

**Mill Valley Oral History Program**

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**LYNDA CRAIN**

**An Oral History Interview  
Conducted by Stella Perone in 2016**

TITLE: Oral History of Lynda Crain  
INTERVIEWER: Stella Perone  
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In this oral history, third-generation Mill Valley resident Lynda Crain recounts her family history in Mill Valley and describes her own experiences growing up in the town. Lynda relates several stories passed down to her by her mother Helen Benson, such as a local outbreak of smallpox that occurred in the 1920s and the Great Fire of 1929. She recalls the various historic homes that her parents and grandparents lived in over the course of many decades. She fondly remembers several historic Mill Valley businesses, including the Suey Kee Market, Mayer's Department Store, and Varney's Hardware. Lynda evokes some colorful characters and scenes from Mill Valley's past in her oral history, including the Snake Man, who carried around town a burlap sack rumored to contain snakes, and a postman who was accompanied on his daily delivery route by an entourage of neighborhood dogs, as well as several famous musicians who were to be seen around town in the 1960s and 1970s.

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## Oral History of Lynda Crain

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**Oral History of Lynda Crain**  
**June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016**

**Editor's note:** This transcript has been reviewed by Lynda Crain, who made minor corrections and clarifications.

**00:01 Stella Perone:** This is Stella Perone with Lynda Crain. That's C-R-A-I-N, correct?

**00:07 Lynda Crain:** Yes, Lynda. L-Y-N-D-A. Maiden name Benson, B-E-N-S-O-N.

**00:13 Stella Perone:** On June 22<sup>nd</sup> at her home at 120 Alta Vista.

**00:16 Lynda Crain:** That's right.

**00:17 Stella Perone:** Okay. Lynda, when were you born?

**00:21 Lynda Crain:** 1947. July 14th, 1947.

**00:24 Stella Perone:** To whom? [chuckles]

**00:27 Lynda Crain:** To Helen G. Benson and Ross J. Benson.

**00:32 Stella Perone:** And when did their families come to Mill Valley?

**00:35 Lynda Crain:** In 1923, I believe, my mother came. Her grandmother lived in Mill Valley, and her parents, from Iowa, had bought a farm in Canada that they were farming, and her older sister would be ready to turn 6, and they had to come back to America so she wouldn't be a Canadian citizen. My mother was born in Canada, but she came in time, at that time, since her parents were American, she became an American citizen. So they had to come down, leave my grandfather in Canada to mind the farm, and stay with my grandmother.

**01:16 Stella Perone:** And what was your grandmother's name?

**01:18 Lynda Crain:** Her name was Ritchie was her last name.<sup>1</sup> I think it was R-I-T-C-H-I-E. Macmillan was her maiden name. And I don't know where she came from, but I know she lived in Mill Valley.

**01:32 Stella Perone:** Her first name?

**01:34 Lynda Crain:** I don't know her first name.

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<sup>1</sup> Lynda Crain is speaking here of her great-grandmother.—Ed.

**01:34 Stella Perone:** Oh, okay. That was your great-grandma.<sup>2</sup>

**01:36 Lynda Crain:** She lived on the corner of Mountain View and Dell in a big Victorian. There's a house there, still there, and she lived there. They came here, and then my grandfather followed and worked for PG&E here in town. They bought a house on Sunnyside, and they lived there until 1947 when I was born, [then] they moved to Sonoma. They bought a winery —

**02:00 Stella Perone:** Okay, wait, hold on. I'm sorry. I'm confused. Who lived at Mountain View and Dell? Can we —

**02:04 Lynda Crain:** That was my great-grandmother.

**02:05 Stella Perone:** Oh, your great-grandmother lived at Mountain View and Dell? And her last name was Ritchie?

**02:08 Lynda Crain:** Yes. I don't know the address.<sup>3</sup>

**02:12 Stella Perone:** Okay. Do you know the house if you saw it?

**02:14 Lynda Crain:** I do know the house.

**02:15 Stella Perone:** Okay.

**02:15 Lynda Crain:** It has the rounded windows in the upstairs. It's kind of Victorian-looking, right on the corner — I think it's Dell there, Dell Lane's across the street. It's right there on the corner.

**02:28 Stella Perone:** Okay, so that was your great-grandmother?

**02:30 Lynda Crain:** Mm-hmm.

**02:30 Stella Perone:** And then she had your grandmother here?

**02:33 Lynda Crain:** No. She was grown. My grandmother was born in Maryland and moved here when she was married and had the two girls that they wanted to relocate again.

**02:46 Stella Perone:** Okay, what was her name?

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<sup>2</sup> My grandmother Anne Groll came to live in Mill Valley with her two daughters and stayed temporarily with great grandmother. Grandfather George A. Groll was a mason. My father Ross Benson was a mason in Mill Valley and past commander of the American Legion of Honor. I was a Job's Daughter. George Groll died in Sonoma in 1956. Anne and her daughter Margaret Goodyear (a widow) moved back to Mill Valley in 1961. They lived at 28 Laverne Avenue until 1972 when Margaret died. Grandma (Anne Groll) lived with my parents at 120 Alta Vista until her death in 1973. Margaret's husband Donald Goodyear was MIA during the war.—Lynda Crain.

<sup>3</sup> It was 38 Mountain View.—Lynda Crain.

**02:47 Lynda Crain:** Her name was Anne K. Groll, G-R-O-L-L.

**02:51 Stella Perone:** Okay, when they moved here, they moved to what house?

**02:58 Lynda Crain:** The two girls and the mom stayed with my great-grandmother on Dell and Mountain View. Then my grandfather came down once he had someone to watch the farm. We still have it in the family. It's a wheat farm and it's 325 acres in Alberta, Canada, where he had just gone to do farming there. We didn't have any Canadian ties. But, so he came down here and they bought the house on Sunnyside. I think, was it 87, or 57?

**03:32 Stella Perone:** I think it was 87.

**03:33 Lynda Crain:** 87. She grew up there with her sister and her mother and father, and then grandpa got a job at PG&E. And Grandma didn't open the — she opened the White Mill later on downtown, which is right next to the PG&E office. And in the picture in that book of the old Mill Valley stuff — I should go get it — it shows his old car parked out in front, PG&E office is there and the White Mill and then there's his old car.

**04:01 Stella Perone:** Okay. So, your grandmother, Annie Groll, opened up the White Mill adjacent to the Quinn's Bar?

**04:09 Lynda Crain:** That's right.

**04:09 Stella Perone:** Roughly what year?

**04:11 Lynda Crain:** I'm not sure, but I have an old menu from 1935 — not a menu, but a cookbook. It was a Borden Creamery franchise.

**04:21 Stella Perone:** Oh, it was a franchise?

**04:21 Lynda Crain:** Well, sort of. They had to buy Borden's. I'll say they were their supplier. It's a Borden's book, it's a recipe book — how much it will cost, it breaks it down, and cooking for how many, 80 people or whatever. You'd probably like to see that too. [chuckles]

**04:41 Stella Perone:** Was Annie the cook?

**04:43 Lynda Crain:** She cooked. She was a wonderful cook, and they hired someone to help cook. It was just the girls. They were grown by then. I think when they had it, my mother was maybe a teenager and her older sister was a few years older. It was them, my grandmother, and a girlfriend. People used to come in and hang out there and it was just —

**05:03 Stella Perone:** So, burgers, ice cream?

**05:04 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, ice cream, burgers, really good pot roast. Good food, good comfort food. She was a wonderful cook, best apple pie ever. They didn't have it that long because my mother used to always, "Oh, at the White Mill this, at the White Mill that, when we had the White Mill —" And I said, "How long did you have that White Mill?" It sounds like that was her whole life. Only a few years.

**05:28 Stella Perone:** Oh, really?

**05:29 Lynda Crain:** Well, because they moved away, too. Then they moved to Sonoma. So, no. They didn't have it, I don't know.

**05:35 Stella Perone:** So, when your mother was like, a little bit —

**05:37 Lynda Crain:** When she was pregnant with me, I guess [chuckles] — my grandfather had had a heart attack and had to retire from PG&E, and so he went up there and they bought this 30-acre winery.

**05:50 Stella Perone:** Okay. And your grandfather, he worked for PG&E in Mill Valley. What did he do for PG&E?

**05:55 Lynda Crain:** I think he got the gas started and installed it, because — this goes later on, probably you'd wanna know, but Sausalito had a lot of residents down there. It was growing, and he went down there and he got smallpox. They had an epidemic — and that's when they lived on Sunnyside. And my grandparents and my mother got it badly, and my grandfather had the smallpox, and they were quarantined. People brought them food and everything, left it out, my mother said. And then when it was all over, and they survived, they burned the sheets out in the street on Sunnyside.

**06:38 Stella Perone:** Wow.

**06:38 Lynda Crain:** Yeah. But he picked it up. He figured there are a lot of immigrants coming in, a lot of Portuguese, and —

**06:43 Stella Perone:** Roughly, what year was this, roughly?

**06:44 Lynda Crain:** Roughly? I have no idea. It was probably in the '30s, early '30s, late '20s.

**06:51 Stella Perone:** Did people die of smallpox?

**06:53 Lynda Crain:** Yes, oh yes. It was terrible. There was no cure.

**06:57 Stella Perone:** So they burned the sheets.

**06:58 Lynda Crain:** They burned the sheets. And I guess several people in the town

did have smallpox. But he was pretty sure he got it going in starting — lighting the pilot light, or going into somebody's home, because there were so many people coming here from other countries and everything, and locating —

**07:15 Stella Perone:** So he worked for PG&E, his office was right down there.

**07:18 Lynda Crain:** Right down there, yeah.

**07:19 Stella Perone:** On the other side of Quinn's from the —

**07:21 Lynda Crain:** I'm pretty sure that's where it was, yeah. 'Cause later when I grew up, it was farther up on Throckmorton. I always imagined it was along there somewhere. But I don't think so, 'cause one of the photos had said PG&E on it. I'll have to look for that.

**07:41 Stella Perone:** Okay, so then your grandparents moved away up to Sonoma?

**07:44 Lynda Crain:** Mm-hmm. And they bought a farm. But in the meantime, as the war went on, my father was at Pearl Harbor. He was bombed at Pearl Harbor on the [USS] *West Virginia*.

**07:56 Stella Perone:** And where was your father from?

**07:57 Lynda Crain:** He was from Iowa. And he joined the Navy, and came back to San Francisco. He was on leave, and my mother met him on a blind date. And they got married 10 days later. Then he went back to the Navy, and then he worked for the post office here when he got out of the Navy. He worked for the Mill Valley Post Office.

**08:20 Stella Perone:** And his name again was?

**08:21 Lynda Crain:** He was Rosswell Benson. And then as we were growing up, he worked for the post office. And then he and a neighbor —

**08:28 Stella Perone:** Which?

**08:29 Lynda Crain:** Mill Valley.

**08:30 Stella Perone:** So the one up at Sunnyside?

**08:31 Lynda Crain:** Down on Sunny — yeah, we lived on Mountain View. At the time, a different Mountain View house. We lived at 75 Mountain View. It's a duplex, and my parents lived there when they were newlyweds.

**08:51 Stella Perone:** He worked at the post office?

**08:52 Lynda Crain:** He worked at the post office, and he was also in the reserves, so



when I was little I remember that. My aunt owned the home that they were in, they rented it from her. She raised the rent to \$25 a month [chuckles] and they moved because they thought that was outrageous. So they moved up to Sunnyside, another house on Sunnyside, 107 Sunnyside. And we lived there until I was about 7. So that was from maybe when I was age 3 to 7.

**09:22 Stella Perone:** You rented that, obviously.

**09:23 Lynda Crain:** We rented that. And that's when my father opened a gas station at the corner of Throckmorton and Buena Vista. It was called Intemann Benson Mobil Gas Station.

**09:34 Stella Perone:** What was it called?

**09:35 Lynda Crain:** Intemann's, I-N-T-E-M-A-N-N.

**09:39 Stella Perone:** Why Intemann's?

**09:40 Lynda Crain:** That was his friend, our neighbor on Sunnyside, Dick Intemann. They opened a gas station, and they ran it for a few years. And then they sold it to the Eberharts here in town.

**09:52 Stella Perone:** Okay, and that was right where the Barber Sharp is now.

**09:56 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, just right where it comes to that —

**09:58 Stella Perone:** The island.

**10:00 Lynda Crain:** Island, yeah.

**10:00 Stella Perone:** The corner, it was —

**10:01 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, and that was the gas station right there. Then from there, he got a job with the city of Mill Valley as their mechanic doing all their city cars. And it was down at the corporation yard where he worked. They had the garage down there. And he became interested in the water quality and all, went back to school and became the director of Public Works here in town.

**10:28 Stella Perone:** Roughly, what year or how old were you?

**10:30 Lynda Crain:** It was before we moved here that he worked for the city, so in the '50s.

**10:36 Stella Perone:** Okay.

**10:37 Lynda Crain:** He retired in the '70s. And then he got cancer right after that, and

died at the age of 56. And they named the street after him, Benson Circle.

**10:50 Stella Perone:** And why did they name the street after him?

**10:51 Lynda Crain:** Because he was well-known in the town, and a nice guy. It was a tribute to him, 'cause he had been their director of Public Works for years.

**11:00 Stella Perone:** I didn't know if he did anything special on that —

**11:01 Lynda Crain:** [chuckles] Oh, he was just special. He was a real nice guy, so yeah, they did that. It was when Scott Valley was built, and they gave us a sign for our own yard, so that was good. So that's the story of them. And my mother continued on here. She worked with the state assemblyman from Marin and Sonoma County.

**11:25 Stella Perone:** Who was that?

**11:26 Lynda Crain:** That was Richard H. McCollister. She worked for him for a few years. Not too many ladies worked, they stayed home; and she stayed home quite a while with me. But she was a good secretary, and she had been a secretary in the city as a young girl before they opened the White Mill or even after, maybe, I don't know.<sup>4</sup> But she worked for him, and then got interested in real estate, and worked for Cagwin, Seymour and Hamilton realtors here, until, probably through the '60s. And then she retired when my dad retired.

**12:01 Stella Perone:** And so she was like the office manager, or whatever for —

**12:05 Lynda Crain:** No, she was a real estate agent.

**12:07 Stella Perone:** Oh, she was a real estate agent?

**12:08 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, she went to real estate school and she knew every house in Mill Valley because she'd grown up here, and at that time they knew everyone in town, and she knew the history of every home because the only new homes at that time they built the Goheen tract and they built Enchanted Knolls, you know, over at Sutton Manor, they called it, where Dorset Lane is and over by CVS. But she knew every — the history — and that's why I wish she would have talked to you because she knew what went on.

**12:34 Stella Perone:** And I'm sorry, she died when?

**12:37 Lynda Crain:** Let's see, 2008 she died, 2007. And then we moved back down here, we had to go to — that's a different story [chuckles], but we got married, I got married in 1972, and had to move to Petaluma 'cause we couldn't afford to buy in Marin. And we lived in the upstairs of that same duplex. It just turned out that she inherited that same first duplex [75/77 Mountain View] that she lived in when she was first married. We lived there also for a couple of years and then I was gonna have a baby and we

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<sup>4</sup> It was an insurance company she was working at in San Francisco.—Lynda Crain.

couldn't afford Marin, so we moved to Petaluma and we stayed there for 30, 34 years, I think, and then came back down here. After she died we moved back into this house.

**13:20 Stella Perone:** So when did they move into this house? Can we look up a history of this?

**13:23 Lynda Crain:** Yeah. This house they moved in in around 1960. And this house was built by Roque Moraes — however you say it — for his daughter when she got married.<sup>5</sup>

**13:38 Stella Perone:** For Marie? Which daughter?

**13:40 Lynda Crain:** I think Dorothy, was it Dorothy Williams was the daughter? It's Dorothy Williams, but I'm pretty sure she said that was her dad.

**13:51 Stella Perone:** Okay.

**13:52 Lynda Crain:** I'm not sure, but anyway. She lived here and then she sold the house to the coffee heiress, the Folger Coffee heiress, Ann Folger. She lived here before we bought it; my parents bought it from Ann Folger Hanger. And then when the Manson murders happened and they killed Abigail Folger, the coffee heiress, I was scared to death. My parents were gone and I was here, a teenager, a young woman. I was working in the city, actually at that time — 'cause I didn't know if they were targeting the Folgers, and thought maybe she lived here; you know, nobody knew why at first when the Sharon Tate murders happened, why they happened. It was so scary.

**14:32 Stella Perone:** So, the seller of this house, Anne Folger, was the sister of the —

**14:37 Lynda Crain:** I'm not sure how they — 'cause I looked it up, I tried to look it up but her mother, that was not her mother, Anne was not Abigail's mother, but yet I couldn't find much information about that. I think it must have been her aunt or something. She was the heiress at the time. They always called her "Anne Folger, the coffee heiress," and they called Abigail "Abigail Folger, coffee heiress" [chuckles] so I don't know. That's all I know about this house. But the house, I think it was built around 1945. I've seen a lot of changes on the hill; it was all open hill, open space and we owned, to the middle of the street, and Manuel Gomez owned to the other middle of the street. And when my father wanted to build the carport, they made him — I'd better not [chuckles] tell about the arrangements, but I do have the paperwork for it.

**15:37:** Everything was on the up and up because my dad worked for the city and he had to make sure everything was done by the book. One of the reasons they had to do some kind of a variance to let — they'd been using it as a street forever, but really it was our property and Gomez's property that went to the middle of the street. That was kind of interesting. But during, like the '70s when we had that drought, my parents put a well in here and there's an underground stream, that goes underneath because they hardly had to

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<sup>5</sup> The address was 63 Mesa Avenue. My parents changed it to 120 Alta Vista Avenue.—Lynda Crain.

go down at all and they got water and they used that to keep our garden going; that's always been important to have the garden. But I didn't fire it back up. I thought if we have another drought here I might fire it back up but it's pretty old now, so let's see — I wanted to tell you about when I was little, there was this man called the Snake Man in Mill Valley and he walked around town. Have you ever heard any other stories about the Snake Man?

**16:39 Stella Perone:** No, go ahead.

**16:40 Lynda Crain:** Okay. He was a tall, skinny, scary man when you're little, of course, and he was kinda hunched over, and he carried a burlap sack and everybody said he had snakes in the sack, so they called him Snake Man. Well, he did have snakes in the sack, and he would go, mostly like — I lived on Throckmorton after Sunnyside — we talked about the Sunnyside house we moved to — 491 Throckmorton, a Klyce house [built by Harvey Klyce] and it was a big, great big old house.

**17:08 Stella Perone:** Oh, okay. And when did you —

**17:10 Lynda Crain:** I was seven, so it would have been in the '50s.

**17:14 Stella Perone:** Okay, and then you moved to —

**17:16 Lynda Crain:** We had to go to a house on Hilarita [no. 77] just for a year because my parents sold the house so fast, even she was in real estate she couldn't find anything she wanted, and they had to be out, so they bought another house that would do until they found this one, so that's — yeah.

**17:31 Stella Perone:** So she was in real estate when you were a young kid?

**17:32 Lynda Crain:** Uh-huh.

**17:32 Stella Perone:** Okay, and then more afterwards.

**17:35 Lynda Crain:** And after — well, yeah.

**17:36 Stella Perone:** Did she have any fun real estate stories she told you?

**17:40 Lynda Crain:** Oh she probably did; I'm sure she did. [chuckles] I can't think of any right now but yeah, she used tell me about it and she did tell me about the house — because she was a young girl growing up here — about a house on Buena Vista that had a body in the basement, but now I don't know which house it was and I don't know the exact story. But, yeah, there were some weird things. I know one weird thing that happened to my neighbor across the street.

**18:08 Stella Perone:** Across the street here?

**18:09 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, across on Mesa. He was — oh, gosh, I can't think of his name now right now, but he was an old time Mill Valley guy. Somebody dropped by some mushrooms, wild mushrooms, on his porch and he ate them and died. So there's a lot of weird [chuckles] — people trusted everybody, and in those days you didn't even lock your doors or anything else, but they'd leave you things and — it was a nice town in those days.

**18:38:** But anyway, back to the Snake Man. So he would go — we used to hang out and play at Old Mill Park and Cascade Creek 'cause I lived in Throckmorton up past Old Mill School up that way. And he would gather these snakes. Well, he lived in a house that looked like a Victorian — it looked like Norman Bates's house kind of. He lived with his mother. He was a grown man but really strange and the whole — in front of their house, it was —

**19:09 Stella Perone:** Was this on Throckmorton?

**19:10 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, it was on the right side. I gotta go by and see if it's still there. I doubt if it still is. It was probably across from Josephine and then up a little bit more on the right side. They had newspapers. It was a hoarder evidently. And newspapers in the windows, you couldn't see anything and it was really scary, and then the fact that he had snakes. Well he had all kinds of weird snakes, orange snakes and just things that you didn't see. I don't know where he got his snakes but my cat used to go down and hunt down in his place and bring snakes home and then bring it for a present in the house. And my grandmother had come to visit from Sonoma, she was staying a few days, and she was sweeping, and she swept behind, the wastebasket moved it and there was this like exotic snake that just scared her.

**19:55:** So we know he had snakes and he used to raise rats to feed the snakes. And all the kids in the neighborhood would go down, we all wanted pet rats, and he sold them for 15 cents. And my mother goes, "Don't go in the house! Don't go in his house!" So we went with a group of kids and stood on the porch, and he kept bringing — they already had their rat, I didn't have mine. It took me awhile to convince my mother to let me have a pet rat. I said, "Oh, no, no that looks like so and so." And then he'd bring another one, "No, no." [chuckles] Finally he brought the right rat and we bought him and my father made a cage for him and that rat lived for years and years until finally we didn't want him anymore. He was huge, he was big, great big, like a rabbit. And we gave it to a friend in Petaluma and then his mother got tired of it, the cage was smelly, it was terrible. [chuckles] But he was a nice rat!

**20:50 Stella Perone:** Did you ever let him out?

**20:52 Lynda Crain:** Oh, yeah. He was out and he'd sit, when he was not too big, he'd sit on my shoulder, and he would rub on the back of the couch and stuff. He was definitely a pet. He was very cute. His name was Freddie. We took him after the kid didn't want it, my mother didn't want that rat back, so we took him — it was where, wild life, was on the Albert Park before they moved. They used to have like a natural history

thing with animals and they took him, so that was good.

**21:24 Stella Perone:** Wow!

**21:24 Lynda Crain:** Yeah. But I heard, from my mother I heard about when the town, practically the whole town was on fire. I guess it was 1929, maybe around there, when it caught fire on the mountain and came down, how awful, for three days. They didn't know, and they were packed up and ready to go, and they didn't know how far it was gonna come.

**21:43 Stella Perone:** Where was your mother at that point?

**21:44 Lynda Crain:** She was on Sunnyside with my grandparents. That was 1929 when she was a child. She went to Summit School, Old Mill School, Tamalpais High School, and I went to Park School. I started Park School because we lived on Sunnyside and then we moved up to Throckmorton, I changed up to Old Mill School and then Edna Maguire was a new school, I went to Edna Maguire. And I used to walk over the hill and down the railroad tracks here to get to school.

**22:16 Stella Perone:** Wait. How did you get here?

**22:17 Lynda Crain:** Just right over the hill. There were no houses or anything there. We'd go over the hill and down across Corte Madera grade and then go down a little dip and there's railroad tracks there, and we walked the tracks to the school.

**22:28 Stella Perone:** Okay. Was that shorter than just go —

**22:31 Lynda Crain:** I don't know. [laughs] Probably. But it was fun. We thought it was short. [chuckles] It was just more of an adventure, yeah. I don't know if it was shorter or not. And Edna Maguire, speaking of Edna Maguire, she was my mother's teacher, beautiful young woman when she was young and she was a substitute when I went to Old Mill School. She was much older then. I don't know how long she taught, but for a really long time — really nice lady. My grandmother used to have a lot of the ladies over, the teachers, and people over for lunch all the time; they did that and she always had the teachers and had Edna Maguire over there.

**23:18:** So my mother knew her very well and they named the school after her. She was a wonderful woman. I don't know what else. Oh, when we lived here, across the street on Mesa [no. 60] was a house that some friends bought, they weren't friends then, they were new people and they were gonna rent it, use it as a rental, and they were very apprehensive about renting this house. Francis Ford Coppola rented the house when he was making *The Godfather*, and he was filming up at Marin Art & Garden Center, it was when he was doing those things. So he moved in, and they said, "Well, we're really kind of afraid to have a tenant, we're really apprehensive."

**24:06:** He said, "I won't bother you, I promise I won't call you unless there's a fire."

So they said, “Okay,” and they rented it. And he didn’t have any furniture, anything. This was the late ’60s. He had some of the crew people over there and they sat, they had director’s chairs as the furniture. Those days there wasn’t all the bushes, and you could just see right in. Our houses are like fishbowls. And we could see his director chairs over there. And one night, my dog — we had a German Shepherd — and she was barking, barking, barking. Wouldn’t shut up. She’s standing at the sink, looking out, and their house was on fire. So I called the owners and I said, “Your house is on fire.”

**24:51 Stella Perone:** Who were the owners?

**24:52 Lynda Crain:** Those owners, it was Mary Ann and John King. So they came down of course. It was terrible, so he moved then after that. Then they moved into the house once they fixed it up.

**25:05 Stella Perone:** Was it destroyed?

**25:07 Lynda Crain:** It was mostly confined to the garage and the kitchen and stuff. It wasn’t totally destroyed. We went outside and had hoses to protect our property. And then when the firemen came, my mother was always really nice to everybody, and she made coffee. She set a table up in the carport and made coffee and donuts for the firemen. It went on all night, they cleaned up and did stuff. But yeah, he didn’t call; the fire happened, and he didn’t call. [laughs] That was funny. But there’s been a lot of famous people here in town, of course.

**25:43 Stella Perone:** Like who?

**25:44 Lynda Crain:** Oh, like Grace Slick and Jerry Garcia and —

**25:48 Stella Perone:** Where did Jerry live?

**25:49 Lynda Crain:** Jerry was up the street here, on Alta Vista for a while. Right towards the end. I don’t think he lived there, but I think he used to practice music, or he was there a lot. He would just drive by and wave. Just up at the top of the hill.

**26:04 Stella Perone:** Like these driveways across the street?

**26:06 Lynda Crain:** No, just around when you go up the hill. He was up over there, up —

**26:09 Stella Perone:** Those houses. Oh, okay.

**26:11 Lynda Crain:** Yeah. If you go towards Park School and Alta Vista, that way. And then, let’s see. It was Mike Bloomfield Band in the ’60s, rented the house that my aunt owned. Where she had owned that duplex. She owned a house on Carmelita and they rented that.

**26:32 Stella Perone:** What number on Carmelita?

**26:34 Lynda Crain:** I don't know the number.<sup>6</sup> It's right across from where there's another little street there, just a little street. You start up the hill on Carmelita, Mountain View is here, and it's like two houses up. It's a big old house. It's the first real old one with the porch out in front of it.

**26:49 Stella Perone:** Yes.

**26:50 Lynda Crain:** Yeah.

**26:50 Stella Perone:** That's the corner of Carmelita and Euterpe.

**26:53 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, across the street.

**26:55 Stella Perone:** Is where, she owned —

**26:55 Lynda Crain:** Yeah. That was a really nice house.

**27:00 Stella Perone:** So, the Michael Bloomfield Band rented that house?

**27:04 Lynda Crain:** Mm-hmm. And then there was the Quicksilver Messenger Service, of course, the Cipollinas.

**27:10 Stella Perone:** When we did our history tour, talking about the Sunnyside house that your mom grew up in, the owner said that John Cipollina used to live there.

**27:20 Lynda Crain:** In that house? He did, huh? He came in —

**27:23 Stella Perone:** That probably would have been after your time.

**27:25 Lynda Crain:** Yeah. Oh yeah. Because, well I was just — his sister was a friend of my girlfriend's sister across the street. So she was a few years older.

**27:36 Stella Perone:** Which sister?

**27:38 Lynda Crain:** What was her name? She died, didn't she? Mikey? Michelle?

**27:42 Stella Perone:** The one that was married to John Goddard.

**27:44 Lynda Crain:** Yes. She was her friend in high school. My friend Claudia's friend in high school. So it was after that, and it was when my mom was real active in real estate. It was in the '60s when I was interested in the Avalon Ballroom in [chuckles] Fillmore. I love that band. But he came in, even though his dad was in real estate, it was odd. He went to Cagwin and Hamilton, they were looking for a house. And it's very odd

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<sup>6</sup> It was 35 Carmelita.—Lynda Crain.



that they pulled in there. My mother said — she came home and she had a card from the band, and she said, “Have you ever heard of them?” And she told me the story about Quicksilver, that they were Virgos and Mercury was the rising sign or something.

**28:27:** And Mercury is Quicksilver, so that’s how they got the name of the band Quicksilver. But later, later on, like in the ’90s, my husband and I opened a surf shop in Petaluma. And we had the brand Quicksilver because I loved Quicksilver Messenger Service so much. And they had sued, I guess the band sued them, for taking their name. They were a surf company around that same time of the band, and someone must have liked Quicksilver. So they named this brand, this surf brand, Quicksilver. And they had to change it and spell it not — they took the C out. And it was Quik, Q-U-I-K, Quicksilver.

**29:15 Stella Perone:** Okay, getting back to what you said. I think you said John Cipollina, when he was looking for a house, went to Cagwin, Seymour and Hamilton —

**29:23 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, which didn’t make sense at all when his dad was in town. He was famous in town, at real estate.

**29:29 Stella Perone:** Did he buy a house from Cagwin, Seymour?

**29:31 Lynda Crain:** I don’t think he bought it. I think they were just renting. It was the whole band. And in those days Janis Joplin went there to look for something. This was the happening place. So a lot of those people came in and they were just a prominent office there and, yeah. [chuckles] That’s interesting, huh? What else? That’s about it, the Snake Man —

**29:58 Stella Perone:** Okay.

**30:00 Lynda Crain:** When my mother was a child growing up on Sunnyside, they didn’t have refrigerators, they had iceboxes and the iceman would come every day and bring ice; they’d get blocks of ice. Then, there was a company in Sausalito, there may have been another one, but I know there was an ice company in Sausalito that made ice and delivered it. And so, they couldn’t refrigerate very long. So every day they went to the butcher to get what they were gonna have for dinner. They didn’t keep things around. And that was her job; she liked to walk around and do everything that — she didn’t drive at that time, it was before she drove, and she would walk. And she said even when they would walk to the high school and come home, her friend — she had a friend that just died a couple of years ago, her name was Josie Macchi, Josephine Macchi. They lived on Millwood and she had a sister Enid, and her mother came right over from Italy, and they became —

**31:00:** When my grandmother came, they were like kitty corner the streets, and everybody knew everybody, they became friends. And those two, my mother and Josie, were friends from the time they were 2 years old until my mother died. And we stayed friends, and I helped her with her estate, and it was just — she was a wonderful person. But they used to go to school together, they went to Summit, they went to all the different

schools together. And when they'd walk to school and then they'd come home for lunch, people could go home, they have enough time, and they walk home for lunch and then they'd always have to stop and get baloney or whatever, cheese at the butcher shop, too.

**31:37 Stella Perone:** And where was the butcher shop?

**31:38 Lynda Crain:** I'm not sure. I'm thinking it was somewhere around the Sequoia Theatre, somewhere down right in the heart of things. But I remember Suey Kee Market, the Chinese market that came in. I don't know when it started, but when I was little we used to go there a lot.

**31:52 Stella Perone:** And that was?

**31:53 Lynda Crain:** That was right by the Sequoia Theatre, where Sonapa Farms was for a while.

**31:56 Stella Perone:** Oh, is that where it was?

**31:57 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, yeah. That was a really neat store and they had a lot of Chinese dishes and all kinds of cool stuff. Yeah, I'm just sorry the town doesn't have that right now. It's like I don't even go downtown, there's nothing here for me. When I grew up, the whole town had — we had the drug stores, and stationery store, and anything you needed downtown. Everybody went downtown. The first Fall [Arts] Festival was at Lytton Square, and I remember that, that was a big deal when they had that, we went down — in high school, I worked at Mayer's Department Store. They had a store in the corner and then, they had one farther down on the other side of [Wells Fargo Bank].

**32:40 Stella Perone:** The corner of Miller and Throckmorton, where the —

**32:43 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, that was the ladies department store, and I worked in the men's store which is down — is it D'Angelo's restaurant that's there now?

**32:50 Stella Perone:** Yes.

**32:51 Lynda Crain:** That's where it was.

**32:54 Stella Perone:** And that was the men's store?

**32:55 Lynda Crain:** Mm-hmm. I did gift wrapping there, so I worked on holidays. So if it was Mother's Day, then I worked up at the other store. Otherwise, I worked in the men's store for Christmas and Valentine's. Our friend, well the one that — he was a Varney, from Varney's Hardware; the Varneys have been here forever. And he married one of the Macchi girls, Enid, and he managed the store, and so we were good friends and he hired me in high school.

**33:23 Stella Perone:** So, he was older. He was a generation older than you? 'Cause

Varney was —

**33:26 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, he was younger than my mother. He lived across the street, the Varneys lived across the street. When we lived on Mountain View, they lived across the street from us, John Varney and Jean Varney and the kids, and he was the youngest kid.

**33:39 Stella Perone:** Who started the hardware store?

**33:41 Lynda Crain:** Oh, I think the grandfather did.

**33:43 Stella Perone:** Was that John?

**33:44 Lynda Crain:** Johnny was his dad, yeah. It may have been him. It was an uncle, and it was John Varney. I miss that store. That was a wonderful store. They had everything you could want. I remember getting roller skates there and getting Christmas ornaments. Anything you needed, they had, and paint — it was just wonderful. I don't know what else.

**34:08 Stella Perone:** So, what are your highlights of going to Tam?

**34:11 Lynda Crain:** I was on the drill team, and [chuckles] I enjoyed that. I loved Tam, it was fun. I liked high school. We had a PE teacher named Mrs. Baker, but she was married to Mr. Baker, who was a postman. And when I was living on Throckmorton — I'm probably around 7 or 8 years old — they didn't have a leash law in those days, everybody's dog was just out, and usually dogs don't like mailmen, but he was like the Pied Piper. And he would walk from the post office on Sunnyside, do the mail, all the way up Throckmorton, which we were pretty far up Throckmorton. That was a long walk to carry a mail sack with all his mail, they didn't drive around then. And he would start out, they lived down, I think, La Goma or somewhere right around Sycamore, down that way.

**34:57:** And he'd start out at the post office and all the dogs would follow him, and they'd join in. By the time he got up to Throckmorton, there were like 12 or 15 dogs with him. And they were all well-behaved, and that was their daily walk, they went with him all day long. Everybody loved Mr. Baker. He was a wonderful, wonderful mailman, but always had an entourage of dogs around him and the dogs liked him. They never barked and carried on. He was so nice.

**35:27:** But Tam was fun. Then I went to medical secretary school in San Francisco and worked at UC for 12 years, and then we lived in Petaluma. I was commuting — and I was gonna have my second child and so I decided I'd find something closer and I started working up there as a medical assistant for years, for probably 15 years. And then we opened the surf shop. My husband used to work for the cable cars here, he was a machinist for the cable cars in San Francisco. And he was injured on the job, so we opened the shop to have a business and it was like a second occupation for both of us,

and we had that for 16 years, and then my mom passed away and I didn't wanna commute from here. I didn't know which house to sell, what to do, and I loved it here so we came back here. My husband lived here for a while, too — he's from San Francisco and he lived down on Mesa, he rented a house there. He lived on the houseboats in Sausalito during the '60s. It was a good time then. The town was really fun, it was a good place to be. [chuckles] Okay.

**36:50 Stella Perone:** So now what were you saying about Jerry Garcia used to be on the street?

**36:54 Lynda Crain:** Yes, he would go by and he would wave and he was a very nice guy and he was up the street. I don't think he lived there, I think he either practiced his music or he had a friend there or maybe even did drugs there. But he was there quite a bit.

**37:08 Stella Perone:** Where's there?

**37:09 Lynda Crain:** It was 55 Alta Vista, it's a pink house at the top of the hill. He would frequent Safeway, you'd see him around town a lot, and it was definitely Jerry. So my mother was curious and I was all into the '60s posters and she always assumed it was Jerry. Well then, she got to talking to this woman that we called "Mountain Girl" because we don't know her name and we thought maybe it was Mountain Girl, Jerry's first wife, but I think she was in the music business, some kind of promotions or something. That woman that lives up the street but we don't know her. And she said, my mother said, something about Jerry Garcia, and she said, "No." She said, "My husband is a Jerry Garcia look-alike," and they met each other in either Mexico or Hawaii. They were scuba diving and she has pictures of Jerry Garcia and pictures of her husband. And she talked all about these pictures she has of Jerry Garcia, so we wanted to see the pictures. We were very curious, but it never got that far. But one day, this house became a mystery to us and it was like a mission. We had to find out what was going on, we were just curious. And one day my mother was driving by, and she was not afraid to talk to anybody —

**38:27 Stella Perone:** And this is about what year?

**38:29 Lynda Crain:** Whenever Bill Graham died. It was after his death. They had a memorial concert for him and she had gotten me a poster because I collect '60s posters. So it was probably — what? — the '80s maybe. I don't know, maybe '80s, early '90s; I would say '80s, I don't know. But she stopped by the house, someone was out —

**38:54 Stella Perone:** She is your mom.

**38:54 Lynda Crain:** My mother. She stopped by, she saw people working in the garden, which was unusual anyway because that garden needed work. You never saw anyone around that house. It was just you'd go by and other neighbors are out, they kept to themselves there. But it was the same car that was parked, there was the same car that he would drive by — Jerry — and wave.

**39:16 Stella Perone:** What kind of car was it?

**39:17 Lynda Crain:** I think it was a Mercedes or a BMW, it was a black car and fancy, nice car. Fancy for the house that [chuckles] — it didn't quite fit. So anyway, these guys were out working in the garden and she stopped and she said, "Does Jerry Garcia have anything to do with this house?" And this fellow came over and he said, "What can I help you with?" Well, he said that first and then she [chuckles] — and she said, "I'm looking for an autograph for my daughter of a poster." And he said, "Well, I'll give you an autograph." So she said, "Well if I just want anybody's autograph I'd get Grace Slick's autograph, she lives up on the hill," and he laughed and he was really cute and he said, "Okay," and she said goodbye. So she told me that was odd that this guy didn't say, "No, Jerry doesn't have anything to do with this house." He said, "What makes you ask?"

**40:17:** So, the next day in the *IJ* was an article with Bob Weir's picture in it and that was the fellow that was at the house doing the yard work or out in the garden that talked to her that would have given her an autograph. So I said, "If you ever see Bob Weir again, get his autograph." I didn't care whose I had on there. [chuckles] But anyway, so we figured that Jerry did have something to do with that house. Well, it went on for a few years and then Jerry died and the woman had told us that her husband was a look-alike for Jerry Garcia, but the strangest thing is her husband died when Jerry died and the car was gone. We never saw the car again, and we don't know.

**41:01 Stella Perone:** She didn't tell you her husband died, he just never showed up again? There was never —

**41:04 Lynda Crain:** He did die. She did say he died.

**41:06 Stella Perone:** Oh.

**41:06 Lynda Crain:** Yes, 'cause my mother says something about her husband, and said, "I haven't seen your husband around." And she said, "He died." And I said, "Well, that's kind of a coincidence, isn't it?"

**41:15 Stella Perone:** You said to your mother?

**41:16 Lynda Crain:** Yeah. Oh yeah, to my mother. We really thought something was going on. We had this surf shop in Petaluma<sup>7</sup> and I really loved Grateful Dead and we used to carry — we were called the Grateful Dead quarters, and we carried all their stuff and I still was really interested in Grateful Dead and the bands of the '60s that were here in Mill Valley. So yeah, that was a big loss. I went to school with Bill Champlin. He came here, I think, when I was in about eighth grade. My girlfriend, my best friend, Susie Muller who grew up on Carmelita, she was his girlfriend — like seventh grade maybe, maybe it was sixth grade, seventh grade. They were very, very musical. He was a really nice guy and then he went on to form the Sons of Champlin and that's our connection

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<sup>7</sup> High Tide surf shop.—Lynda Crain.

with him. I went to school with a Steve Miller that was in a band and I'm pretty sure it's the same Steve Miller, but maybe not. You never know, it looks just like him. My other girlfriend, Sue Gibson, her brother Bill is a drummer for Huey Louis. So, I have stories about Bill but I don't want to divulge anything but I've known him since he was a child.

**42:39 Leonard Crain [Lynda's husband]:** And Mike Bloomfield was around the corner from us.

**42:42 Lynda Crain:** Yeah, I already said that.

**42:44 Leonard Crain:** Oh, okay.

**42:45 Lynda Crain:** Okay, one more thing that I wasn't gonna mention because people would probably think I'm crazy but, when I was about, in my 20s, maybe 22 or so, I lived here and this was the house —

**43:00 Stella Perone:** Wait, lived here what —

**43:00 Lynda Crain:** Oh, the Alta Vista house.

**43:02 Stella Perone:** This house here?

**43:03 Lynda Crain:** This Alta Vista house that I still live in. This was the Folger house and the Manson, Tate murders, Abigail Folger, one of the coffee heiresses, was murdered and I was in my room, this is after the murders, and I was in my room, and I saw a person walk right here through the hall and I thought it was my mother in a night gown going to the bathroom but the light never came on. I said, "What are you doing?" 'Cause it went right into — my door was open, it went right into the wall like — and no noise, no lights, no nothing. I said "What are you doing?" and I got up, and I looked, and there was no one there, and I went to her room and she was in bed. So I always thought that was the ghost of Abigail coming back to this house and I don't know if she ever had anything to do with living in this house, or if that was her aunt, I just don't know how Anne Folger was related to Abigail but we always called that ghost Abigail. But people think you're nuts if you tell them [chuckles] of the weird things in the house. So that's it.