, your brother will go to college and not you." So it was just an incredible experience for me to share this with my students.

Then when I went to Africa to work, first with Richard Leakey in the northern frontier of Kenya, I came back and shared what I learned. I went to Africa three times during the time I was at COM [College of Marin]. I went to France and saw the original cave art, again just by chance. One of my former students, an adult woman who lived in Mill Valley, bought a home in France and she invited me to come. I went to visit her and she introduced me to Jacques Marsal the man who had discovered Lascaux when he was 15. He made it possible for me to see the original Lascaux.

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow. Because that is closed off.

**Betty Goerke:** Oh yes, absolutely. And then I began taking students to Lascaux. I took three groups of students to Lascaux three different summers and each time we were able to go in. I would take four students at a time to go into Lascaux. Jacques Marsal, invited me to go down to the painting down at the bottom. I don't know if you are familiar with Lascaux or not.

**Debra Schwartz:** Is that with the running antelope or whatever the beasts are?

**Betty Goerke:** Aurochs, yeah. And horses.

**Debra Schwartz:** Horses, yes.

**Betty Goerke:** And so he took me down into the pit down below, which nobody goes to; you had to rope ladder down to the bottom, where there is a scene where there is an auroch and it has been stabbed and there is a stick figure, a stick with a little bird on it and a man with an erect penis, or it looked like a man on the ground. I don't know if you have seen this in art history books. Anyway, it is a wonderful scene and he took me to see that. I couldn't get my students down there too. So that was again, you know, one of those pieces of luck: a student of mine who had a connection with the discoverer of Lascaux. Because of that, he was able to get me into Lascaux and then my students into Lascaux and he introduced me to the man who was in charge of giving permission so that was all done. And then when I began taking students, I met — I can't remember how I met the person who — I don't know where I met him. But anyway, I met somebody else who opened doors to see another cave so my students and I could go into a vast cave in the Pyrenees Mountains. Too long and too complicated, but door after door after door, once you know somebody and they trust you, then they will open a door to see something else. So at one point, my daughter and I were allowed to see a cave that is absolutely closed, on somebody's private property. So he invited me to come — maybe I have told you this story already — we were crawling through a cave to get down to see a painting of what is called "The Wizard."<sup>4</sup> Do you know this? Should I be showing you pictures of what this is?

**Debra Schwartz:** You can certainly show pictures and we can even take photos of the pictures and include them in the interview.

**Betty Goerke:** Okay. Well, it is a very famous painting down in the bottom of the cave. The cave belongs to a man, a count. He took me there with my daughter and he had with him two French archeologists. And the French archeologists were there to see if there was something in the cave. They were trying to decide why people had painted certain places in the cave and not other places. We are talking Paleolithic art, in the period of 18- to 34,000 years ago. So their hypothesis was that there must have been something, maybe if there was singing, some kind of reverberations in the cave, that is why they chose that particular spot. They were particularly interested in this drawing of "The Sorcerer," which was half animal and half man. So they were ahead of us. Robin and I were crawling on this tiny little ledge — which I would never of course attempt today — where we could have fallen down into the cave of 300 feet below. They were a little ahead of us and they were going, "Mmm, mmm, mmm." Robin turned to me and whispered, "It sounds like Marin County. They are meditating down there." So we finally arrived to the drawing of "The Sorcerer" and found out what they were actually doing.

**Debra Schwartz:** They were testing for reverberations?

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<sup>4</sup> A painting also known as "The Sorcerer" in Trois-Frères, Ariège, France.—Ed.

**Betty Goerke:** They were testing for reverberations. And I think it was eventually written up in some archeological journal, but I don't have it anymore and what they found out. So, to go back a bit, this experience of my going to Lascaux, my seeing 10 other caves, my ability to take students there to see it — because every time I did something, I would come back and talk to my students about it. “Look what I did here and look what we found out.” They wanted to do it too, so I took these groups out. And all that, based on luck, you know, based on luck.

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow. Did you do those field trips in association with the school, or were they private field trips?

**Betty Goerke:** No, College of Marin.

**Debra Schwartz:** College of Marin, wow. Would the College even do something like that now, I wonder?

**Betty Goerke:** I don't know, I don't know. It just takes one enthusiastic person who is determined and will do anything for her students. The college was very supportive of my work. They gave me time off to work in India for a month, and also to see the Iceman of Austria, which was newly discovered in the Alps.

**Debra Schwartz:** This is so wonderful! It is exciting to think of these rare opportunities! They certainly must have been life-changers for your students.

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

**Debra Schwartz:** How many students do you think went into archeology or Native American studies?

**Betty Goerke:** At College of Marin, most of the students were older; our average age was 34. There weren't many young students who could afford to go on the trips. We had an 18-year-old and sometimes my colleagues went on these trips. Many of these women, mainly women, did go on to Berkeley for graduate school or to finish their education with a B.A., but not all. Just a wonderful life experience that they had. But a lot of work. Each time I'd come home and think, “I don't think I can do it again.” But then new students would come and they would be enthusiastic and I would get suckered into it and do another trip. I also took students on trips to Central America.

**Debra Schwartz:** Even on your video, or your CD I watched, you took students other places in the country as well, right?

**Betty Goerke:** The Anasazi ruins, yeah, we did. I took them to Crow Canyon, which is an archeological site in Colorado, a wonderfully organized site where they could experience digging. I wanted to give them experience in field work, so we did field work in Northern California, frequently with Santa Rosa or Sonoma State, and here in Mill Valley with San Francisco State, at De Silva Island.

**Debra Schwartz:** Wasn't there a midden pile<sup>5</sup> there? Right over by Strawberry Village?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh yes, a very deep one, going back like maybe 4,000 years, 4- to 5,000 years. We dug there. Any time there was any kind of opportunity to dig, I would try to latch on to someone else's dig and take my students there.

**Debra Schwartz:** Also at the campus itself, correct? Wasn't there some archeological discoveries there?

**Betty Goerke:** Right. Most of that archeology was done before I arrived, but we wrote it up; my students and I wrote up a dig. Did I give you that book?

**Debra Schwartz:** No. What is the name of the book?

**Betty Goerke:** The name of the book was *Uncovering the Past of the College of Marin, 1994*. My students and I wrote the book. Each student had a chapter or a couple; they would cooperate with chapters, and that was our book. The dig had happened 20 years earlier; we wrote it because it had never been written. A real complaint about archeologists is that they go out and do the dig, have fun, and never write anything up. I was trying to satisfy that in two different books — three, actually — that I have written about archeology, trying to get the facts together and on paper, because otherwise you are just out digging and having fun.

**Debra Schwartz:** This is a lower division class, your archeology class? It was a lower division? I mean, it sounds like upper division at least. You really got your money's worth with these classes.

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, they went on to Berkeley, they were well prepared. Berkeley professors were willing to come over and talk to my students. They loved the students because the atmosphere in the classroom was always open. I'd bring something, "What do you think about this? How would you interpret this? How would you interpret that?" When the archeology professors came from Berkeley and [the students] quizzed and questioned the professor, who was quite surprised because they were used to students who just sat there and took notes. They always wanted to come back, which is nice.

**Debra Schwartz:** And the transfer relationship between College of Marin and Berkeley is well-appreciated as well now. So you were writing books. Let's talk a little bit about some of your books.

**Betty Goerke:** Well, that's not as much fun as talking about teaching archeology, unless you involve your students in it. With the College of Marin, with the *Chief Marin* book, well, that began because we were doing a dig in Cyra McFadden's backyard. Cyra was a friend of mine and her husband biked with my husband, Jon, on Sunday rides, not

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<sup>5</sup> An archaeological term for a trash heap.—Ed.



little [ones] — 50-, 60-mile bike runs. John McFadden noticed that in his backyard, they had artifacts.

**Debra Schwartz:** This is Mill Valley?

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, on Lomita. And so Cyra made some money after she wrote *The Serial*. Do you know about her book *The Serial*?

**Debra Schwartz:** Of course.

**Betty Goerke:** After the movie came out, she had money to do some home improvement: They decided that they would put a swimming pool in the backyard of their very simple house, a wonderful house but not a grandiose place, as you will probably realize if you read *The Serial* about kids dropping things on their lawn and their bushes as they walked home. Anyway, the shovel came, the bulldozers came, and unearthed a beautiful pestle and a little piece of steatite, or soapstone, which looked like a Parcheesi piece. I can get that and show it to you. [Betty retrieves the artifacts.]

**Debra Schwartz:** So this is the pestle and the Parcheesi piece that was found.

**Betty Goerke:** That John McFadden found when the excavators came. It is really quite intriguing because it was clearly an earplug when it was whole, but it was cut in half, must have broken, and then someone drilled a hole in it so they could wear it. It was a wearable artifact.

**Debra Schwartz:** So it was an earplug that fit into the ear. Did they hang something from it?

**Betty Goerke:** Frequently they did. I think that this was done later when it was broken in half. An earplug that stuck out like this, and sometimes they had all kinds of doodads hanging on it: little tiny basket pieces, little pieces of woven baskets, feathers. But it is usually called an earplug. You've probably seen pictures [of people] with very large holes in their ears for the things that they hung on. Because skeletons don't have any flesh on them, we don't know what their ears looked like, and if they had large enough holes to hold jewelry or not.

**Debra Schwartz:** Or that simply fit into the canal. It wouldn't fit into the ear canal; it would have fit into the lobe itself.

**Betty Goerke:** Right.

**Debra Schwartz:** Interesting. So you found this, you saw this material.

**Betty Goerke:** Yes, John McFadden called me up at the College and said, "Betty, these things have come. I think I have found some interesting things. What do you think?" So I came over and said, "Yes, this is wonderful!" and I asked him to call off the contractors

and give us a month, six weeks, I'm not sure, of Saturdays so that we could go in and excavate.

**Debra Schwartz:** And that's you and your class?

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, oh yeah. And a group called MAPOM, which is the Miwok Archeological Preserve of Marin. They worked with Charlie on the dig that I told you about up in Miller Creek, and that's how I knew them.

**Debra Schwartz:** And that started you on your book called *Chief Marin*.

**Betty Goerke:** Well, one of my students interviewed the neighbors and found out that the property on Lomita used to have a mound that was at least 10 feet high and that all the kids played on it for years and years. And in 1950, the mound was leveled and they built houses in that area. I then read the field notes of Nels Nelson who, on horseback and on foot, went around and notated every extant midden in the Bay Area in 1907. And numbers one, two, and three were in Sausalito. When he got up to Alto section he found a number of sites there, numbered 11 and 12.

**Debra Schwartz:** At De Silva.

**Betty Goerke:** No, that's another one. He covered Sausalito, came through and did Mill Valley, where Chief Marin was born, and then went up and talked about and described the Alto section. Well, as I learned from Nels Nelson, the neighbors told him the Indian village on Locust Avenue was the birthplace of Chief Marin. So I thought, I should learn about that. But really, the impetus was my students going around and interviewing people and finding out that there had been a big mound there. I thought, well, I was having trouble with teachers who were going out beyond Alto School and digging in mounds there. Then my kids came back and reported this to me, "You know, our Scout group, our art class at this middle school, we were out there digging and looking for artifacts." My kids knew that was not okay. They had been out digging with me in Calistoga when they were in grade school and so they knew what digging procedures were and how careful you have to be, and take notes and write descriptions. So they came back pretty horrified. In the meantime, walking home from the middle school, they would find artifacts on the old railroad tracks. So they told me that they had heard that a principal, that kids in sixth grade at Tamalpais School — is that the one on the flats, the grade school?

**Debra Schwartz:** You mean over by Tam Junction?

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, is it called Tamalpais?

**Debra Schwartz:** Uh, I think so, primary school, by Tennessee Valley.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tamalpais Valley School.—Ed.

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, right. Well, they told me that in the grade school there, the teachers were taking them out and they were digging into a mound. So I called the principal, explained that I was an archeologist at the College of Marin and I understood this was happening and I explained to her that this was, I didn't use the word "disrespectful" at first, but I tried to explain that if people were digging in mounds, they were destroying evidence and particularly destroying context. Archeologists have to interpret the soil and the artifacts found in some kind of meaningful way, and you just don't take artifacts out of the ground. You have to know what it was associated with, and context and association are very important to archeology.

**Debra Schwartz:** To establish the timeline and so on.

**Betty Goerke:** Absolutely, thank you, to establish a timeline. So I asked her if she could please stop this activity by the teachers and she refused. So, I thought, I've got to write a book about archeology in Marin County and explain to people why this is important, why you want to leave these things where they are until a professional archeologist can come along and dig them up and analyze them and place them in context. So I wrote a little book about the past in Mill Valley; I forget what I called it. I finished it and I read it and I thought, "This is not exciting enough for people; they are not going to read it." I realized that if I focused on Chief Marin and made it about a person, they would be more likely to read this book and appreciate what the Indians had contributed. So, the reprehensible, to me, activities of the arts teacher at the middle school and what the principal allowed at the Tam school set in motion a desire to get this information out to people, so that they would understand what the Indians were about and what they had contributed. That took 28 years.

Again, with the help of my students, we began translating the mission records. As soon as I found out that there was indeed a true Indian who was labeled Chief Marin and found his name in the death records at the San Rafael records, and found his acceptance at the Mission Dolores in San Francisco, I had the beginning and end, and I just had to fill in everything that was in between. So I got a group of students together and we went and began slowly reading the mission records at Mission Dolores in San Francisco. At that time, they were allowed to look at the copies and I was allowed to look at the originals; now you can't do that. And we began finding Chief Marin's name. He was baptized "Marino," so we knew what name to look for, and then we began trying to trace his friends and relatives. I asked students at College of Marin, not the ones who were going over to help me translate the records, but others, if they would like to come over and help translate these records with us. I was able to get a copy of the mission records from San Francisco, and we sat around the dining room table once a week with a fabulous group of students, some of whom were getting credit and some of whom were just doing it for the love of discovery and belief that the Indian history should be known. We worked for a number of years, slowly translating and going through these records. If you have seen the *Chief Marin* book, you have seen some of the photos of the mission records. Some are very clear and some of them are very blurry, so it took a long, long time. We had to learn Spanish; we had to learn the key words for "run away;" we had to learn the words for people who came in already married. There was a special vocabulary we learned, so

carefully I went through the words that we needed to know. [The students] had those lists in front of them so they all knew what the key words were. Fortunately for me, one of my students, an older woman from Bolivia, of German descent, could help us with the translations. And then I found another student who also had Spanish family background, who was able to help us with the translations when we couldn't do it ourselves.

**Debra Schwartz:** Because all the mission records are written in Spanish.

**Betty Goerke:** Right. After we did the Mission Dolores records, I found where we could read the San Rafael records and we had to go down to Menlo Park to read those. Once a week or once every two weeks, a group of us would go down there and look at those records. That is why it took so long; it took 28 years.

**Debra Schwartz:** Your book provides so much information about the life ways of the Native Americans around here and some about the philosophy, the religion, the culture, the history, particularly the interaction between the Native Americans and the missions. What is not in that book that you wish was in it, or is it pretty complete?

**Betty Goerke:** The book was much longer originally and I had no idea if it was going to be published or not, but I wrote it, really, for my students. If my students were going to find it interesting and exciting, then hopefully the principal would appreciate it too and would read it. I forgot your question.

**Debra Schwartz:** They edited it, a lot was edited?

**Betty Goerke:** Oh yes. I didn't know who would publish the book. So I talked to Malcolm Margolin of Heyday Books, who published books on Indians, and asked him if he would be interested. He seemed mildly interested, mildly. I sent him the first three chapters. I sent him the chapter on the Indians arriving in Sausalito and the cultural chapter, and chapter one, the environment — chapters one, three, and four. And he liked it a lot, [he was] very, very positive and enthusiastic, which was a surprise. But when I sent him the finished the book he wouldn't take it. "No," he said, "it is too long, it won't be read, and it's too long." So I said, "Well, what can I do?" He said, "You have to cut it, a lot, dramatically." I tried to do it. I could not do it. I didn't want anything to be left out. Fortunately I found an editor who was interested and who was willing to cut. She just cut, cut and cut and cut and cut and I took it back to Malcolm, having no idea if he would accept it or not, and he did accept it. It was cut by a third, that's what he said, "You've got to cut it by a third." The only regret is that not all the footnotes are there. And of course, if the goal is to have people read it, you can't have so much information. The next book I wrote about Indians, *Discovering Native People at Point Reyes* – is short and concise. Do you have that one, Debra?

**Debra Schwartz:** I do not. I need to get it.

**Betty Goerke:** Let me pause just a second. There will be some duplication of information but it is a small book with lots of pictures.

**Debra Schwartz:** *Discovering Native Peoples at Point Reyes.*

**Betty Goerke:** One of my friends referred to it as “The Mini *Chief Marin*.” [laughs]

**Debra Schwartz:** The “Pocket *Chief Marin*.”

**Betty Goerke:** It is really for people who are exploring out at Point Reyes.

**Debra Schwartz:** I’ve got to get one of these. When I get one of these, will you sign it for me?

**Betty Goerke:** Yeah, yeah, of course.

**Debra Schwartz:** Okay, so —

**Betty Goerke:** When I say second book, I mean “second book that is for the public.” These other books that you have here, *Uncovering the Past of College of Marin* and the Alto book, that is not for the public.

**Debra Schwartz:** Right. So you lost — and what we regret is not in the book — is that there are a lot of footnotes that are not there. Is there more information about the way that Native Americans lived that was cut out, or was that retained in the book?

**Betty Goerke:** Well, what the editor was able to do was take my longer sentences and put them together, and it became a much tighter book.

**Debra Schwartz:** Ah, thank goodness for editors.

**Betty Goerke:** Oh, she was great, yeah. But then she also took out a lot of material. I realize now it was unnecessary. I didn’t have to have all that information in there. It was not just for archeologists and historians.

**Debra Schwartz:** So now you have basically retired from teaching? You are still writing, right?

**Betty Goerke:** I am still writing and I am still teaching. I am teaching in a program at College of Marin that I helped design, in which people can take five classes and get a certificate for Native American studies. It’s for Scout leaders, teachers, and other folks, for common interest.

**Debra Schwartz:** So the basket weaving, all that, yes. Looks great. I recall seeing the basket weaving class going on at Kule Loklo in Point Reyes a couple months ago. So you are teaching, then, through that program.

**Betty Goerke:** I only teach two classes a year.

**Debra Schwartz:** And you are writing. What are you working on now?

**Betty Goerke:** I am working on a book about my father, who was an aerial observer with the French during World War I. The observers are the ones who took photographs when the planes went over the lines into German-controlled territory of France. They took the photographs, they shot at the German pursuit planes, they dropped the bombs, they directed the pilot where to go, and they flew over the American or Allied trenches and dropped leaflets about where the Germans were located. The main focus of the book is an air race in 1919 in which my dad was one of the participants. Forty-four people left San Francisco — sorry, 44 planes left from New York, 16 planes left from San Francisco — in a race across the country. My dad was a participant and one of only 10 pilots who finished the race. I am writing about that and then his time in World War II as a pilot as well.

**Debra Schwartz:** So in your retirement, you are really not very retired, are you?

**Betty Goerke:** No, no, I'm not.

**Debra Schwartz:** Well, it seems enthusiasm leads the way for you. Well, I think we can stop here, because we are going to have another interview and capture the first part, so we will stop here. Thank you so much for everything that you are sharing today. All that you do — for those that are going to be reading this should know — that you have been very, very involved with the Mill Valley Historical Society for years and years. On behalf of myself and everybody in our community, I thank you for everything that you have done for our community and for educating others.

**Betty Goerke:** Oh Debra, how gracious of you, thank you.

**Debra Schwartz:** As to the history, the long history, not just the last couple hundred years, but I think it is so, so important to find that perspective as we try to find where we are in the continuum of life. So thank you very much and I look forward to our next interview.

**Betty Goerke:** You're welcome. Okay, this is in regards to my students —

**Debra Schwartz:** One more thing, we are going to add in one last comment on Betty's interview. I am going to ask you one last question. What is it that, in conclusion of this interview, you would like to share, your personal sharing for those that are going to be listening to this interview, or reading it?

**Betty Goerke:** I think I would like to share what I try to impart to my students — whether they were in the classroom or coming to talk to me in my office about their career trajectory or their scholarly, their educational, trajectory — that is: to follow your dream. Never lose sight of what is most interesting to you. If you are lucky, maybe you can make that what you do as work and get paid for it. But there is no harm, and a

wonderful pathway that you can include in your life, which is not work associated. You can do what you are most interested in on the weekends, at night, in the afternoons, just as long as you keep that in mind and pursue your dream. That wasn't expressed very well but that's what I think.

**Debra Schwartz:** I think you expressed it quite well. We got it.