Mill Valley Oral History Program
A collaboration between the Mill Valley Historical Society and the Mill Valley Public Library

ALAN AND RUTH BARNETT

An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Bill Devlin in 2008

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After meeting in New York City and marrying in 1955, Alan and Ruth Barnett took a long time to find the perfect place to live. Alan had grown up in Chicago and Ruth in Germany and Czechoslovakia. It was a job as secretary to Grace Morley, the first woman director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, that brought Ruth to the Bay Area. Alan served in the National Guard and wound up working for the military in the public information sector. He would later take on teaching positions at San Francisco State University and San Jose State. The beauty of Mill Valley called to the Barnetts, and in 1963, with three children in tow, they became Mill Valley residents.

In this oral history, the Barnetts discuss life during World War II and their experiences living in different countries based on Alan's Army assignments. Ruth and Alan recount daily life in Mill Valley, school politics, local residents and businesses, celebrations, and disasters. Both Alan and Ruth became politically active, advocating for a number of causes, such as withdrawal from Vietnam, opposition of the Gulf War, raising environmental awareness, an end to local racism, and declaring Mill Valley a nuclear free zone.

Oral History of Alan and Ruth Barnett

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Alan Barnett: So how long have you been here?

Bill Devlin: Since '59. Anyhow, let me get us on air here. This is Bill Devlin, and I'm with Alan and Ruth Barnett. They've been kind enough to extend their hospitality and reminiscence of Mill Valley and other things. Today is Tuesday, the 29th of January, 2008. Thank you for letting me come here. Last time I was here I think was Ann's 40th birthday.

Alan Barnett: Ann's 40th! She's now 50.

Bill Devlin: I know!

Alan Barnett: And she's about to become a grandmother.

Bill Devlin: I know.

Alan Barnett: Yes. We just had a baby shower for our first great-grandchild.

Bill Devlin: Oh, my gosh.

Ruth Barnett: By the way, this isn't a typical couple. I'm getting you a cup to make you tea. Alan brought out where my other cups.

Alan Barnett: That's the story of our life.

Bill Devlin: The question is, where does the teabag go here?

Alan Barnett: Here. Just set it down.

Ruth Barnett: Oh, you already.

Alan Barnett: Yes, the tea is flowing. Come and sit down. You've been introduced. Maybe you don't want this on the machine, but give us an idea, since there's a lot to talk about, what you would like to hear.

Bill Devlin: Well, it's pretty open-ended. We basically have three things that we're working on these days. One, our original bent was people who have been here for a long time. How has Mill Valley changed? How did you get here? This type of thing. Secondly, the rock and roll business in Mill Valley has been very prominent, and thirdly, war and peace. I don't know how we came up with this, but I think it was probably Alison Owings, who's our chairman of the oral histories.

But as soon as she said that I said, "Well, now, I think I have a potential oral history here that hits two out of the three."

So that's basically why I'm here. So why don't we just start off with this. I have the questionnaire that you both have answered, and Alan, you've got a very interesting background. You were born in Chicago, I take it. Tell us how you got into University of Chicago, Columbia, what have you here. It's a pretty deep resume there.

Alan Barnett: Well, let's see. I got turned on to history, by the way, in fifth grade at Kenwood School, elementary school, public school, in Chicago, and been a history buff, really, since then. I must have been 10 years old. And I remember walking to school, it was about a mile and a half walk from our house, with a neighbor, who was a German refugee, German Jewish refugee, and we're Jewish too. And we would frequently talk about Germany. So this was in '38, '39, just as the war was impending. And I can remember Pearl Harbor, where I was. I actually had gone to an afternoon movie, and came out on the street and the street was empty.

This was Sunday afternoon, and of course Pearl Harbor had to have been six hours different, and it was bombed at seven in the morning as I recall. So everybody, when I finally got home, was glued around the radio. I began collecting newspapers and became very absorbed. And then became of draft age towards, actually later. No, it was considerably later. I was only beginning high school at the time the war. Any case, that really absorbed me, and I actually led a student strike in high school. It was one of my first activities.

Bill Devlin: You've been at this a long time, haven't you?

Alan Barnett: That's right. So that's been my slant. My first mother died when I was 8 years old. My father remarried two years later. My second mother was very much interested in art, had gone to the Art Institute and introduced me to that. And I began doing Saturday classes at the Art Institute.

Bill Devlin: What kind of art were you doing?

Alan Barnett: Oh, it was, you know. I was a young adolescent. We were doing clay, doing drawings, going to the Natural History Museum and drawing animals. That kind of thing. But I began to have an interest in art and have been doing it actually ever since, either teaching it, writing it, or actually at least doing art posters and took a few courses in a university. But we lived actually right across the street from a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Hyde Park, and then when I finished high school I went on and got a two-year degree at the university. And by then I was 18 and had had enough of Chicago and thought that I should go out to New York and expose myself to that.

So I was there from what? 1948, I guess, to '55, when I was drafted. And while I was there, I met Ruth.

Bill Devlin: Ah. Here we go.

Alan Barnett: Here it connects. We met in 1949 in Chicago when she was crossing the country and she can take it from there.

Ruth Barnett: Well, I'm a year older, I want you to know. So I cradle-snatched Alan. I was a child. My parents had divorced in England, and during that time, if both parties – my mother had found a new mate and she had committed adultery, and if my father had done the same, they couldn't be granted a divorce. These were the laws and probably after Henry the Eighth. So, they weren't asking me, did I want to be with which parent when my parents divorced. I was the younger child. I had an older brother, a little bit older. Luckily, my father was granted custody of both children, my brother and me. I mean, I have a brother who is a year older.

Alan Barnett: But you had grown up in Berlin and Czechoslovakia.

Ruth Barnett: Yes. How far back do I have to go?

Bill Devlin: Well, I'm taking a look at your printed biography, and you were born in Berlin, and then at the age of about 11, fled to Czechoslovakia, which would be 1938. And then to England. So you witnessed a little bit of history firsthand.

Alan Barnett: Actually, her grandparents were Czech. So she would go to Czech.

Ruth Barnett: We're not Czech. We're German-speaking. They were from Arabia. Brno, where they lived. Do you know that part of the world?

Bill Devlin: Not very well.

Ruth Barnett: It's very close to Vienna. Of course, they speak German. In fact, my grandfather, Bloch was their last name, was always going off to Vienna. That was obviously where his interest was. My mother's parents already were not happily married. She wasn't happy with my father. It was an arranged marriage, really, between two well off Jewish families.

Alan Barnett: He was a banker.

Ruth Barnett: My father was a banker, and that's been written up, and we could show the little booklet to you. And interestingly enough, at the moment, only the summer is in English, but it's coming out in English. I think it's of sufficient interest because my grandfather, whom I didn't know, he was dead already, and a grandmother I couldn't get along with. My original name was Penovsky. And this little book has come out about the man, and this was already in *those* days unusual that a Jew became – he was not only the city councilman of Berlin, he was the city elder, which apparently is a very prestigious kind of thing. And he was a banker. It was in a small Jewish bank. Do you know about Berlin?

Bill Devlin: No. No, I've never been there.

Alan Barnett: Across from the palace. We always imagined that the Kaiser would come out and get his weekly allowance from the Jewish bank.

Bill Devlin: Now this booklet is, okay, 64 pages. Eugene Penovsky, 1855 to 1922. And that was your grandfather, then.

Ruth Barnett: And I was born in 1927, so I never knew him. But I knew the grandmother and did not like her.

Bill Devlin: The book is printed I take it by the synagogue in Berlin.

Alan Barnett: They published it, and the research was recently done, and as Ruth Barnett said, the English translation is forthcoming. Then we'll be distributing copies to the family.

Bill Devlin: I see the first printing in 2007.

Alan Barnett: Right. So we just received it about a month ago.

Ruth Barnett: And a little bit of local fun, I think, is that at the Mill Valley market, there is somebody who speaks German.

Alan Barnett: Gerhardt. He's a checkout clerk.

Ruth Barnett: And the funny thing is, I didn't know how he knew I spoke German. He would always talk to me in German, and he somehow –

Alan Barnett: You would answer.

Ruth Barnett: And then he asked me once, "Where in Germany were you born?" and I said, "In Berlin." He said, "I was also born in Berlin. Where did you live?" I said, "On the Tiergarten Strasse." "That's where I lived." This brings it right to Mill Valley.

Bill Devlin: It sure does. I don't know how he would think that because you have more of an English accent, actually, I think.

Ruth Barnett: I learned to speak English in England. That's why.

Alan Barnett: She was a refugee there for 10 years.

Ruth Barnett: 10 years. And my second language was French, because my mother thought, as a small child, *she* was sent, which was very customary in those years, after high school to finishing school in Switzerland to learn French.

Alan Barnett: What's important really is that she was a poetess and quite an accomplished one, and published. And some of it's been translated into English.

Ruth Barnett: But poetry doesn't do well when you translate it.

Alan Barnett: The meter doesn't quite fit in another language. In any case, we met in '49, and since Ruth was working at International House, actually, very close to Columbia University, we were able to see each other for lunch and so on.

Ruth Barnett: And Alan was a boyfriend of a person who I knew well in London when I was a refugee there.

Alan Barnett: Somehow or another we got connected. So finally we got married in 1955, just as we had contemplated it for many years. Just as I was going to be sent to Europe, having been drafted when I was 26. I had been able to avoid the war by serving in the National Guard and so on. So I was actually drafted during the Korean draft. Fortunately the fighting was over, and with chutzpah that I cannot quite account for, while I was still at the university and knew that I was going to be drafted, I went down to the Pentagon and was able to walk in the door, knock on a number of doors, and say, "I'm about to be drafted. I'm a doctoral student. I probably have some skills that would be useful to you. How can I be of assistance, or how can we help each other?" So I went to military intelligence and I finally ended up at public information. And they said, I think they were impressed with the arrogance, and in any case, said, "All right. This is what you need to do. After you finish basic training, you go to clerk typist school." Well, wait a minute. Clerk typist school. And fortunately I had taken high school typing and I was a reasonably good typist. So I scored high at clerk typist school, and as a result I had a choice of where to go, like Alaska, Okinawa, Japan, or Germany or Austria. And we had had this long affair, relationship, for 6 years, and –

Ruth Barnett: And he said, "Should I choose Germany or Austria?" And I of course with my background said, "Neither. That's up to you where you want to go."

Alan Barnett: So in any case, we decided to get married and a few days later, were, two days before I shipped out to what turned out to be Austria. And Ruth was able to come and join me in Salzburg where I was assigned to the *Salzburg Sentinel* newspaper and wrote for them.

Bill Devlin: This really looks like hazardous duty.

Alan Barnett: We had our farmhouse.

Ruth Barnett: We got out of it. I got out of it. They wanted me to work for the Army Engineers, and I'm the most, I mean, I do a little bit of pottery but technical? Forget it.

Alan Barnett: Ruth kept house and picked flowers. In any case, we rented a farmhouse outside of Salzburg, and had a honeymoon of eight months. Actually, I did feature stories for the newspaper. It was the command newspaper for southern Europe. It wasn't *Stars and Stripes*. It covered Austria and the Italian command.

Ruth Barnett: And I was useful, because I spoke German.

Alan Barnett: She was the translator.

Ruth Barnett: We climbed to the top of Salzburg Cathedral.

Alan Barnett: What had happened was, during the war, the military had targeted the Gestapo headquarters in Salzburg, which turned out to be the Archbishop's palace, but instead they dropped the bomb down the dome of the cathedral. So the U.S. of course paid for the rebuilding of the cathedral, and we arrived on the scene just before the dedication. So Ruth and I interviewed the architect on the scaffolding at the cathedral. Those were some of the good times.

Ruth Barnett: The other good time is we're sitting here and there's some art around us, was there's a famous artist Monsù.

Alan Barnett: They had a festival every summer, the Mozart Festival, but painters come as well and I did some interviews for the paper for them. In any case, the command closed down because of the end of the occupation. That was an occupation that ended. Most American occupations do not. Whether Korea or where have you. Or for that matter, NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. But then the problem was where to go, and I got assigned to Fort Ord and didn't really want to be in the boonies, so we drove across the country.

Ruth Barnett: We were hoping for Italy. We would have thought that made sense to the Army, not to pay us so much, because there was after all a command post in –

Alan Barnett: In Livorno actually, in northern Italy. Near Genoa. So that didn't happen. Actually, it happened –

Ruth Barnett: I always wanted to learn Italian.

Alan Barnett: We both loved Italy. In any case, we stopped off at the Presidio in San Francisco, and I fortunately met the officer, the lead officer, of the public information here at the Presidio, who was a woman, lieutenant colonel, and we got on very well and talked a lot of politics with each other. So I ended up writing speeches for the commanding general of the Sixth Army.

Bill Devlin: So you avoided Fort Ord.

Alan Barnett: I avoided it. Yeah.

Ruth Barnett: He was very scared that that may not be possible, because.

Alan Barnett: We had had it so good so far. So we rented on Russian Hill, a $60 apartment. So we had a great time.

Ruth Barnett: And I went to San Francisco State University.

Alan Barnett: I was mustered out of the Army in '56 I guess. We spent a year traveling in Germany and I finally got my first full-time job at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester. Not teaching music, but teaching Humanities, and we were there for five years. Had three children born, and enjoyed it a lot. Got introduced to modern music, actually. That was the strength of Rochester. Rochester otherwise is terribly cold during the winter, terribly hot during the summer.

Ruth Barnett: And I was not very happy.

Alan Barnett: And very conservative politics.

Ruth Barnett: And I didn't like the music. He was so lucky at his office right where the students were practicing.

Alan Barnett: I had done part-time teaching while I was in graduate school at Columbia. But then after five years we felt that we had had enough of Rochester and were fortunately again hired here at San Francisco State University in 1962. I had just gotten my degree from Columbia, having been interrupted by the war and so on.

So we moved out here in 1962, settled at Belvedere Tiburon. What is The Cove? The Cove Shopping Center. Right in there. Because I had visited Ruth. She had come to San Francisco earlier. At one point in our relationship she decided –

Ruth Barnett: Well, we were on and off again all the time and I loved to travel.

Alan Barnett: So she came out and got a position as the secretary to the director of San Francisco Museum of Art. Grace Morley was the first director and a woman.

Ruth Barnett: Here I'm very young and I think I'd never want to work for a woman. You would have an easier time as a young woman to work for a middle-aged man, but instead Grace Morley was my boss at the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Alan Barnett: So that was before we were married. And you were here just about the time when she was defending the Refregier murals in the Rincon annex post office.

Ruth Barnett: I worked for Grace Morley. I mean, she dictated it. I had the earphones and I wrote that letter.

Alan Barnett: Defending it, because Nixon, who was in Congress, was trying to –

Ruth Barnett: Whitewash over it.

Alan Barnett: Correct the finishing of it. Actually, the Refregier murals down there were the last WPA project. And they were finally dedicated in 1951. They had been delayed by the war. The money I guess had been laid out. I'm not sure whether he started them before the war, but then picked it up in the late '40s and finished them around when Ruth was there at the Museum during the controversy. Now, of course, they're one of the treasures of San Francisco.

Bill Devlin: They're still there?

Alan Barnett: Yep. Absolutely.

Ruth Barnett: And so the other murals at San Francisco State University, were the other murals.

Alan Barnett: Well, the Rivera murals. There are three great murals. We're into murals. You'll hear about that. Any case we came here in 1962. When I had visited her we had particularly roamed around Mill Valley, saw how beautiful it was, hiked down Steep Ravine. While she was at work I would be hiking and I was doing watercolors, even have one, of the Steep Ravine area. [pauses] Lost my train of thought.

Ruth Barnett: You were exploring the area.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. And fell in love. So we took literally a year to find this place. We had no money.

Ruth Barnett: And both our fathers would only give us – what was it?

Alan Barnett: We paid $32,000 for this house.

Ruth Barnett: And it was overpriced because it only originally had two bedrooms and we had three children at the time.

Alan Barnett: An architect friend said it could be refurbished and so on. So after a year of looking, we moved in here in June of '63 and became Mill Valley residents. And have been here ever since. Ruth was really the one to be more – I initially got recruited into the American

Federation of Teachers at San Francisco State and did my politics that way. Ruth did politics at home.

Ruth Barnett: There was a strike.

Alan Barnett: Well, before that you were involved in all kinds of, preventing red-lining for blacks.

Ruth Barnett: I was for the Committee for Prison Humanity –

Alan Barnett: No, before that. The housing.

Ruth Barnett: Housing. That was a shock for me, Bill. I'd already lived in San Francisco and had befriended an older black woman.

Alan Barnett: In a black neighborhood, actually.

Ruth Barnett: A woman who had a car, because I was too poor. I didn't drive, because they paid you very little as a –

Alan Barnett: Secretary.

Ruth Barnett: Secretary to the museum director. I couldn't afford anything, and I lived actually very close to the Fillmore, on Geary, between Octavia and Laguna, and I could walk to the museum, which was very convenient.

Alan Barnett: But jumping ahead to, you got them involved in the Fair Play against red-lining of neighborhoods and you were picketing real estate offices on Blithedale Avenue.

Ruth Barnett: Bringing it here when we came to, because we'd explored a little bit in our beautiful Marin County, and right where the bank is now was a real estate office. West America Bank. Right opposite the church, and there were people walking around with –

Alan Barnett: Picket signs.

Ruth Barnett: Picket signs that apparently Mill Valley didn't want people of color to live here. And I was shocked. And I told Alan about it. "I don't think we want to live in an area like that." Because I was always, as a Jew, having been, you know – who wants to move into an area where there's some kind of –

Alan Barnett: Racism or discrimination. Sure.

Ruth Barnett: Racism.

Alan Barnett: So you got involved in them, then you got involved in school, elementary school politics.

Ruth Barnett: So they made me. That was terribly funny. I didn't really want to be at Old Mill School. The realtor who sold us this house, Sandra Miller, she's probably still alive.

Bill Devlin: Boy that sounds familiar.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. She was here for years. Very beautiful woman. Tall, long dark hair.

Bill Devlin: I remember her. Yeah.

Alan Barnett: She lives in San Rafael now.

Ruth Barnett: She did. We've lost touch. Very nice woman. She said, "You'll be pleased you're in the best school district in Mill Valley."Although borderline, and our neighbors, the Wileys', who are no longer here, had to send their children, their girls, to Park School, because then Old Mill became so well known.

Bill Devlin: But you became the interracial chairman? At the Old Mill School?

Ruth Barnett: At the Old Mill School, they called me the inter – whatever. They just hired me. I had to have a job on the Board, and I said –

Alan Barnett: There were not many other races in Mill Valley. There was Dan Collins.

Ruth Barnett: I didn't know what I was supposed to do, and I had enough clerical work helping him get his thesis finished. I was always typing and I never liked typing. He's still a better typist than I am.

Alan Barnett: So Ruth was the first one to get involved in local politics.

Ruth Barnett: Because I wasn't a volunteer for a committee.

Alan Barnett: You're still jumping ahead. What we need to talk about, I guess, and I brought the newspaper clipping from the *Mill Valley Record* because this is the 40th anniversary of Mill Valley becoming the first city in the United States, with Beverly Hills unfortunately, to vote for withdrawal from Vietnam. And I went down last June or so because the annual celebration was not Memorial Day but Fourth of July. And Jerry Hauke was the head of the JCs, I guess, and they were the organizer for the parade. I think the article said that.

Bill Devlin: I was there but that was two years later.

Alan Barnett: Were you in the JCs?

Bill Devlin: Oh yeah. I was president of JCs in 1970, it would have been. I joined in '69.

Alan Barnett: So 1967 I was on the telephone for weeks trying to persuade Jerry to permit a peace contingent to march in the annual Fourth of July parade. Finally he agreed that we could march at the end of it and, as it turned out, as the newspaper article reports, something between 100 and 200 people joined us. We marched behind the Hamilton Air Force Base cavalry, which meant treading very carefully. We otherwise didn't tread very carefully in Mill Valley. And what the newspaper article says, and I can repeat it, is that – the mayor at that time was Al White. We all remember he was probably head of Kaiser.

Ruth Barnett: He was the head of Kaiser. His wife –

Alan Barnett: Was Maxine.

Ruth Barnett: Maxine, and she walked at the end of the parade.

Alan Barnett: Well, they were riding in the convertible at the front of the parade, and the parade moved from town to Lytton Square. A reverse direction from what's currently usual. And when they got to Lytton Square, Maxine got out and joined us, and as the article mentions, Murray Hammond of the Episcopal Church, and Jack Bartlett was also mentioned.

We haven't seen Murray, and we became quite close friends actually, oh, I think for two or three – oh, more than that. We met Muriel on the street a few years ago. I haven't even looked in the phone book, but I'll tell you more about it. Any case, they came and marched with us, and so that was in July of 1967. And that sort of triggered a peace movement in Mill Valley during the Fall, and a number of people got together and I'm trying to think of who. Harriet Rosenthal and her husband.

Bill Devlin: Paul.

Alan Barnett: Paul Rosenthal. Right. It was Paul in particular who organized an effort to get the city council to adopt a resolution and indeed, they brought it to the city council on February 21st, 1968. Which by the way was just after the Tet Offensive. So you see, "Political Bombshell Catches City Council." What he did was to present a resolution calling for the council to support withdrawal from Vietnam. And then they put it on the ballot. There was an April ballot for the voters. And as it turned out, the voters, by 1801 voted yes against 1433 voted no. So we became at the same time, I got other newspaper documentation, there were statewide municipal elections that April. When are we talking about? April 10th. So Beverly Hills I know voted as well. Whether the city council in Beverly Hills voted, I don't know. But we can say that we're one of the first two cities in the country, and we may be the first city council, to have voted for

withdrawal. That's kind of interesting. And it was Rod Robinson who had submitted the motion originally to the city council. Al White was the mayor. Wickham.

Bill Devlin: George Wickham.

Alan Barnett: George Wickham was on the council and I don't know who the other two members were.

Bill Devlin: Bob Andresen.

Alan Barnett: Well, he was elected that year. Whether he was already on the council.

Bill Devlin: I think that he was.

Alan Barnett: It may have been a reelection of George Wickham.

Bill Devlin: Yeah. It looks to me, knowing the people there, because I think that's when Jerry got on. So that would have been three seats. So it was Andresen, Wickham and Hauke that got on it.

Alan Barnett: But they only got on in April. They were not the council that voted for the resolution in the first place, or to put it on the ballot. Any case. When I went back and read the article, it was the city attorney, who was of course, I'm trying to –

Bill Devlin: Lee Jordan?

Alan Barnett: Lee. Brought forward, told the council that they were altogether in their rights. There had been a Supreme Court decision that, State Supreme Court decision, in the Fall of '67 with regard to San Francisco that found that, in its opinion, was, quote, "As representatives of local communities, boards of supervisors and city councils, have traditionally made declarations of policy on matters of concern to the community, whether or not they had the power to effectuate such declarations by binding legislation. Indeed, one of the purposes of local government is to represent its citizens before the Congress. The legislature and administrative agencies in matters over which the local government has no power. Even in matters of foreign policy it is not uncommon for local legislative bodies to make their positions known."

I had not remembered this because we had brought the comparable issues before the city council in subsequent years. For instance, at the time of the Cambodian invasion, the secret invasion, which was 1970. The city council again voted. There must have been other votes as well, because in 1985 the city council adopted as a by-law that they would not entertain resolutions or motions that did not directly bear on their ability to govern or to deliver city services. And it was on the strength of that that when we came to them in 1991 to try to get a resolution opposing the Gulf War, that they wouldn't listen to us, and that was a big deal. We had a huge candlelight march in Lytton Square. They had set aside a special meeting at Mount

Carmel School in 1991, and there were 300 people in the march. We marched from the square to the gym in Mt. Carmel and tried to persuade the council to take up the measure and Flora Praszker, who was on the council, I recall very clearly, saying, "Why aren't you people home listening to Monday Night Football?"

So we are back again. It was simply because I had found a language, then went and got a hold of the legal opinion. It was the case of Farley v. Healey, the San Francisco case that Lee Jordan was quoting from, and this is the case.

Bill Devlin: Alan, if I may. In between the Vietnam War and when the city council decided not to allow this type of opinion as official city policy, didn't the city declare itself a nuclear free zone?

Alan Barnett: Oh, absolutely. I think that was around 1981.

Bill Devlin: I mean, there's a sign out there somewhere.

Alan Barnett: But that, you see, you could argue that it didn't directly affect the city. The health and safety of the city. Barbara Boxer, who was in the board of supervisors at that point, I think, got a similar motion passed, and the argument was that nuclear energy was a threat to local residents, both in the county and in our case, the city.

Bill Devlin: I could go both ways on that. I mean, it's pretty universal.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. You see one of the reasons I'm drawing your attention to this is that currently, we are bringing the matter before the city council and have talked with the mayor, and in fact I've raised it at one of the candidate's nights. I read them just what we read together. Because we would like the city to remove this impediment that was put in the, as a bylaw, in 1985, and then the first issue we would of course raise would be the Iraq war. Because something more than 300 cities in the country have already voted for withdrawal.

Bill Devlin: How do you see your chances on that?

Alan Barnett: They're reluctant, although they were not reluctant; I got to tell you, at candidate's night. Things change after people are elected. In any case, the first step is that the mayor is bringing this document to get a reading on it, from the city attorney, and then we'll move from there. But we would like to do this all over the county. Fairfax would probably be the first city. And I understand that what this actually says is, one of the purposes of the city council.

Bill Devlin: It's not discretionary. It's diametrically one-eighty.

Alan Barnett: That's right. So it'll be very interesting. We hope to generate a public discussion about it, because what happened during that whole era, from the time of the march, Mill Valley became a very lively place, as you will remember. So I brought it up, and I've shown to Shawn

Marshall, our posters for the Mill Valley Forum. Already in 1968 a number of us got together, including Murray, Hammond, Lou and Jim Norton, the Jessups. We formed something called, well, it was the Mill Valley Forum, and I think we – what did we call it? It had some formal title. Any case. The idea was to have public discussion, to have city hall, not necessarily with a view to resolutions, although in the case of the war, yes, but on matters of local concern. And the idea was to bring together conservatives and progressive people in the city, because the city was pretty well divided about these issues. And to address these issues. So here is one on the transit tax, and the speaker for it was Kathleen Foote, who was at that point mayor, and against it was Peter Behr. And Peter, we remember with great affection, he was one of the outspoken supervisors opposing the war.

Bill Devlin: Alan, if I can pause for just a second's time to turn over a tape. [end of part one] Back on tape here.

Alan Barnett: Just a word about the Mill Valley Forum. The person who designed this and found the old Uncle Sam was George [unintelligible] who lived right down the street.

Ruth Barnett: George had the corner house. Do you remember, Bill?

Bill Devlin: No, I don't.

Alan Barnett: It is, what? The Carney house now at the corner of Roosevelt and Lincoln. They were great. She was a major. She's still alive, living up in Sonoma. Joyce. She got Ruth very much involved in school board politics and the building of the middle school, for that matter. But Ed designed this and we used it as the backing for all kinds of issues, but it was interesting because conservatives and progressives were getting together to put on these forums as you see the student revolution. John Leonard was in high school still.

Ruth Barnett: He was student body president I think.

Alan Barnett: I don't know.

Bill Devlin: And Jack Bartlett was the moderator for that forum.

Alan Barnett: Jack actually was the minister who presided at the marriage of our daughter at the Mill Valley Outdoor Art Club. Which would have been in – when?

Ruth Barnett: We're about to become great-grandparents. Can you believe that?

Bill Devlin: Yeah!

Alan Barnett: So with regard to the student revolution, I had not gotten tenure at San Francisco State University, so I was there for only three years. Went on to San Jose State University, and there I spent the rest of my teaching career. And we just could not leave Mill Valley.

Bill Devlin: I was going to ask you about that, because I remember those days when I found out more about you. This guy commutes in his Volkswagen I think it was at that point.

Alan Barnett: Well, at one point.

Ruth Barnett: We still have it.

Alan Barnett: Actually, initially it was on the Greyhound bus, which you could pick up here at the bus depot.

Ruth Barnett: My mother had just been killed in a car accident and I wouldn't let him drive. I was so afraid.

Alan Barnett: But driving. That is, heck, an hour and a half, which nowadays is not a long commute.

Ruth Barnett: He got the first bus out of Mill Valley in the morning.

Alan Barnett: 5:30 in the morning. And those years, the rain was like it is this year. And then you would transfer in the City and get the Los Angeles local that would stop in San Jose.

Ruth Barnett: And later he said, "I couldn't study very well because often I'd have somebody leaning on my – "

Alan Barnett: Well, yeah. The reason I guess we're bringing up to mind is that one of the programs was on what was happening at San Francisco State University, in 1968 particularly.

Bill Devlin: That was when S.I. was –

Alan Barnett: That's S.I. Hayakawa, our neighbor.

Ruth Barnett: He had a parade, too.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. There was a Christmas Eve candlelight march to his home, as I recall. Any case, that strike, just for the record, was about open admissions to minority students and people who had not necessarily had their high school degrees. Maybe they had gotten a GED or something like that. But to provide open admissions to minority students, to create third world programs so that they could learn about their heritage. Those were the main issues, I think. So we formed, right up here on the hill, the San Francisco State Strike Support group, because the

students went on strike in the fall of 1968, and leaders of the strike were Nesbit Crutchfield, who was a black man, who lived in Sausalito. And Crutch was accused, as a matter of fact, of hanging a bomb on the door on John Bunsall, who was then in Political Science and later became the president of San Jose State University. So there was a lot happening locally.

I should say in passing that in 19 – let's see. Was it about 1968 or '69 that the interschool exchange with Martin Luther King. It had to have been 1969 because MLK didn't get its name until after his assassination.

Bill Devlin: I'm seeing in your human rights resume that the interracial exchange program, 1967-'70, and that's when you sent your daughter Ann to MLK Middle School.

Ruth Barnett: She wanted to go and she thought her friend Sarah Allen would go with them. The Allens, you probably knew that family right on Middle Ridge. He was a psychiatrist. And the last minute, I guess they were afraid that their only daughter, to let her go. So Ann was the only child from Old Mill School who became an exchange student.

Alan Barnett: No no no. There were 100. The whole idea.

Ruth Barnett: No. *Here.* From Mill Valley.

Alan Barnett: There were 100 from Mill Valley would exchange with 100 black students to come to Mill Valley schools.

Ruth Barnett: But it never happened. The black kids came to Mill Valley.

Alan Barnett: Oh yes. Yes, they did. For three years the program existed. It was a harrowing experience for our own daughter who got beaten up a number of times, and so on. Because this was the black power days.

Ruth Barnett: This happened at Tam High actually.

Bill Devlin: Tam High was very similar to that at one point.

Alan Barnett: But this was in middle school here that Ann was.

Ruth Barnett: Yeah. In fact, she thought they were her friends, the black girls there, and then I still remember her telling me, they said, "Stick with your race." Ann is very short, she's even shorter than I am. And these were big teenagers.

Alan Barnett: But she is a very feisty lady, as we know.

Ruth Barnett: Her friend Grace Gordino who lived, of course – you know the Gordino family. Grace got in her bus and drove Ann with her and then they called us from the Gordinos.

Alan Barnett: We tried to intercede, you know, to protect her, and she would have none of it. And we should have, as it turns out. Because it became very ugly.

Ruth Barnett: Our next child, we didn't even want him to go, because –

Alan Barnett: We continued it for three years, and we continued to try to participate in what we thought was our responsibility with Marin City, with a number of programs, particularly with the forming of Marin City USA under Al Fleming, who just died. I saw a notice in the *IJ* about. Did you know him? Big Al?

Bill Devlin: No. I didn't.

Alan Barnett: He was the head of Marin City USA, the resident head, which was a community development corporation. I guess it still exists, and it is the imputed owner of that whole shopping center. And the city is supposed to get some funding for public services from the Center. It's always been very, very difficult. Our feeling has been that, well – number one, the only steady income that Marin City really could maintain was providing the drugs to the white community of Marin County.

Bill Devlin: Well, the flea market was very successful.

Alan Barnett: That's right. You're quite right.

Ruth Barnett: Everybody went there on Sundays.

Alan Barnett: But the fact of the matter was, that the result is that a whole generation of Marin city young people are at San Quentin or elsewhere, and it's been extremely destructive. And we discovered –

Ruth Barnett: A cleaning person and her oldest son was caught stealing a bicycle and sent to San Quentin and that killed her. I mean, it killed her emotionally, and she died.

Alan Barnett: Yola. Randolph. The Randolph family is one of the permanent families, and she was very middle class. We went to her home.

Ruth Barnett: Yeah. Yola. Her name was Yola Randolph and she was, for instance, at one point when we still had three children, somebody slammed a door against one and Peter practically lost one of his fingers. Luckily, the cleaning help came by car from Marin City. We had Dr. Brown. I don't know who you had. We had Yola.

Alan Barnett: No, no. Brown. T.G. Brown.

Ruth Barnett: T.G. She's no longer with us. She lived –

Alan Barnett: She was one of the great doctors of Mill Valley. She was here for a long time.

Ruth Barnett: She practiced with a man who – what was his name? But she was already retired.

Alan Barnett: She rode horseback with –

Ruth Barnett: She fell off her horse or something. She was something else.

Alan Barnett: What was Wornum's first name?

Ruth Barnett: Michael.

Alan Barnett: Mike. Sure. Michael Wornum. Barbara was much more progressive than he was. He was sitting on the Board of Supervisors in those days and doing good work in terms of the environment and biking paths. But he was a slow learner in terms of politics.

Bill Devlin: You're charitable Alan.

Alan Barnett: Anyway. What needs to be said is, we created this strike support group here when the students went on strike in 1968 at San Francisco State University, it was in those days, and Hayakawa was president.

Ruth Barnett: May I just interject about his daughter saying, "He *is* my father and please treat me with respect."

Alan Barnett: She opposed her.

Ruth Barnett: She was opposed to what he was doing but of course being his daughter she couldn't join us. She was charming.

Alan Barnett: And he had a very progressive wife who was the leader of the co-op here.
Any case, the strike. I should say in contrast that at San Jose State University, where I was then, although we were doing the, right here two doors down, the strike support group, doing public programs, public education and raising funds for legal defense for the students who were getting busted in the fall of '68. At San Jose State University we had a very progressive college president, Bill Clark. Harry Edwards, the great athletic figure, was a very good politician, and he won all of these demands without a lot of to-do, certainly without a student strike, and they created open admissions and they got Black Studies and Ethnic Studies programs at San Jose State University. So we really never went through that problem there.

Ruth Barnett: And they came down to support us. The famous day when I was arrested.

Alan Barnett: So. To bring it around to then, the strike had begun and the faculty went out, at San Francisco State University, in the late fall just before the holiday of 1968. And then there was the problem of rebuilding it in 1969, after people came back from holiday. And Ruth and another of our neighbors who was co-chair with me of the strike support group.

Ruth Barnett: She was a teacher.

Alan Barnett: Terry Alt was at San Francisco State University, went into a mass rally on January 27th, 1969. Three hundred people have rallied the free speech platform stage on campus.

Ruth Barnett: Hayakawa had said he doesn't want any.

Alan Barnett: Demonstrations on campus.

Ruth Barnett: Demonstrations. But we were in the legal place and it was a colleague of hers at San Francisco State University who had something to do with the speakers platform.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. The speakers platform. So the police were called in. The Blue Meanies. This was after a fall of considerable violence on campus. It was very tricky. Then Hayakawa ordered the dispersal of the community and student rally.

Ruth Barnett: They read us the riot act and we didn't know what the numbers were even. I hadn't, and I was pretty political too, so I had no idea this meant you'd better disperse or you'll all be arrested. And before we knew it we were all –

Alan Barnett: We were all surrounded.

Ruth Barnett: Surrounded.

Bill Devlin: So what happened at that point? Did they march you down and book you at Hall of Justice?

Ruth Barnett: Right! Paddy wagons were already standing out there. And Martha and Terry, all the teachers, were sitting on my lap, because that was the most frightening thing, for San Francisco State University to be driven like crazies. They were driving us to put us in jail.

Alan Barnett: At the Hall of Justice.

Ruth Barnett: Terry recalled the teacher who was there was a divorced mother living right in this neighborhood with a son and a daughter, and she's terrified, because she said once before the husband had taken the children away from her. Anyway, we both were in *huge cells*. I mean, my

only experience at the jail, we were, I don't know how many people. Forty women. And I wasn't in the same area with Terry. She was next door to me. And Alan came, I guess.

Alan Barnett: Well, let me give the parallel. The faculty at San Jose State University decided to do a sympathy strike with the faculty that had gone out at the end of San Francisco State University. We developed some local issues, because other campus faculty, from Fremont came.

Ruth Barnett: The university system.

Alan Barnett: Well, a number of other campuses went up. Relative few faculty went out. Any case, we started our faculty strike in January, and was at a strike meeting that news came that some seventy San Jose students had gone up to this rally.

Ruth Barnett: To support us.

Alan Barnett: They wanted to raise money to get the bail. And I called home. We had interminable faculty meetings. They would go on for eight hours. You can imagine.

Bill Devlin: That would interfere with your commute. Yes.

Alan Barnett: In any case, we got the word that there had been this arrest. I called home to our neighbors to find out where Ruth was, because I knew she was going in to the demo.

Ruth Barnett: [unintelligible] my children, and she was furious.

Alan Barnett: And found out that she had, of course, not come home.

Ruth Barnett: What business did you have to go down there and get arrested?

Alan Barnett: This was what the neighbor said. So the children were with the neighbors, and I came up late. Oh, it must have been about ten o'clock at night when the faculty meeting was over. It was raining heavily. I came to the Hall of Justice to see how I could bail out Ruth. And I was standing in front of the Hall of Justice, it's pouring down, and some of the male students had ignited a mattress and were throwing it out of the window, up on maybe the fourth or the fifth floor of the Hall of Justice. The fire department was just arriving. I saw an axe on the side of the fire truck, and the temptation to pick up the axe and to smash the glass entrance was very strong. Fortunately I resisted it. One person in the family under arrest was enough. So actually the bail was made for Ruth.

Bill Devlin: Was it made for everybody?

Alan Barnett: Practically everybody. We have no idea who did it.

Ruth Barnett: We had to have money to get out of this huge dormitory type place.

Alan Barnett: At three in the morning.

Ruth Barnett: At three in the morning, if we had money to bail ourselves out. And I knew of course that he was teaching down there. I better get home to my children. I can't expect the neighbors, although Eleanor Decker had five of her own children. And she was furious with me that she was stuck with two more of my own.

Alan Barnett: She's a real earth mother. Any case, that is Eleanor Decker who's since moved away. Her husband actually was head of psychiatry at San Francisco General. So Ruth got bailed out and I drove Ruth and Terry home. And then they had to stand trial. The trial, there were three counts – disturbing the peace, illegal assembly, and one other.

Ruth Barnett: And failing to disperse.

Alan Barnett: Failing to disperse.

Bill Devlin: Did they have a combined trial for everybody?

Alan Barnett: They were trial groups. So Ruth was in a trial group of seven. Students, actually.

Ruth Barnett: Shall we say I wasn't *quite* middle aged at the time.

Alan Barnett: You were 40. You were 40.

Ruth Barnett: So I was middle aged already. I was definitely older but I was an old student to begin with. I'd gone to university.

Alan Barnett: In New York.

Ruth Barnett: In New York and London first. I was at the City Literary Institute. And I never even got a degree. I haven't got a Bachelor's even.

Alan Barnett: Any case. The trial was for six weeks, if you can imagine.

Ruth Barnett: Ridiculous!

Bill Devlin: Well, Alan, what did you do for a defense attorney?

Alan Barnett: We actually got a PD [Public Defender].

Ruth Barnett: Somebody volunteered.

Alan Barnett: Not taking it seriously, as we should have.

Ruth Barnett: And he was real good. He volunteered.

Alan Barnett: He lived up here at Castle Rock Drive. A young man.

Ruth Barnett: We were five. Some had to drop out because Hayakawa said anybody who was guilty of this cannot stay at San Francisco State University. He is going to, or she is going to, get expelled.

Alan Barnett: And as it turned out the students, not only the part-time faculty, lost their positions and were not rehired.

Ruth Barnett: Yeah. Terry –

Alan Barnett: Tragic, really.

Ruth Barnett: She was a divorced woman.

Alan Barnett: Ultimately she committed suicide.

Ruth Barnett: Lots of tragedy.

Alan Barnett: Any case, Ruth was convicted of two counts.

Ruth Barnett: But they couldn't convict me on failing to disperse because I made a point. Edith Freeman –

Bill Devlin: Yeah, I know Edith.

Ruth Barnett: Edith Freeman came and spoke on our behalf. And she was so good, so together, and so elegant looking. Nothing helped us. Absolutely nothing. Because she said, "I was at San Francisco State," because she was an academic when this happened. And she was lucky enough that she wasn't with us being arrested. She was brilliant. It made no difference. Absolutely no difference.

Alan Barnett: So they were convicted, and we stayed with it, actually. There was an appeal, now with a professional attorney. The State Supreme Court threw it out. The DA still persisted and took it I guess to the US Supreme Court. The US Supreme Court wouldn't hear it. They wouldn't grant a writ. Which meant that all the convictions were eliminated. Thrown out. Most of the students never learned of this.

So I got a call, because I remained with the legal defense, years later. "I'm tired of lying on my employment form about whether I've been convicted of a crime. What's to do?" I said, "The fact is, you need to go down to the Hall of Justice and get your record cleared."

Bill Devlin: Expunged.

Alan Barnett: That's right.

Ruth Barnett: Expunged. But they never heard. For me, it wasn't so terrible because here I had my responsibilities as a mother living in Mill Valley.

Alan Barnett: It changed our life, though. The trial and the strike. In the case of Ruth Barnett, she became involved in prison work, and I sort of provided some back up to that. So it's then that she helped form the Committee for Prisoner Humanity and Justice.

Ruth Barnett: We were particularly more "with it" kind of people.

Alan Barnett: Which involved attorneys as well, and you might talk a little bit about that.

Ruth Barnett: Financially we were always having to help out, because none of the students had any money. Some were from Los Angeles. There was a very bright lawyer came to our trial when I was there. I've forgotten all the names, it's so long ago. He came from Los Angeles and his daughter was in our group. This huge trial when the students couldn't go to class. We were just sitting there. I was always told, "You've got to wear silk stockings and heels and look like a middle class housewife."

Alan Barnett: There were 763 people who were arrested and on trial. Some of them I think may have pled guilty to get it behind them.

Ruth Barnett: And Alan was meanwhile in San Jose.

Alan Barnett: So I would come up of course to the trial. It changed my life because I was kind of an intellectual and had this political interest, had this art interest, and had never really put them together. And in Ruth's trial group there was a young lady who was an artist, and we bought actually her first painting, which was a painting of her mother that we still have down in the basement. But her boyfriend was Rupert Garcia, who was doing silkscreen prints, and was very reputable.

Ruth Barnett: We'll show you the rest of the house. And if you're cold –

Bill Devlin: No, I'm fine. This is my favorite room in the house.

Alan Barnett: It's ours too.

Ruth Barnett: And ours!

Alan Barnett: It's where we live. And by the way, Dart Cherk designed this for us.

Bill Devlin: Oh really!

Alan Barnett: And he designed the house next door.

Ruth Barnett: The original house was much too small, because at the time we had three children.

Alan Barnett: When they became teenagers we had to leave home. Anyway, I began going around the mission district with Rupert and getting introduced into the Latino art that was being made for the student movement and other political activities, the Vietnam War and so on at that time. One of the fallouts was, we decided to do an exhibit at the Fall Arts Festival here in Mill Valley.

Bill Devlin: I remember it very well.

Alan Barnett: And the initial idea was to do it in the library, I think. And the library board decided no, that was not feasible. Can we give you some more tea?

Bill Devlin: Thank you.

Alan Barnett: That's right. It finally ended up at Brown's Hall by then I had begun collecting posters, and there was a big archival collection that had already emerged at Berkeley, and we were able to get some stuff from them and did the show at Brown's Hall, and somebody came in while the show was going to say, "You know there's a sound truck going through, there's a van, a Volkswagen van, going through the neighborhood saying "Don't go to Brown's Hall to see this art exhibit. It's foul. Obscenities and so on."

Bill Devlin: Free ads are the best ads.

Alan Barnett: That's right. Anyway, one of the results then was I got interested in that kind of popular political art, and finally did a book on it. This is our show and tell time. Which the library has a couple copies of.

Bill Devlin: *Community Murals: the People's Art*. Alan W. Barnett.

Ruth Barnett: And that's what he looked like at the time. He was losing it fast.

Alan Barnett: But actually, to do the book. This, by the way, is the La Peña mural over on Shattuck and Ashby. La Peña's a cultural center that was organized actually by Chilenos, who were refugees from Pinochet's Chile. So that was one of politics, and we traveled back and forth.

Ruth Barnett: We have one copy of it.

Alan Barnett: Two copies, I think.

Alan Barnett: I don't know where the dust cover went.

Ruth Barnett: Dust cover.

Alan Barnett: Unfortunately the dust cover is the best color photo in the book. The color photos tend to be fairly small. This sort of size. Hard to reduce murals to books.

Bill Devlin: Who published this?

Alan Barnett: It was New Jersey. It took years to get it published.

Ruth Barnett: They were terrible.

Alan Barnett: It was published in '84

Ruth Barnett: I was ready to blow up the place because Alan couldn't get promoted teaching. They don't promote somebody with a PhD unless he's written book.

Alan Barnett: Let's see. This was Associated University Presses. Actually, they had done a very nice book that we have of Ben Chong. And it even received an award, which was a way, of course, of simply giving the award by the publisher itself as a way of pushing the book.

Ruth Barnett: His mother wanted a coffee table copy of this book and Alan said, "We don't have many copies of it. You can't have that."

Alan Barnett: Anyway. It's a good book, I think. And a serious book. Because what I did. And Ruth and I together went across the country for a number of years. We would go to Texas, for instance, because we knew there were some murals in El Paso. And meet with the artists and Ruth would be burping their babies and so on, while I was trying to get some information. And they would tell us what murals there were in the neighborhood or over the hill, and we just traveled the country that way, back and forth.

Ruth Barnett: That was the only way to find murals.

Alan Barnett: Well, getting the documentation.

Bill Devlin: The documentation and permission to publish.

Alan Barnett: That's right. After you did the photographs, and I had access to the archives, some of the big mural organizations particularly in Chicago and New York. Yeah. Then when you decided what pictures you wanted, you had to go back and get permissions from the artists. So I've got a stack of those. And sometimes that meant getting books for the artists, which was a reasonable request. So I've been writing about those, and my first sabbatical, actually, at San Jose State University, was in 1975, so my interest in Latino murals carried over to going to Mexico and we spent six months, actually, of the sabbatical in Mexico City.

Ruth Barnett: Alan's Spanish, he's not a good linguist, but Spanish he's very good.

Alan Barnett: So we met muralists out there, formed friendships, have some of their art actually hanging here. They came back and would stay with us in the subsequent years and I've been writing about their work as well. Then in later years we went to South America and did the same thing. So I'm in the course of writing that up now, and trying to do a new book of social art.

Any case. So that's one side of what we were doing. And in that way, Ruth getting involved in prison work and I putting my interest in art and politics together, that her arrest and the strike changed our lives and gave it much more direction. Actually, we were on strike for a hundred and thirty five days. It was a long strike. And my feeling was that this should not be taken out of the hide of the students, so what we would do is not have classes on campus but we went over to the Newman Center, the Catholic center off campus, and would have classes there. And fortunately they continued my salary. I had a good department chairman. He knew I was meeting classes and so on.

But a lot of faculty were not so fortunate and they couldn't pay their mortgages and so on. So after a hundred and thirty five days, it foundered. It ended. One of the interesting things that happened was that the filmmaker Antonioni? The Italian film maker? I don't know if you remember *Zabriskie Point.*

Bill Devlin: I never saw it.

Alan Barnett: He came to us, to the faculty, when we were on strike. Was in the course of making the film and wanted us to stage a demonstration and riot. That would allow us to stay on strike somewhat longer because of what he would pay for the strike, and of course we would have nothing to do with it. Anyway. While this was all happening, we were founding members of Marin Alternative with Barbara Boxer and so on, which really launched her career. She, as a result of that, ran for the Board of Supervisors, I think failed the first time and succeeded the second time.

Ruth Barnett: And Lynn Woolsey.

Alan Barnett: Well, Lynn was much later.

Ruth Barnett: Much later. Yeah.

Alan Barnett: I remember Barbara, when she was working for the *Pacific Sun*, did a story on a demonstration we did at the Hamilton Air Force Base entrance on Christmas Eve, I think it was. And that was memorialized in their 50th anniversary issue. So, Marin Alternative was a multi-issued thing. There were a couple hundred people who were quite active. We would meet maybe once a month. We had subcommittees and so on.

Ruth Barnett: Most meetings were here because we were really the only older people. Most were students who were going to San Francisco State University or College of Marin, who were still living with their parents who weren't necessarily in the strike. But upset about it because it delayed everybody.

Bill Devlin: What ever happened to Marin Alternative? It morphed into something else?

Alan Barnett: As a matter of fact, it became Marin Action. The same people. All of these big organizations have a kind of shelf life. People burn out and you begin again. And that's been the story, really, of our life, and much of our social life, our private relationships, have been built around our political relationships because the politics took time. They were our neighbors, our friends, people similarly thinking. A number of us came together in 1981 to support Barry Commoner, who had come here to introduce himself and his campaign for the presidency.

Ruth Barnett: We hoped we would get a president like Commoner.

Bill Devlin: That's a whole nother tape.

Alan Barnett: Ruth became "Death Row Ruth."

Ruth Barnett: I used to go every Friday and visit with two, actually, prisoners. David Martinez was a really talented young man who was, as a teenager, he came from Los Angeles. Do you want to hear about this story?

Bill Devlin: By all means.

Ruth Barnett: And he told me his story and I was inclined to believe him. Because what had happened to him, being his mother was white and his father was black.

Alan Barnett: Well, Latino.

Ruth Barnett: Latino, right. He was arrested. Put in jail. And they charged that he had tried to kill somebody or something. I don't know the whole story anymore. He probably had a gun. What do I know? Anyway, he was on death row, and I visited him regularly once a week. I would

go, and the guards at San Quentin were always very strained. They were quite sure I had either a husband or a brother there. "What are you doing there?" Because I always looked kind of, I probably had lipstick on, but I looked pretty middle class, and who was I visiting? And I was visiting him. I'm trying to remember now what happened to David eventually. Apparently the Dowds got involved with him. You know? Doug Dowd. Are you familiar with this?

Bill Devlin: No, I'm not.

Alan Barnett: He was a colleague, actually, of mine at San Jose State University. He's an economist. Very well known, very well liked. Actually he and I, when Maillard was our local Congressman, sixth district, we organized a meeting with him during the war, during the Vietnam War, to press on him. He was a Republican but a liberal Republican, the need, I guess, to get out of Vietnam still. This was about '69, 1970. It indicates somewhere here. So Doug and I had to organize this thing actually at a friend's house in the city. Had a big gathering at Golden Gate Bridge, actually, and they have some kind of conference room and we met with him. But Doug's wife was involved in prison work.

Ruth Barnett: Right. We were all friends because even when we lived in Rochester, New York, before coming here, my brother, went to Cornell when Doug had his first teaching job there. That was his first teaching job.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. He was one of the organizers of SDS. Students for Democratic Society.

Bill Devlin: Oh my. It goes back a long ways.

Alan Barnett: Yeah.

Ruth Barnett: We've got a lot of history here, that's for sure!

Alan Barnett: So any case. What's important, really, is Ruth's work, and I think you were corresponding with a good many prisoners.

Ruth Barnett: No. When David Martinez thought he was definitely going to be executed. And that I must say, from my involvement with the Committee for Prisoner Humanity and Justice, for a very brief time there was no execution. But unfortunately they went back to doing it. I've always been, even when I was still in England, against, I think there was a way in England, when I was already involved with some kind of prison work as a young person, but they had Broadmoor and Dartmoor and people who had done horrible crimes could be sent to these colonies there where there was no danger of their escaping, and I always thought if an island could take care of these people and can get rid of the death penalty, why can't this huge country, there must be certain areas where people could live out their lives and garden or whatever they have to do to help these people.

Alan Barnett: Any case, Ruth was also serving on the Marin Mental Health Association Board.

Ruth Barnett: I was under –

Alan Barnett: With Dorothy Hughes.

Ruth Barnett: I think it's too much for Bill.

Bill Devlin: Excuse me. No, I'm out of tape and to be continued on Side Three. [end of part two] Here we go. Well, one thing before we get to what you're doing these days.

Alan Barnett: Oh, that's a long ways!

Bill Devlin: It's a long ways. One of the things we asked on the questionnaire is what changes have you seen in Mill Valley since you've been here. This is sort of like when Jerry Hauke was running for office, I said, "Jerry, what's the primary issues?" And he says, "Hippies, dogs and taxes."

Ruth Barnett: I love that!

Bill Devlin: And Alan, your questionnaire says, "Changes in Mill Valley from gentry and hippies and intellectuals to yuppies. From politically involved to uninvolved, and less residents serving businesses." Is there anything you'd like to add to that?

Alan Barnett: Well, one of the things I specifically remember, is. Although this was a center, a countercultural center, and some very good people came and lived here. Dan Ellsberg lived here for a while. Great musicians were here, as you know. One of the things I remember is when the City Council voted to remove the slats from the benches around the Book Depot so that people would not be able to sit. That's how conservative city councils became.

One of the battles that we were involved in was that of the reservoir up at the end of Corte Madera Creek. No, this is Corte Madera Creek. It was Cascade Creek. The Cascade Reservoir. One of the tragedies that had occurred there was that a child, three years old I think, had drowned. I guess there was a chain link fence around it at one time. We haven't been there for years. But during the sixties, as one can imagine, it was a congregating place. We even skinny dipped there. And we were at the end of our thirties. We're not pot smokers or dopers of any kind, but that was one of the concerns of people, and particularly the neighbors, because it was a real place where young people congregated and there was a fire danger. They would build campfires and so on.

Ruth Barnett: And young boys particularly.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. Remember the rope swings?

Ruth Barnett: They would swing and they could —

Alan Barnett: Any case, we thought that that place should become a city institution with a lifeguard, police protection, and that it should be safely used. It was a long campaign.

Ruth Barnett: Didn't have time to walk, but it's such a beautiful, from here, to walk to the reservoir and come back on the other side. Alan was always working. We had bicycles. We did it by bicycle. Came back on –

Alan Barnett: Any case, that was one of the struggles. I remember in the early seventies, one was talking about the loss of community serving businesses. Ed Burley. It's not only a recent –

Bill Devlin: Some things don't change.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. It's just become worse. You just couldn't buy. When one of the corners of this became frayed and we needed a large needle. It's very hard to find one anywhere in Marin County.

Ruth Barnett: We had *two* five and ten cent stores when we first came to Mill Valley.

Alan Barnett: And Varney's was our big resource.

Ruth Barnett: And nobody had, I mean, there's no money made when you're buying things like – I came, after all, from a tradition of refugees and immigrants, and look! I'm still wearing some old sweater!

Alan Barnett: We don't give stuff away. Anyway, that intellectual vibrancy of the community, and that kind of lifestyle vibrancy, so that, for instance, we did one forum on new lifestyles. Unfortunately we don't have the names of the people, but the issues themselves indicate work and vocation, because people were finding alternative lifestyles already. One of the things that I think has never been adequately looked at.

Ruth Barnett: You can't buy any wool anymore.

Alan Barnett: That was very recent. Joyce Groves, who was so active on the school board, opened on Blithedale Avenue a sewing shop. Miller Avenue. A sewing shop.

Ruth Barnett: Her two daughters were in there.

Alan Barnett: And our daughter came and they learned to sew. And they made –

Ruth Barnett: In first grade at Old Mill. Ann was the youngest student and Joyce decided there should be a fashion parade. And Ann was so cute, so small and trying hard to learn how to sew and she didn't want to lead this parade. That was not her thing.

Alan Barnett: You know, Cyra McFadden made fun – and money – out of the Mill Valley lifestyle. But it did have a vitality.

Ruth Barnett: Joyce Groves was a fantastic neighbor. She was a very domineering woman. She had a group of us women, because the men were all working, meeting at her house at the corner where later the Decker family lived.

Alan Barnett: And then they went into quilts. That became the big thing.

Bill Devlin: I'm not even going to talk about that. We have *rooms* full of fabric and quilts.

Alan Barnett: Okay. But Joyce was one of the leaders. She and Sally –

Ruth Barnett: Sarah would know all about it.

Alan Barnett: What was Sally's last name?

Ruth Barnett: Groot.

Alan Barnett: Groot. She was one of the leaders, one of the progressive leaders in the community. She was a splendid person.

Bill Devlin: I think we were on a human rights committee together, possibly. With Sally?

Ruth Barnett: Sure. With Sally.

Alan Barnett: I think probably so. We tried to create the human rights committee, in fact we did, in 1968, I think at the time of the assassination of King, that a number of us got that thing going.

Ruth Barnett: And I was stuck. You know, I really couldn't get very involved for many years.

Alan Barnett: But she was very involved.

Ruth Barnett: Well, I *had* to be politically involved.

Alan Barnett: We were saying that you were involved in Mental Health Association of Marin with Dorothy Hughes. Actually, Dorothy lived here for a while.

Ruth Barnett: Did you know Dorothy Hughes?

Bill Devlin: No, I didn't.

Ruth Barnett: A very good woman.

Alan Barnett: She was a leader in the community for mental health.

Ruth Barnett: And very together. Not like me, in all different directions.

Alan Barnett: And we put on bit programs. For instance, we brought E.F. Schumacher here. "Small is Beautiful".

Ruth Barnett: "Small is Beautiful."

Alan Barnett: Which is very much Mill Valley. That kind of thing.

Ruth Barnett: I did help, because I had the technical skills. I could always do the typing of programs and stuff.

Alan Barnett: Now one of the things I wanted to say is, it's always struck me how many, particularly young men, kids who had grown up here in middle class families, had chosen not to go into the professions but into carpentry and other kinds of skilled, trade skills. Largely I think because they had control over their own work situation.

Bill Devlin: Well Alan, one of the things here is that there was a study done several years ago. Not that many years ago. But maybe 15 years ago. Mill Valley has, in the country, has one of the highest proportions of home-based businesses.

Alan Barnett: Like fifteen percent.

Bill Devlin: That's correct.

Alan Barnett: Is that the number you've heard?

Bill Devlin: Yeah. That's the number I recall.

Alan Barnett: I think Marin County has like five percent.

Bill Devlin: Yeah. And we have like 15 percent.

Alan Barnett: Now that means, today, computers. For the most part.

Bill Devlin: Yes.

Alan Barnett: But in those days it meant carpenters.

Ruth Barnett: I still can't work my computer. I'm constantly asking. I'm not somebody who's very technical.

Alan Barnett: Anyway. So it moved from carpentry to computers. That's one way you could sloganize it if you wanted. That need for self employment for control over your own life, to be self directed. Very strong, individualistic. But there is also a readiness to work together with other people. There's a strong communitarian streak here. And again, that's a middle class phenomenon, in contrast to the way it works out in deprived communities, minority communities. Because they don't have the resources. They don't have the money to provide their own services. So they would form community centers. Very different. The community centers where we found murals for the Mill Valley Community Center.

By the way, just a sideline. We strongly opposed the idea of a bathhouse for Mill Valley. We swim. I began swimming every day at San Jose State University in 1970, and so far as possible still do that. And Ruth now swims, but we insist on swimming outdoors over in Strawberry.

Ruth Barnett: We love to swim. We go to the Strawberry Swim Club.

Alan Barnett: And that's a major resource. But also the idea. I remember I would argue with Don Hunter. The insurance companies were the leaders on the design of that pool. They wanted a pool four and a half feet deep. And Don finally agreed to a pool of five feet, I think, in the lane area. Because we were saying, if you're going to teach kids how to swim, they have to feel confident to be in water above their heads.

Bill Devlin: Right.

Ruth Barnett: And now we're teaching.

Alan Barnett: And the insurance was just too much. That's what drove it.

Ruth Barnett: The young ones in your family where we go swimming at Strawberry. They're excellent now when the weather's cold like this the kids are allowed to be in the hot tub. Because you know, when you're shivering, and I after all grew up in Berlin, but I learned to swim when I was five, and I can still swim. I mean, I do mainly breast stroke, you know. I never learned how to crawl. I couldn't ever get it.

Alan Barnett: But we still try to go there. Anyway, that's why we're still here, and creating trouble.

Ruth Barnett: We walk and swim.

Alan Barnett: So. Let's see. Once we got sort of identified with prison issues, particularly through Ruth's work and getting busted, people began to come to us, so that in 1981, I notice there under Item N. Let's see. That's Ruth's.

Ruth Barnett: May I put in a little bit? My mother's second husband was an attorney in London, and my mother volunteered in his office and I would, when I would visit my mother and her second husband, I would spend some time at the law office in London. I've *always* been interested in legal work. But of course, as I didn't have the education to become or even want to become a lawyer myself, because you know in England there's a different system.

Alan Barnett: Between barristers and solicitors.

Ruth Barnett: So I have only the typing to do, which my mother dutifully did for.

Alan Barnett: He did the research. Any case, we got involved in this case of Larry Justice and Earl Gibson, who were black prisoners and were accused of murdering a guard in the hospital. We were persuaded by the evidence that they were innocent, and provided our guests legal defense and jury work and so on. And they were acquitted finally. They had a very good defense.

Ruth Barnett: That was one of the few successes.

Alan Barnett: And then we got involved in the case of Steve Bingham. Do you remember who Steve is?

Bill Devlin: I certainly do.

Alan Barnett: Let me illustrate.

Bill Devlin: We're taking a break here. [tape stops]

Alan Barnett: I got involved in the legal defense of Steven Bigham, which was a Bay Area wide, really a national effort. Ruth was involved in jury investigation, and they assembled an incredible jury. Mary Bradford, who lives in Park Terrace, was the principal of a high school in Los Angeles.

Bill Devlin: I don't know her.

Ruth Barnett: She's older than we are. I don't think anybody's older than Alan.

Alan Barnett: She was just becoming a grandmother and that became a focus for the jury. Mary Vesey, who lives here in Mill Valley, I met recently.

Ruth Barnett: Really?

Alan Barnett: Yeah. She even donated some money to the Marin Peace and Justice Coalition. We were standing there in the parking lot of Safeway.

Ruth Barnett: She was on the panel.

Alan Barnett: She was one of the jurists.

Any case, it was just to say he had a very good legal defense. He had a very good attorney.

Ruth Barnett: Two attorneys. A man and a woman.

Alan Barnett: And you can imagine that the DA was really intent on convicting him.

Ruth Barnett: Ah. He was searching up and down.

Alan Barnett: He thought he had a case won. Absolutely.

Bill Devlin: Ultimately he was acquitted.

Alan Barnett: He was acquitted after a three-month trial.

Ruth Barnett: Three months! I had to be there every day.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. We came whenever we could.

Ruth Barnett: Every day! And I had to wear hose and heels and all these things I didn't particularly enjoy.

Alan Barnett: I guess Steven was a Harvard lawyer, had been the head of the Mississippi summer project registering black voters during the Civil Rights struggle. So he had a good resume and very good politics. Any case, he was acquitted. We were all very close by then, and have remained friends. In fact, we just saw him last night.

Ruth Barnett: Last night. His daughter's in Africa now.

Alan Barnett: And in fact they –

Ruth Barnett: He's got a brilliant daughter.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. She was conceived just after the trial. Sylvia.

Ruth Barnett: And they only got married legally after.

Alan Barnett: No, he was here. Because she's in jail now. So Steve was, and in fact, Steve's grandfather was Hiram Bingham who discovered Machu Picchu.

Bill Devlin: Oh for heaven sake.

Ruth Barnett: There's lots of history in that family.

Alan Barnett: So any case, one of the unique things that came out of that trial was that a number of the jurors were from Mill Valley. Mary Vesey, Mary Bradford. Those are the only names that come to mind. They all fell in love with Steve, because he was – he still is – a handsome guy. He's very soft spoken. Not a great speaker, actually, but very soft spoken. Very smart and very decent. This was the only jury I have ever known that would have picnics afterwards. For years. Reunions. Absolutely. Sometimes we would all come.

Ruth Barnett: Can you imagine sitting there and having to listen to the DA.

Alan Barnett: Three months.

Ruth Barnett: It was horrible.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. He became a judge.

Bill Devlin: Oh! That's um –

Ruth Barnett: I've forgotten his name.

Bill Devlin: The guy in the wheelchair.

Ruth Barnett: Yeah!

Bill Devlin: Who was in the courtroom at the shooting.

Ruth Barnett: Yes, yes, yes.

Bill Devlin: Gary Thomas.

Ruth Barnett: Gary Thomas.

Alan Barnett: No. That wasn't the DA.

Ruth Barnett: He was the judge. He was the judge, Gary Thomas. Wasn't he?

Bill Devlin: Yes. He became a judge.

Alan Barnett: I know he became a judge.

Ruth Barnett: He was promoted.

Alan Barnett: I would have thought that he would have recused himself, because after all the trial was about. It was another judge. Anyway, the trial turned out well. So that was two days before your birthday or *was* your birthday, June 27th, 1986. So here we had a great defense group – what to do with it? And we got involved with the Marin County jail. Because Prandi, and particularly Doyle, who was the assistant sheriff. They had an Oedipus complex and wanted to double the size of the system. The system was about 300 people, which included the Honor Farm. They wanted to build this big new jail at the Civic Center. So we organized.

Ruth Barnett: We wanted a smaller jail.

Alan Barnett: No. They wanted a jail that would handle 600 people. Thought they would need them. And we argued there's no history of criminality in Marin County. Not to justify anything of that scale. So we did a bond measure. No. We did a ballot measure. We did three ballot measures. Won all three of them. And one of the notable things is, we got the Marin Taxpayers Association to join us.

Bill Devlin: Now that is an interesting combination.

Alan Barnett: Because they didn't want to spend money on something that they recognized was unnecessary. I'm just trying to think of the Colonel.

Bill Devlin: Fielding Greaves?

Alan Barnett: Fielding Greaves! He and I used to do articles against each other for years, and he would write against Frank Scott more recently in the *IJ*. Fielding became a friend, and the basis of the friendship was this group, was the cause of not building a big jail. And at the end, and I think I was the treasurer, which was a terrible job. Because I'm not great at money. We returned to him money that they had raised for the cause, because we hadn't spent it all at the end of one of those ballot measures. He said, "This is the first time that that has ever happened. We've been involved before. Money wasn't returned to us."

Any case, we won three times. The supervisors insisted on building a jail. Then it suddenly occurred to them they didn't have the money for it. And we felt that we really had won, because we had delayed them for at least six years. They finally built the jail in '94. but we had defeated them all those times. As a matter of fact, George Lucas became one of the big contributors against the building of the jail. For environmental reasons.

So any case, that was another issue. By then it was immigration issues that we morphed to. The last measure was '94, and it was in '94 that Proposition 187 was put on the ballot, which was a

proposition that would deny particularly health and social services to the undocumented and their families. And we organized an opposition to that and it turned out that Marin County became one of eight counties of California's 53 that opposed it when it came to vote. And finally the State Supreme Court or the U.S. Supreme Court, I'm not sure which, invalidated the proposition.

Bill Devlin: Let's move on. There's an awful lot here. I feel kind of sorry for the transcriber, but of course.

Alan Barnett: Oh, it's got to be transcribed?

Bill Devlin: Oh yes.

Alan Barnett: It's not kept as tape?

Bill Devlin: Well, it'll be kept as tape under lock and key, but you'll have a chance to edit before it becomes part and parcel of the History Room. But from there, I know that you did quite a bit with the welfare and immigration working group. But let's get into, if we can, what happened in the '90s and beyond with the peace movement. How did that start out?

Alan Barnett: Well, that was started out by [unintelligible] –

Ruth Barnett: [unintelligible] who is no longer alive. This is something –

Alan Barnett: She was a Mill Valley resident.

Ruth Barnett: She was a Mill Valley resident and she was the mother of the woman who had the art store.

Alan Barnett: Gail.

Bill Devlin: Gail Evans.

Ruth Barnett: Right. And I've always thought about it. Mathilda who later lived in the only cheap housing she could get, which was, you know, the senior housing right.

Alan Barnett: On Molino. It was very nice. Oh, it must have been one of the earliest things they built on the hill.

Ruth Barnett: Always walking along the avenue. And she couldn't even walk anymore to Gail Evans' store. And I would always say Mathilda, she was always sort of a mother substitute for me. I adored this woman who was, you know, striding along.

Alan Barnett: She had been a school teacher in Chicago.

Ruth Barnett: She had been a school teacher in Chicago, and I always thought, and I still think, and that brings it up to date, that there should be a bus or some kind of collective, if you've traveled in Mexico City, to travel around.

Alan Barnett: It's a little van.

Ruth Barnett: Just a little van, to help this old woman who couldn't even go to visit her daughter. She couldn't walk.

Alan Barnett: She was awarded a lifetime membership in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Ruth Barnett: Wanted me to join that organization, and I'm by nature not a joiner.

Alan Barnett: We've joined so many things.

Ruth Barnett: Well, to join and be at meetings.

Alan Barnett: Oh, she does all of that. She's always stuffing envelopes.

Ruth Barnett: Stuffing envelopes is okay.

Alan Barnett: Any case.

Ruth Barnett: But having to type and write the letters and stuff like that.

Alan Barnett: You had asked.

Bill Devlin: I'd asked about the Mill Valley for Peace in the Middle East.

Alan Barnett: Oh, that's right. Yes. That happened in '91, of course, when we attacked Iraq. Kuwait first, and so on. That's when the candlelight march was held in the Square and we tried to persuade the city council to pass a resolution against intervention. And it of course didn't want to get involved and it had the strength of this provision, this bylaw, by now, about not getting involved in such issues. So we knew the war, or feared the war, was coming, and there were, oh, maybe 15 or 20 people who, many more, picketed right here at Tam Junction, I remember. And I remember the day that the war was announced. That the attack was announced. We already were meeting at four. We would meet at the morning commute and the evening commute. I was out there at four o'clock, having already learned that the US had attacked.

So we continued to vigil, and of course it was a very quick war. Then we re-formed, after 9/11, and that was 10 years later. Actually, it's amazing. The current Marin Peace and Justice Coalition, there are other organizations that bridged this, but the attack of course was a Tuesday

morning here, and we had our first meeting Friday evening at Isabelle Cook School on Sir Francis Drake Blvd. One thousand Sir Francis Drake, which is San Anselmo, I guess. Yeah. It's right near the Red Hill shopping center. Seventy people turned up that evening, and we had our first demonstration against the impending attack on Afghanistan the following Monday, I think.

Bill Devlin: That's pretty quick organization.

Alan Barnett: Well, it's because people were attuned. Had been actually demonstrating for months before, at Tam Junction primarily, trying to get –

Ruth Barnett: Right. We would stand there. I was still with Mathilda.

Alan Barnett: And we would –

Ruth Barnett: And who was the tall man we knew? He died already several years ago. From Sausalito. We used to have these meetings.

Alan Barnett: Peter Cunningham

Ruth Barnett: Peter Cunningham. Did you know him?

Bill Devlin: No. I didn't.

Alan Barnett: He was a Haiti person. He supported a charity that he got us to support. Actually, I even did an article on Haitian murals for Art in America back in '91 or something like that. But, yeah. Mill Valley – what is it called? Mill Valley for Peace in the Middle East? Or Coalition.

Bill Devlin: No, no. I'm on another page here. Mill Valley for Peace in the Middle East.

Alan Barnett: So formed that and we're still vigiling at Camino Alto and Blithedale every Friday for an hour and a half.

Bill Devlin: But aren't most of those people, isn't that sort of a Redwoods offshoot or something, to a certain extent?

Alan Barnett: Actually, we were out there much before the Seniors for Peace did. We've always supported them and attended their events.

Ruth Barnett: We go over there once in a while when there's a big demonstration.

Alan Barnett: Sure. We sometimes put them together.

Ruth Barnett: But I have for instance a friend. We worked together at the Museum of Modern Art when she was 20 and I was 25. And she worked in the Redwoods. But she will not join the peace contingent. So we aren't, or shall we say, we've remained close as friends but Alan and I, I guess.

Alan Barnett: There are 300 people, I think, in Seniors for Peace. I'm not quite sure when they formed. It may have been at the time of the Iraq war. The second war.

Ruth Barnett: That's when we did join.

Alan Barnett: '83. But we were out since '81, on that street. And as a matter of fact, I could show you. A *Washington Post* stringer came over one day, and took some photographs.

Ruth Barnett: Can we show them?

Alan Barnett: I think I could find it. And I got word from a friend in Australia who told me, "Did you know that you were on the front page of the *Washington Post*?" So I went up to Borders and bought one. It was a Sunday Washington Post. A little photo, about so big, of me holding my oil drum, bleeding oil drum, which you may have seen, there on Camino Alto. So Mill Valley once again hit the national pages.

Ruth Barnett: And also in Berlin. We have a friend Agnes.

Alan Barnett: Who's come here and demonstrated.

Ruth Barnett: And demonstrated with us.

Alan Barnett: Actually the night of the invasion of Iraq we had a circle on the Square, and that group. I think Move On in some senses continued organizing. That group. Recently, maybe annually, they do a demonstration on the Square. Move On does. Now Move On, unfortunately, has moved away from the war because they think it's a loser. Just two weeks ago they decided on a Washington DC retreat to turn their attentions to the negotiation that's going on now between Bush and al-Maliki, the Prime Minister of Iraq, for permanent basing of US troops. That certainly needs to be attacked, but you don't give up on the war issue.

But anyway, yeah, we've been out there every, if it's not totally inclement, we'll be out there on Friday afternoons. So that has stayed together. And our hair gets grayer. We did it during the Vietnam War. One thing we missed, and if you want to take this I'll show you, because it's up on a bulletin board next door. In 1969, I think it was, Larry Beck, who was a doctor here. His wife still lives here. They're separated now. Larry received some money. It was 1969 I think, from a bequest.

Ruth Barnett: From a grandfather.

Alan Barnett: Yeah. Had died. And he bought an ad in the *Chronicle.* I think it cost $11,000.

Ruth Barnett: *New York Times*, the ad came in.

Alan Barnett: No. This was an ad for the *Chronicle.* Any rate, addressed to Alan Cranston, who was then our senator, calling on him to withdraw from Iraq. No. Vietnam. This was 1969.

Ruth Barnett: Right. Vietnam.

Alan Barnett: And that began a new project. We got lots of – there was a request for people to help pay for the ad, and Larry got back more than he invested. We had learned that the telephone tax that had been laid in 1968, I think it was, by the federal government, for 10 percent of your telephone bill, was a tax specifically to support the war. It was the only tax that was laid on the public, and we thought that that would be an effective way to do some not very risky civil disobedience and get the public involved in it. So we created the Marin County, here in Mill Valley, the Telephone War Tax protest.

Ruth Barnett: I've got to correct something you said, Alan. Larry did not get back the money he inherited. Because we were there sitting in the Becks' living room and the idea was that you could fill out a coupon and send a donation. And Larry thought that it would be a nice thing for his family to know how the rest of the community appreciated for this big sum of money.

Alan Barnett: And he didn't get back enough?

Ruth Barnett: No. he didn't get it back. Because we gave up on sending letters to thank people for all the five dollar. This was a labor of love. So it was incorrect, what you just said.

Alan Barnett: Well, that may be. As it turned out we collected much more money than that. We collected, in the end, I'll tell you. The idea of the Marin County Telephone War Tax Protest focused here. We had an accountant. His son worked for the *Mill Valley Record* and is still around. What were their names? They lived at the corner of Hillside and Blithedale. He was an accountant who devoted his time. The ladies helped him out keeping records. We were asking people to withhold their telephone tax, put it in an escrow account at Wells Fargo here in Mill Valley. Pending the adjudication of a lawsuit that we brought against the federal government charging that it was an illegal war tax because the war was undeclared. It was brought before a federal judge. Schnocke, his name was.

Ruth Barnett: Very conservative.

Alan Barnett: Very conservative. But we had good attorneys, and we collected $70,000 from people who were withholding. It became the Northern California Telephone War Tax Protest and then we began getting money from all over the country from people who heard about it. We

finally lost in court. But in the meantime, the IRS would come after people, and we sent out a monthly newsletter trying to tell people what to do..

Ruth Barnett: If they come to arrest you.

Alan Barnett: What to do. What to say. They threatened to take TV sets, to take their cars. We said, "You can have the car hoisted on the tow truck and write them a check for the $5 you owe the IRS and they'll have to drop it." There were lots of adventures in that one. But finally we lost in the courts, and we wrote everybody, "We'll give you an alternative. We can return to every one of you your money, because we kept careful records, or we can donate it to a peace organization." We ended up giving the American Friends Service Committee $70,000. So that was another one of our projects.

Bill Devlin: Well, Alan and Ruth, we've been here for, gosh – we could keep going on this. What I'd like to ask you is what happens next? What would you like to be known for?

Alan Barnett: All of it.

Bill Devlin: All of it. What happens next with the peace movement? What do you see going on?

Alan Barnett: Okay. What we are presently involved in is trying to capitalize on this court decision four years ago and get the Mill Valley City Council, number one, to rescind the bylaw that indicates they will not act on the kinds of issues we think that they should. We're arguing that this is one of the functions and part of the vitality of any community, to be involved in national decision making, decisions that affect *all* of us, and what we're facing is a Congress and a president, no matter how good our representation is, and we've always supported, at least in recent years, Lynn Woolsey, and have a very nice, almost personal, relationship with her. Obviously, it's not been enough. Her votes and the votes out of the Iraq caucus.

And what we would like to see happen is that cities all over the country would build a groundswell of opposition to the war and occupation of Iraq, and to restore, and I'll give you a copy of our document, the whole notion that people should be using their city councils, which is the public body closest to them, and can best represent them, and apparently are mandated by the court to represent them at higher levels of government. We would like to see that become part of civic life of Mill Valley and Marin County and every community across the country.

Bill Devlin: All issues are local.

Alan Barnett: That's right. That's right. So that is the immediate task before us. It's a huge one. We know the difficulties. We're trying to get help from national organizations. We're working with Global Exchange, with United for Peace and Justice, which are national organizations now. Because we need to be able to work, if we get everybody involved at the local level, people need to know that it's going to have some effect at the end of the day. What we hope is that Congress

will ultimately be doing its job, but we elect Woolsey over and over again, can't do much more there. She stands up every session and speaks against the war.

Ruth Barnett: We've sat in the living rooms of Nancy Pelosi and we know Barbara Boxer. I've known her since Barbara's a few years younger than I am and we're both very short and we hug.

Alan Barnett: Anyway. So that is the project.

Bill Devlin: Well, I wish you all the luck in the world with your endeavors because I know both of you have a finely developed sense of justice and I appreciate that. And thank you for letting me into your home. What happens next is we will get a transcriber to put this down, and I'm afraid there's going to be a lot of blanks in there where we're all talking at the same time, which is why most times we like to have just strictly a one on one, but knowing that you're both so involved in what you've been doing together, I felt that this was one of those exceptions. I like to break rules too.

Alan Barnett: Well, we like to think of ourselves as comrades in arms.

Ruth Barnett: Alan wanted me to be quiet, and I can't be quiet, because of my own background, which was, as you know, as a refugee and an immigrant and all that. I have very strong feelings.

Alan Barnett: So let me say once again. Comrades in arms.

Bill Devlin: Very good. All right. On that I thank you, and we're going off the tape and we'll be getting back to you with the transcription and we'll all have a chance to revisit that.

Alan Barnett: Let me just show you the poster of the Disconnect the War [unintelligible] telephone. It's up on the wall next door. [end of part three]