Howard Harker was born in Santa Cruz on July 14, 1933. At the beginning of his oral history, Howard traces the immigration of his Harker ancestors to the United States from England, then follows them on their route to the Bay Area and ultimately to Mill Valley during the 1890s. Howard moved with his parents to several Army bases during World War II, and then came to Mill Valley after the war to settle on family property. After graduating from Tamalpais High School, Howard earned his engineering degree at the University of California, Berkeley. While taking summer classes at Berkeley, he met and fell in love with Margot Ralley; the two would marry in 1956 and raise four children. In his oral history, Howard shares his memories of growing up in Mill Valley, becoming a pilot in the Air Force, and working in his career as a metallurgical engineer in a variety of assignments throughout the US.
Oral History of Howard Harker

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Oral History of Howard Harker
June 25, 2012

Edmond G. Addeo: Okay, this is local author Edmond G. Addeo interviewing Howard Harker at his home at 30 Ralston Avenue on June 25th, 2012. Okay, Howard, let’s give this a try. Say your full name and date of birth.

Howard Harker: This is Howard Robert Harker, born July 14, 1933, in Santa Cruz, California. The farthest we have been able to track our lineage is to Yorkshire, England, where Adam and Grace Harker were members of the Friends, the Quaker group. They were subject to persecution at that time. William Penn had extended an invitation to people who were undergoing religious persecution to come in Pennsylvania. So in 1699, Adam and Grace Harker came to Pennsylvania and settled up in the Philadelphia area. I should say, they left from Yorkshire, England. We can track the family in the Philadelphia area. We don’t have as many details as we would like, still working on that, but to get to the direct connection, my great-grandfather Asa Harker joined a wagon train in 1849 and followed the Oregon Trail to Portland, Oregon, which incidentally at that time was known at Stumptown from all of the logging that had gone on there. He entered into a mercantile business there and prospered, gradually bringing other siblings there.

Edmond G. Addeo: Before we go to Asa, do you remember anything more about Adam, like the name of his wife?

Howard Harker: Grace, Grace was her name. She died in 1747. I don’t have his date right offhand here.

Edmond G. Addeo: Do you have her maiden name?

Howard Harker: No, I don’t know her maiden name.

Edmond G. Addeo: Okay. So we got Asa going on the Oregon Trail.

Howard Harker: The family settled in the Philadelphia area and I said we could track it but not with great detail. So we finally get to Asa Harker who traveled the Oregon Trail to Portland, entered into the mercantile business in Portland, starting originally on a houseboat which was anchored by the side of the river in Portland. He prospered; he brought siblings out, in particular his older brother John. They developed the mercantile business. Gradually, other siblings came out. A sister came out and married one of the local businessmen in Portland. Another brother, Jim, came out and married a local lady. Their offspring are the ones that started the Harker School down in Palo Alto, which is still in existence. Asa brought a childhood friend out via the isthmus; that’s how the siblings got out there, coming to the Isthmus of Panama and going across, initially by stage and then eventually by rail. He brought his childhood sweetheart out, Emma Van Dyke, and married her in, I think it was 1870.

Edmond G. Addeo: This was way before the canal.
Howard Harker: Yes, oh yes. In 1860, Emma Van Dyke came to San Francisco and Asa came down to San Francisco and they were married there and then moved to Portland. In 1865, his brother Jim came out. Later on, [his] sister Debby came out and married Charles Smith, a local businessman. Also, another sibling, Charles Garrison Harker, who had just come out of West Point, was stationed at Fort Vancouver just up the coast from Portland and he was a member of the troops assigned to the boundary party that was trying to work out the boundary between the United States and Canada. In 1869, Asa sold or gave the mercantile business to his brother John, where it was J.B. Harker Grocery Company, and he moved the family to San Francisco. He had had extensive contacts in San Francisco because a lot of the merchandise he was selling came through San Francisco one way or another. So he moved to San Francisco and joined up with a Mr. Taber and formed the Taber-Harker mercantile company, which became very successful in San Francisco.

Edmond G. Addeo: Is it Tabor?

Howard Harker: Taber.

Edmond G. Addeo: Okay.

Howard Harker: They had a large building on California Street down close to Market [Street]; it was almost a full block. At that time, the produce area in San Francisco was in that area. Later it got moved to South San Francisco as the financial area developed, but initially that is where it was. We have an 1880 census document showing them living at Octavia and Pine Street in Pacific Heights. The house is still there. The house escaped the fire in 1906. The fire was stopped in that area by dynamiting buildings along Van Ness Avenue, and Octavia is just a couple blocks further west so it escaped. In the 1890s, the family had been spending summers along the creeks in Mill Valley and I believe that around 1890 or shortly thereafter, Asa acquired parcels in Mill Valley in the Summit and Ralston area. By the time that Asa died in 1894, we were establishing a presence in Mill Valley.

Edmond G. Addeo: So we have him in San Francisco, and now I’ve got to get him to Mill Valley.

Howard Harker: The children were Josephine, Charles, George, and Katherine. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, the business was sold, I believe, and I think it was sold to the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, which was trying to expand their operations at that time, but I don’t have great detail on that. The family was spending summers in Mill Valley somewhere along one of the creeks here; that was a very common thing to do by people in San Francisco. And of course they became interested in the area. Asa died in 1894 and I believe that he was involved before he died with acquisition of property here in Mill Valley, either at the 1890 auction by the Tamalpais Land and Water Company of the first parcels here in Mill Valley or shortly thereafter. They acquired several parcels in the area of Summit and Ralston. My sister and I have the last two pieces of that. This interview is being conducted in our home here in one of those parcels. In any event, the interest shifted to Mill Valley at that time. By 1900, there were several buildings in this area and by 1906 when the San Francisco fire and quake occurred, we had six buildings up here in the area of Ralston and Summit. Incidentally, the 1929 fire burned...
all but one and that was here at 44 Ralston, my great aunt’s house. This was Katherine Van Dyke Harker. I mentioned Katherine earlier as one of the children of Asa. The other houses were her sister Josephine at 26 Ralston and several buildings at 401 to 411 Summit. That’s where Charles and George Harker, two more of the children, were living. Josephine Harker went to Vassar, as did Katherine. Josephine graduated in 1883. She had a good friend there, Harriet Buttler, who ended up coming out to the Bay Area and living with the Harker family in San Francisco for a while and then here in Mill Valley. Charles Harker and Harriet Buttler fell in love and got married, but unfortunately just a few months after the marriage, Charles disappeared. He was a lawyer, had graduated from Hastings, and was practicing in downtown San Francisco. As far as we can determine, he got on the ferry coming from San Francisco to Sausalito but didn’t get off. We don’t know any more than that.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** Wow!

**Howard Harker:** As was common in those days, one brother would look after the surviving wife of the other brother and that is what happened in this case. Ultimately George and Harriet fell in love but they couldn’t get married, because they had to wait seven years for Charles to be declared dead. So they spent the time enjoying each other’s company with bicycle trips around the Sierras, with boat trips up the delta, and with going to school. George went to UC and then UC Medical School and became a doctor. Harriet thought that that was such a good idea that she also went to medical school with him, but she never practiced; this was just a way to stay close to George. So when the time was up and Charles was declared dead, they got married. Shortly after, they had two children, David and Robert. David is my uncle. In fact, there is an oral history of his in the History Room, and Robert, my father.

So my father, Robert Asa Harker, grew up in Mill Valley. He was actually born in a hospital in San Francisco but grew up here. He went to Summit School and then he went to a high school in San Francisco. I don’t know how that worked; it was a private high school. Then he went for a year to Stanford and then transferred to UC and he got out of UC in 1931 and took a job with an asphalt company just north of Santa Cruz along Route 1; interesting company. There was a natural outcropping of asphalt, kind of like the La Brea tar pits, only not so liquid. It had solidified over the thousands of years and they could literally dig it up as rock, crush it, mix it with a little oil, and they had asphalt. So he was the plant superintendent there. He was responsible for maintenance, of course, and he did business with a plumbing supply company in Soquel, California near Santa Cruz and met a young woman there, Geraldine Smiley, who became my mother. They eloped and went to Minden, Nevada, and got married in 1932 and I was born in 1933 and my sister in 1934. Later on, another 10 years later, there were two other children, boys — my younger brothers Roger and Chuck. Roger is retired up in Nevada and Chuck is an architect back in Philadelphia.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** So they eloped in Santa Cruz?

**Howard Harker:** They eloped from Santa Cruz to Minden and got married there because you could do it quickly, I guess. Then [they] returned and set up housekeeping in Santa Cruz and then finally in Soquel. I went to grammar school there up until the fourth grade and that was about 1942. My father got a commission in the army and became a training officer for anti-
aircraft weaponry. He went around to various air bases setting up anti-aircraft defenses. It seems kind of odd when you think of anti-aircraft around an airbase, but in fact they were doing that in case there was any kind of invasion. Anyhow, he traveled around the western United States from 1943 to 1945 and we followed him around. We had a 1941 Ford and a little luggage trailer and we just moved from one temporary operation to another. Then he got into Spokane, Washington, when the Japanese surrendered, so we came back to California as quickly as we could. My grandmother Harriet had died in 1940. We wanted to settle on family property here in Mill Valley but at that time there was no place to stay in 1945 because of all the wartime workers that were involved, particularly with the shipyards in Sausalito. So we moved from Spokane, Washington, down to Marin County and the only housing we could find was in Marin City, where as a veteran my father had priority to get any openings. Some of the shipyard workers were leaving so there was some housing there, the only place we could find. I spent the seventh grade and my sister spent the sixth grade in the Marin City schools.

The family had a piece of property up at 427 Summit and my father arranged to get title to that by trading off some other properties with his brother David. We elected to build a house at 427 Summit. It was quite difficult because it was hard to get supplies to do it at that time; in particular, the lumber. We wanted to have redwood siding and it was very difficult to get, but fortunately my father had come to know the owner of a lumber company working out of Santa Cruz and he was able to get hold of the appropriate lumber and redwood siding that way. So we moved in there in 1946. But meanwhile, my sister and I commuted from Marin City, we didn’t want to repeat our sixth and seventh grade experience in Marin City schools, so we commuted by Greyhound bus from Marin City to Mill Valley, got off at the Park Station on Miller Avenue, walked to Park School, and went to school there until the house was completed in 1946 and we moved into 427 Summit.

So we continued to finish our primary schooling at Park School and then matriculated to Tam High[^1] where both my sister and I went through. Her class was the last class that had an option to go to either Drake or Tam because Drake High School had just opened up. I didn’t have that option because Drake wasn’t open, I wouldn’t have taken it anyway and my sister didn’t take it. From there, I went to UC Berkeley with my nose to the grindstone in an engineering program and took Air Force ROTC because I saw an opportunity to learn to fly. My dad had become a pilot and I was enamored of the same thing. So as I was finishing up at UC Berkeley, because I had taken the ROTC program, I didn’t have room in my schedule for the required American History and Institution courses that a land grant college required. So I took those in summer session, which is a good thing because that is where I met my wife Margot. She was taking American History while she was living with some friends in Oakland. She had been going to school at Notre Dame, Belmont. Anyway, we found each other in American History there.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** Let’s stop there with you and go into Margot’s family history. How do you spell Margot?

**Howard Harker:** M-A-R-G-O-T, thank you.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** And her maiden name?

[^1]: Tamalpais High School, Mill Valley
Howard Harker: Margot Arlene Ralley. And she was born in Chicago but raised for the most part in the Hawaiian Islands because her dad couldn’t find a job when he got through electrical engineering in the Chicago area and meanwhile he had met her mother and they got married and he ended up taking a job at the Pearl Harbor shipyard in Hawaii. In fact, he was actually working at the shipyard on December 7, 1941.

Edmond G. Addeo: Wow!

Howard Harker: So she was evacuated on one of the Pan Am clippers to Oakland and from there took the train to Chicago and the family eventually moved to Chicago. Her father worked indirectly on the Manhattan Project involving large turbines. He had become an expert in large rotating machinery and he had several assignments that were related to the Manhattan Project. After the war, they returned back to the islands and he took a position with Honolulu Ironworks, worked there for a while. She went to school on the island and then he worked for a sugar mill operation and they were in Maui. She started off on Oahu and then went to Maui and then he moved to a different plantation running the mill operations. That was on the Big Island. After she finished her primary school, she elected to come to the states for some high school and some college and that is where the Notre Dame, Belmont connection came in.

Edmond G. Addeo: Okay. So now you meet at UC Berkeley.

Howard Harker: We meet and fall in love and have a relatively short courtship and get married on April 21st, 1956. About the same time I got married, I got my orders to flight school. I had been commissioned in September of ’55 and so I ended up flying down to Texas to start flight school. I had to go down for a month to go through the boot camp, get organized. Then I came back up to San Francisco. Meanwhile we had rented a small apartment on Clay Street in San Francisco and stayed there for a short time. Then we drove down to San Antonio, Texas. I completed my pre-flight and went to my first flight training base, which was in Hondo, Texas, about 50 miles west of San Antonio — interesting place.

Edmond G. Addeo: The middle of nowhere.

Howard Harker: In the middle of nowhere, that’s right. And a World War II training base had been converted into a more up-to-date training base. I went through primary flight training there and then in January, went to basic training in San Angelo, Texas, which was about 100 miles farther northwest. No sooner had I arrived at Goodfellow Air Force Base than we headed for the hospital and Margot had our first child there, Michelle, on January 21st, nine months to the day from our wedding day.

Edmond G. Addeo: You didn’t waste any time.

Howard Harker: No, that’s right. So anyway, I completed training there. I was, I believe, second in my class and could have had a pretty good pick of assignments. But in order to do that, you had to sign up for an extra year. I was on a three-year contract; I would have had to sign up for a four-year contract. And even that would have been questionable because you signed
“indefinite,” so that meant you could be extended, so I chose not to. So I went from the A list to the B list and I chose about 40th and picked an assignment in Bedford, Mass., at the L.G. Hanscom Field which was just outside Boston. This was where the MIT and Lincoln labs were located. They had all of their aviation operations there. There was also an Air Defense Command group there and there was a civilian group and an air reserve flying center where the reservists could fly. I became a member of the active duty cadre there of the air reserve flying center, flying reserve navigators. I was flying the C47 and the C45. Then we had some C119s, troop carrier aircraft, so I learned to fly those too.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** So you purposely selected multi-engine aircraft over fighters?

**Howard Harker:** Yes, for two reasons. One, I am pretty social and I like to have somebody to talk to when I am flying. The other, I think it’s a heck of a lot safer. The third reason was that I thought I might become a commercial pilot after I got out of the Air Force and the best way to get that, I thought, was to take an assignment on the East Coast with a lot of traffic and get a lot of instrument flying time in busy areas. What I misunderstood at the time was that when it came time for me to get out, they wanted people with jet time and I didn’t have any jet time. But it didn’t matter, I was anxious to go back to my engineering work. Incidentally, I picked up a commercial pilot’s rating instrument multi-engine and my aircraft and power plant license ratings while I was there in Massachusetts, so I was well prepared to go into commercial aviation but chose not to. So in 1959, after Margot having had another child, Lisa, we decided to return to California.

We did that with Michelle, 2 years old, and Lisa not many months old. We came to California. We stayed with my great aunt at 44 Ralston for a while to get our feet on the ground and found that we couldn’t afford to live in Marin County. Even at that time, the prices were higher. So we bought a home out in Pleasant Hill over by Walnut Creek and I commuted to this metallurgical company that I was working for. I had started working there as a senior at UC Berkeley operating a small pilot plant at the Stauffer Chemical Facility in Richmond. Fortunately, they offered me a job when I got out of the Air Force, so I returned there. So I commuted from Pleasant Hill to Richmond and then later to Berkeley.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** So you are a mechanical engineer.

**Howard Harker:** But I became a metallurgical engineer just through my work and I am presently a licensed metallurgical engineer in the state of California. By 1962, we had saved enough money and my great aunt had deeded us a parcel of family property. She subdivided her piece into three pieces. She sold one, deeded one to my sister, which encompassed her house at 44 Ralston, and then a piece of bare land at 30 Ralston, which we proceeded to build on. We were referred to a local architect, a Richard Hyatt here in Mill Valley. We pretty much knew what we wanted in general. We also knew what we could afford and we tried to make those two things fit. Richard Hyatt was very helpful in designing our present house here. It is sort of a Japanese mid-century modern, I guess you could call it, in terms of the motif.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** With a spectacular view, I might add.
Howard Harker: It has a very nice view of San Francisco and the bay. We are at about 700 feet above sea level here.

Edmond G. Addeo: Hyatt’s name pops up a lot in Mill Valley architecture. I know he was the original designer of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church and I think he designed the El Paseo complex. Do you know of any other things?

Howard Harker: He designed several houses in Marin County. Several of them have very much the same motif as this. Mid-century modern with Japanese influence. We have been in a couple of them and you pick it up right away. Since we were living in Pleasant Hill and couldn’t be over here to monitor the building, we hired Hyatt to be not just the designer but also the manager of the construction, so he represented us during construction and that worked out very well. We moved here in 1963. We had sold our house in Pleasant Hill and as is frequently the case, the timing didn’t work out quite right, so this house didn’t have an occupancy permit when we had to leave the Pleasant Hill house. So what we had to do was camp out here. We had sleeping bags and so forth. We had moved our furniture in here and had boxes, but we couldn’t indicate that we were living here and we had no electrical connections here except the construction power pole out there. In the evening we would plug into the power pole and roll out our sleeping bags and spend the night. In the morning, we would roll everything back up and unplug the power. I’d go to work.

Edmond G. Addeo: The kids must have loved it.

Howard Harker: Yeah, right. So anyway, that is how we got started here. As the time went on, I continued to prosper at the metallurgical company in Berkeley. The kids all went to school at Old Mill. The unstructured classroom situation and the New Math caught up to us at Old Mill and it was just not a reasonable thing to leave the kids exposed to that, so we got them in Mount Carmel and that helped, although Lisa still suffers from her exposure to the New Math. Michelle then went on to Marin Catholic but just as she completed a year in Marin Catholic, I had an opportunity to start up a new facility for the company back in Michigan. So we picked up and moved to north of Detroit in Lake Orion, Michigan, and I started up a pilot facility which was designed to provide a bright finish on metal, like chromium, only not electro-plated. It was a vacuum-deposited chromium, the idea being to reduce the cost and reduce the environmental risk of the hexavalent chromium. We were back there for two years and got the plant up and going and then I was asked to move an electron beam furnace, which I specialized in, from our Berkeley facility up to Verdi, Nevada, where the company had purchased another firm that had a forging operation. This forging operation was manufacturing large rings for jet engines and the product was a rough machined titanium ring. The turnings that came off the machining operation were simply piling up in Verdi because there wasn’t any good recycle method available. However, the electron beam furnace provided that.

Edmond G. Addeo: How do you spell Verdi?

Howard Harker: Verdi.

Howard Harker: It’s just west of Reno and right on the California border but it is in Nevada. So anyway, I moved the furnace up there and then we moved to Sparks, Nevada, and I was offered a position with this company called Viking Metallurgical to operate this furnace, which I did. We stayed there until 1981 when I recognized a growing opportunity with a firm that we had been purchasing titanium scrap from to mix with the titanium turning scrap that we generated locally to provide ingots that could be recycled in this forging operation. I saw that the company that was selling us the titanium scrap, which incidentally they were importing from Russia, was a Swedish firm, Axle-Johnson Metals. I saw that they were interested. They saw they could integrate downstream and add a lot more value. So I talked to the fellow we were doing business with and told him that if that was what he had in mind, I could build an electron beam furnace and set up a plant for him. Sure enough, pretty soon I got an offer to do that and we moved back to the Philadelphia area where they were located and bought a house along the Main Line in Malvern. I built a plant out in Morgantown, Pennsylvania, which is about 15 miles south of Redding and about 40 miles west of Philadelphia. I purchased 25 acres of land there. We only needed about five, but hoping for the best, we bought some extra land. The fellow we bought it from had purchased a number of farms in the area.

This was the next turnpike stop west of the Exton area and that is about where building had stalled out at the time. So he couldn’t afford to build out of the Morgantown area because the market wasn’t there yet. And so he elected to sell us 25 acres of land. I told him that we were going to be using a lot of electricity and I would be willing to go with him to the local power company and explain to them what we were going to be doing and commit to the use of a lot of electricity. This would help him a lot because they had to pull copper to conduct electricity over to this soon-to-be industrial park and that was going to get very expensive. Typically, the developer would have to put up a bond and so on to pay for the copper, but I was able to convince the power company that we were going to use enough power and commit to it that they said okay, we’ll go ahead and put in the copper, so that was a big help for everybody.

Edmond G. Addeo: How long were you in Pennsylvania?

Howard Harker: We ended up being back there for 17 years. Meanwhile, with all this moving around, we rented our home here because we knew we wanted to come back here. My sister had moved next door at 44 Ralston in my great aunt’s house and she managed our house here; she rented it for us.

Edmond G. Addeo: I understand all this traveling left your kids pretty well spread out.

Howard Harker: That’s right. We left a daughter when she got married back in Michigan. We left our son and daughter for a while back in Pennsylvania, but not for long. Our son ended up coming back here and taking a position in Nevada and he is up there, and our daughter, Pamela, ended up in Seattle, Washington. Our other daughter, Lisa, is up in Terra Linda, so we have one nearby.

Edmond G. Addeo: So that brings us to present time. You are now retired?
Howard Harker: I’m now retired. I still do a little bit of consulting. I maintain my registration as a licensed metallurgical engineer. My sister unfortunately seven years ago had a stroke and is in a care facility, so I manage her house. She has a couple of renters in the facility so I manage that and I take care of her finances and so forth and all the maintenance of her place and our place here and the cars and so forth. I got my ham license and I joined a local amateur radio club. I joined the local Rotary Club, and I’ve recently become a docent at the Mill Valley Library, so I manage to keep busy.

Edmond G. Addeo: That’s good. Okay, so let’s go back to life in Mill Valley with your schooling and things like that. What are some of the outstanding memories you have in both grammar school and high school?

Howard Harker: Well, let’s see, a few snapshots of my growing up in Mill Valley: let’s see if I can give you a few. One thing that comes to mind at Park School was at that time, it was a kindergarten through eighth grade school. Some of the eighth grade boys were a little adventurous and they would find a place to smoke cigarettes. There was and still is a pathway from one street to the other behind Park School and there was a hole in the fence you could go through to get into some bushy area and we called that nicotine alley. I didn’t ever participate in smoking there but others did. I would work in gardening as I was going to school there, gardening for some of the people on the hill. Soon I got to be 16 and my mother found me a job down at the local Purity store. She wanted to get me to work. So I started as a box boy at the Purity store, which at that time was located where Banana Republic started and which is now a Tyler Florence shop. I eventually became a clerk there and worked there while I finished high school and also in summers when going to UC Berkeley. I remember the competition being a market across the street which is now the Mill Valley Market. At that time it was an independent grocers association market called The Green Frog. And then next to it was an insurance company, I think Polhi Insurance. Next to that was the famous Jimmy Quinn’s spot and next to that was a restaurant which was called The White Mill, I believe, right across from the Purity store.

Edmond G. Addeo: So what about sports and things at school, Little League or any of that?

Howard Harker: I did a little bit of baseball. I was on the baseball team at Park School. We played some of the local schools. One thing I remember about that: I played catcher and could reach second base. Of course that was the key besides catching the ball. The coach said, “Always remember, you catch with your left hand and never have your finger straight out with your right hand as you are getting ready to catch, because the ball might hit you right on the end of the finger.” He was right, it did! I still have a bent finger from that. We had good times at the park practicing and playing there. That was about the extent of my activities in school directly. In high school, I joined the Marin Rowing Club. Not the present one, but one that was located down in Sausalito, a very small operation, so I rowed for the Marin Rowing Club. I rowed both singles and four-oared shells there.

Edmond G. Addeo: You were dating some local girls?
Howard Harker: Yes, of course, some local girls here and some that I met at UC Berkeley. But I focused eventually on one that I met at UC Berkeley.

Edmond G. Addeo: Can you remember the names of some of the local girls?

Howard Harker: Uh, I remember Janice Julian who lived in Homestead Valley. I dated her. I don’t really remember the others particularly. I was working and going to school.

Edmond G. Addeo: Yeah, you were a pretty busy guy.

Howard Harker: I was a busy guy, yeah.

Edmond G. Addeo: Let me catch up here. As far as I can tell, in your career from getting married to Margot, you have lived in about 10 or 12 places.

Howard Harker: Yes, we have moved around. It is a matter of going where the work is, you know, trying to make a little money. But fortunately we kept our house here.

Edmond G. Addeo: Yeah, that was good.

Howard Harker: We had the Texas experience, we had the Massachusetts experience, we had the Michigan experience. That was one that we didn’t like at all because of the weather, primarily, and also the cultural attitude there is quite different from here. You have the lake effect creating a lot of clouds and snow and ice. We didn’t enjoy it there. All the other places were fine.

Edmond G. Addeo: You have been active in some civic affairs like Rotary.

Howard Harker: Yeah, the Rotary Club, very active in that.

Edmond G. Addeo: Did you ever want to run for office or something?

Howard Harker: No, no, not interested. I got into a little politics in high school and got soundly trounced when I ran for student body president and that taught me something.

Edmond G. Addeo: Okay. Okay, so we got Hyatt built the house. Let me catch up on a couple of history things. Do we have Asa’s wife’s name?

Howard Harker: Asa’s wife was Emma Van Dyke.

Edmond G. Addeo: Oh, that’s right. Now, when he came out here on that wagon train, which was about the time of the Donner Party train — I remember they split to go to Oregon and Donner insisted on going here. Do you think he might have been part of that split from the original Donner?
**Howard Harker:** I don’t know, you’d have to check; I don’t know if that was involved. It was quite a large wagon train, 70 wagons, I think, that he came out on.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** Yeah, I’ve done some of that history. There was a guy named Jim Savage who was actually part of that party and he was one of the guys who thought Donner was crazy so he went to the Oregon part of it. Okay, I think that is about everything I have. Can you think of anything we haven’t touched on pertaining to Mill Valley?

**Howard Harker:** I just remember Mill Valley being a regular town with all of the usual amenities available downtown, the grocery stores, the two hardware stores, two drugstores.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** The ice cream parlor.

**Howard Harker:** The ice cream parlor, just a well-rounded town. You had executives commuting to San Francisco; you had the tradespeople remaining here. I remember the Murphys had the women’s shop and the men’s shop in the Keystone Building; [we] shopped in those. Cagwin, Seymour and Hamilton had a realty firm right next to the Keystone Building. They all lived up here on the middle ridge, the Hamiltons just down the street on Summit, the Seymours just up the street on Summit, and Horace Cagwin on Tamalpais Avenue. They are all right around here; we knew them.

**Edmond G. Addeo:** Okay, well, I think that about wraps it up. Thank you very much, Howard.