

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

**CATHERINE SHAW**

**An Oral History Interview  
Conducted by Mari Allen in 2016**

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In this oral history, Mill Valley resident Catherine Shaw recounts her “life in the woods” with her husband and their two daughters. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1943, Catherine moved out to the West Coast with her family as a child, living first in San Diego and then Bellingham, Washington. Catherine recalls meeting her future husband, Larry Shaw, at Reed College in Portland, and their wedding a few years later in 1963 on Mount Diablo in the East Bay. Catherine and Larry moved to Mill Valley in 1975 when she was pregnant with their second daughter, and she fondly recalls the little house in the woods that they instantly fell in love with. She discusses Larry’s career at the Exploratorium and his invention of Pi Day, which is now celebrated in Mill Valley’s schools and around the world. She describes their involvement over the years in the Buddhist Temple of Marin and the Marin Interfaith Council, and recounts going back to school at the age of 50 to get a Masters in Buddhist Studies from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Catherine speaks movingly about the depth of her relationship with her husband, describes his stroke and subsequent illness, and shares many memories about their Pi Day celebrations, their numerous “re-weddings,” and their life together as Buddhists.

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## Oral History of Catherine Shaw

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**Oral History of Catherine Shaw**  
**October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

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

**0:00:04 Mari Allen:** Good morning, I am Mari Allen, volunteer interviewer with the Mill Valley Public Library, doing an oral history of Catherine Shaw, on Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 10:00 AM. And Catherine, if you can introduce yourself?

**0:00:23 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. I'm Catherine Shaw, and I live in Mill Valley.

**0:00:27 Mari Allen:** Very good, thank you. So let's begin. Tell me first about yourself, where you were born, and then also about your husband, who you're going to be speaking about as well.

**0:00:41 Catherine Shaw:** My name's Catherine Shaw. I was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1943, in the same hospital where my mother had been born almost 26 years before. My father was in the Air Force, so we moved around a good deal. I came to Mill Valley in 1975, when I was pregnant with our second child. Professionally, when I was young, I worked as a draftsman in engineering offices. I drew, among other things, the underground plans for the San Francisco International Airport. [chuckles] When our older child went into 7<sup>th</sup> grade, it was a biology class, and biology was one of my many undergraduate majors, and after the teacher explained what the class was going to be, it just sounded wonderful. In fact, interestingly, it was very much the same as my mother's college-level zoology class in the 1930s, that's how things have changed from the '30s to the '80s. So afterwards I said, "This sounds like a really good class, but it sounds very labor-intensive, I'll volunteer some help." And she said, "Oh, wonderful, just another pair of hands." I said, "I do have a background in biology," and she said, "Oh! So good! My degree is in 18<sup>th</sup> century literature." [laughs]

So she actually referred to me as her teacher while I was officially her teacher's aid. And from that, I got into teaching ESL, both at the Mill Valley Middle School and at Tam. When the children were grown, I went back to school and finished my Master's in Buddhist Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

**0:02:32 Mari Allen:** And what year was that?

**0:02:35 Catherine Shaw:** Finished in 2000. I was 50 when I started. [chuckles] And then worked for a while as the manager of the Buddhist bookstore, which is at the Buddhist Churches of — or was at the time — at the Buddhist Churches of America headquarters, at Pine and Octavia, in San Francisco. In 2003, my father, who had been caring for my mother for quite a few years, got very sick himself. And I went to Bellingham, where they lived, and for the next eight and a half years, was more there than here taking care of them.

**0:03:13 Mari Allen:** In Bellingham, Washington?

**0:03:14 Catherine Shaw:** Washington, yes. Very good. Many people know. [chuckles]

**0:03:18 Mari Allen:** So Catherine, let me backtrack a little bit. So you were born in Kentucky. Where did you go to high school?

**0:03:26 Catherine Shaw:** In Bellingham, Washington.

**0:03:27 Mari Allen:** Okay. So you —

**0:03:27 Catherine Shaw:** My parents moved there when I was 14. I went to what was then called Junior High School in San Diego, California. When my father finished his PhD in psychology, he resigned his commission in the Air Force, went to work as a civilian for the Navy doing the same work, which was testing recruits to see where to put them. And finally, finally, after trying for years, he got an academic position as associate professor at Western Washington University in Bellingham. So that's why we were there.

**0:03:58 Mari Allen:** And so you graduated from high school —

**0:04:00 Catherine Shaw:** No, I did not.

**0:04:00 Mari Allen:** There. Oh, you didn't. So continue telling me your story. We need to go way back. [laughs]

**0:04:07 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. Well, I was born in February, which means that I started elementary school at six and a half instead of six, which was heartbreaking to my parents, who grew up in the age when you skipped grades if you were smart, and they just couldn't believe it, that I couldn't start at five and a half. And finally, by the end of the whole thing, they realized that if I could get accepted into college, I wouldn't have to finish high school. [chuckles] So I only went — in those days, it was three years of junior high and three years of high school — so I only went to two years of the high school and then was accepted at Reed College in Portland and so went off to there, at 17 and a half instead of 18 and a half. So, no, I didn't graduate. When I realized I wasn't going to finish at Reed, I took the GED test, so I do have a high school diploma, which I needed to get a BA and a MA, of course.

**0:05:00 Mari Allen:** And your Master's is also from Reed?

**0:05:01 Catherine Shaw:** No, it's from the Institute of Buddhist Studies, part of the Graduate Theological Union.

**0:05:04 Mari Allen:** Okay, so you were talking about being a draftsman?

**0:05:07 Catherine Shaw:** Mm-hmm.

**0:05:08 Mari Allen:** So what was your undergraduate degree in, then?

**0:05:11 Catherine Shaw:** Well, [chuckles] I went five different times. The draftsman came from architecture; that was the only one that actually led to anything. Twice in biology—no, thrice in biology, twice in art, once in architecture, finally graduated in humanities, from New College of California in San Francisco, which no longer exists. [chuckles] So, very checkered academic career. Coming from a family of devoted academics, I was a bit of a black sheep.

**0:05:40 Mari Allen:** And how many siblings do you have?

**0:05:41 Catherine Shaw:** None.

**0:05:42 Mari Allen:** None. Okay. And so, when you graduated from Reed College, or left Reed college —

**0:05:50 Catherine Shaw:** Yes, after one year.

**0:05:50 Mari Allen:** And then you arrived in San Francisco in 1975, you said?

**0:05:55 Catherine Shaw:** In Mill Valley.

**0:05:56 Mari Allen:** Oh, okay. When did you get to —

**0:05:58 Catherine Shaw:** Okay, let's see — pretty much immediately. Most of my adult life has been in the Bay Area. Met my husband at Reed —

**0:06:07 Mari Allen:** So tell me a little bit about Larry, too.

**0:06:10 Catherine Shaw:** Okay, here we go. This is the more interesting stuff.  
[chuckles]

**0:06:12 Mari Allen:** Oh, no, not at all.

**0:06:14 Catherine Shaw:** He was born in Washington DC, because his parents were there, because his father worked for the Department of Agriculture. When he was a year and a half, they came to the Bay Area, and his father worked in Albany. They lived in Albany 'til he was 10, when they —

**0:06:28 Mari Allen:** And what is Larry's birthdate?

**0:06:30 Catherine Shaw:** August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1939. He graduated from Reed. So he went to Pleasant Hill High School, graduated from Reed in physics, went to work at Lawrence Livermore, where he had been working in the summers. And he did well enough as a summer intern there that they started hiring other summer interns. And then, after he went to work there as a junior physicist, he realized how good his Reed education was when

his lab technician also had a degree in physics from Fresno State. And it was accurate, who should be the physicist and who should be the technician. He worked there for a few years. We got married in 1963.

**0:07:15 Mari Allen:** And you met at Reed, you said.

**0:07:17 Catherine Shaw:** We met at Reed. That was my freshman year, and it was his senior year.

**0:07:20 Mari Allen:** Oh, okay.

**0:07:23 Catherine Shaw:** After a year at Reed, I went briefly to the art school in Portland, and then hitchhiked around, and at one time found myself and a friend stranded in Tracy. [chuckles]

So we added up our money and finally had enough to take the bus to Livermore. I said, “I know someone who lives in Livermore.” [chuckles] So we arrived in Livermore. “Larry Shaw” I found in the phone book, went to an address, and left our stuff there. We went out — I guess we had enough of our money to get something to eat — came back, and here was a total stranger. There were two Larry Shaws at Livermore. [chuckles]

**0:07:57 Mari Allen:** Oh, my gosh!

**0:08:00 Catherine Shaw:** And they both worked at the lab, so this one knew the other one, and put us in his car and drove us up. By that time, it was rather late. And the second Larry Shaw got out of bed to greet us, and brought [laughs] —

**0:08:11 Mari Allen:** Catherine! [laughs]

**0:08:16 Mari Allen:** And what was your maiden name?

**0:08:17 Catherine Shaw:** Adams.

**0:08:18 Mari Allen:** Adams. So you were Catherine Adams when you met Larry Shaw number two at his place in Livermore.

**0:08:23 Catherine Shaw:** Right, right. Which was easy bicycling distance to the lab. So soon after he took us in to San Francisco —

[background conversation]

And we saw, excuse me, we saw each other off and on, thereafter. Let’s see, what year would that have been? I guess ’61 about. And then we were married in ’63.

**0:09:00 Mari Allen:** Where were you married?

**0:09:03 Catherine Shaw:** On the slopes of Mount Diablo. We started the — or one of the starts of the pagan community in the Bay Area, and one of the things I brought was a photo album of one of our re-weddings. We decided we should get married every seven years, since it's known that the body has pretty much become new every seven years. One wouldn't want to be living in sin, so [chuckles] a poet and scholar wrote the wedding ceremony.

**0:09:39 Mari Allen:** And what was the date of that?

**0:09:42 Catherine Shaw:** The full moon in June of 1963, when I was 20 and he was almost 24. I don't remember the monthly date because every one after it was simply the full moon in June every anniversary and varied from year to year monthly date-wise. At that time, he was working at Livermore. And he retired [chuckles] at age 24, and we and our cat drove up the Oregon coast, and eventually ran totally out of money while waiting for his retirement check. [chuckles] And it was raining the whole time. Sometimes we slept in the car because it was just too rainy to do anything else. The cat would go out in the evening and come back dry in the morning, somehow. [chuckles]

**0:10:41 Mari Allen:** Oh, my gosh. And you said you have children?

**0:10:43 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. We have two children born in 1972 and 1975.

**0:10:48 Mari Allen:** And what are their names?

**0:10:49 Catherine Shaw:** Tara and Sara.

**0:10:52 Mari Allen:** And where are they now?

**0:10:54 Catherine Shaw:** Tara is in Berkeley. She is a Kaiser physician in sports medicine. For a while, she was the only sports medicine physician in all of the Oakland Kaiser. Now they've hired another. Sara is in Spokane; she's a veterinarian.

**0:11:12 Mari Allen:** And what high school did they go to?

**0:11:15 Catherine Shaw:** Well, they both went to Tam to start with. Sara is a very independent soul and couldn't stand regimentation. She lasted one semester, and went to San Andreas, which, at the time, was quite a good school. Since then, it's been combined with what they call the continuation school, so I understand it isn't as good as it was, but at the time, those were two very different things. The independent study school —

**0:11:39 Mari Allen:** Has become Tamiscal, which is where my oldest daughter goes.

**0:11:42 Catherine Shaw:** Oh! So it must still be good, then! [chuckles]

**0:11:44 Mari Allen:** Yes. So San Andreas is one, but Tamiscal is the independent study school. That's what spun off.



**0:11:50 Catherine Shaw:** Oh! How interesting.

**0:11:50 Mari Allen:** Yeah, so it still exists.

**0:11:51 Catherine Shaw:** Oh, wonderful. I'm so glad. The teachers were really, really good. And they encouraged her to take a California high school test at age 16, which she did. It supposedly is equivalent to passing in the upper half of your class. She said it was very, very easy. And it didn't impress her with what the upper half of high school might be. [chuckles] So she graduated from there. Tara was valedictorian at Tam. She does very well, in well-structured environments.

**0:12:23 Mari Allen:** And remind me again, who is the elder one?

**0:12:25 Catherine Shaw:** The elder one is Tara. The one who likes structure.

**0:12:28 Mari Allen:** Very interesting.

**0:12:30 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. Although she married a woman who likes structure even better than she does. [laughs] Which became evident when they had children. Tara bore the children, who were twins, and so, took a lot of care, and the grandparents would come and we would walk around a lot to put them to sleep. And when it was Tara and Larry and I, we would kind of drift across the streets. And when it was Sarah — her spouse is also the same name as her sister, different spelling — and Larry and I, we would go to each corner exactly, turn exactly, cross on the crosswalk, go to the next corner exactly. [chuckles]

**0:13:15 Mari Allen:** And how old are your grandchildren?

**0:13:16 Catherine Shaw:** Seven.

**0:13:17 Mari Allen:** Okay.

**0:13:18 Catherine Shaw:** They are now in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. First year they've been separated.

**0:13:21 Mari Allen:** Oh, okay. And where are they in school?

**0:13:23 Catherine Shaw:** Martin Luther — no, excuse me, Malcolm X. Martin Luther King is middle school. Malcolm X is elementary. Very good school.

**0:13:35 Mari Allen:** In what?

**0:13:35 Catherine Shaw:** In Berkeley.

**0:13:36 Mari Allen:** In Berkeley. Okay. Let's go back to you and Larry. So, when did he get involved working with the Exploratorium?

**0:13:47 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. What year? It was shortly after it started. It was 1972. And a good friend, that we had lived with down the peninsula, had somehow found out about it and was head of electronics, and hired Larry to be the second person in electronics. 1972, he worked there until 2005. So a long time. And during that time, he did just about everything that there is to do there. At first, of course, the staff was very small, and everybody did everything. But as it went along, electronics hired more people and there got to be more departments. One of the more interesting sub-careers was in a program they have called “Artist in Residence.” Various artists will come and create something. And he was the technical help for the artist. He did some very interesting things. It also led us to having free admission at every avant-garde thing in the city for a number of years, which was quite delightful.

**0:15:01 Mari Allen:** And one thing that students in Mill Valley know about. So every year, now, at Mill Valley Middle School, they celebrate something on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 314, that is known as “Pi Day.” And all the students bring a pie of some sort. And when you Google that, “Pi Day,” the first name that pops up is Larry Shaw.

**0:15:24 Catherine Shaw:** Yes.

**0:15:24 Mari Allen:** Can you tell me a little bit about that? Because when I tell students that the inventor of Pi Day resides in Mill Valley, they are just shocked. [chuckles] So tell me about that very, innovative idea.

**0:15:40 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. When Frank Oppenheimer, the founder, died, there was an interregnum which was somewhat difficult, and the next director was not a good fit. He was a good person, but not a good fit. So they were having difficulties. In fact, during that period, we happened to be in London, and at the Natural History Museum there, they asked us all about it. And we knew nothing, and they kept assuming that we were simply hiding the truth. [chuckles] And later we learned that many small, independent museums die under those circumstances, and that was what was expected of the Exploratorium. So they had an employees’ retreat, and staff retreated at Asilomar for a day or two. And during the course of that, Larry came up with the idea of Pi Day as something to unify the staff. And developed a Pi Shrine, which I have with me.

**0:16:43 Mari Allen:** What is it called?

**0:16:44 Catherine Shaw:** This is the Pi Shrine.

**0:16:46 Mari Allen:** A Pi Shrine.

**0:16:47 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. Here it is.

**0:16:49 Mari Allen:** Oh! My goodness, okay. Well, afterwards, I’ll take a photograph of it.

**0:16:51 Catherine Shaw:** Yes, yes, yes. The new Exploratorium has a new Pi Shrine. And so, there was a ceremony of leaving the old Pi Shrine and taking this one up. In the old Exploratorium, there was a circular building, in the center, a classroom, and then upstairs were exhibits. So in the center of the circle, of the circular building, they installed the circular Pi Shrine, with some ceremony. And then every year, at March 14<sup>th</sup>, at 1:59 in the afternoon, we would have a little pi parade, which Larry led — I have some pictures of that — and circumambulate the Pi Shrine, three and a seventh times, of course. And then eventually, it was discovered that that was also Einstein's birthday. Our younger daughter was doing a paper on him and said, "Dad, did you know Einstein was born on Pi Day?" So then we would sing "Happy Birthday" to him. The first year of all it was on a Monday, when the museum is closed. So we thought eating pie would be appropriate, and we got coffee, and tea, and cream, and plates, and pie, and the staff would get together and have a little celebration.

**0:18:08 Mari Allen:** And let me clarify for the transcriber that the "pi" that we're discussing for Pi Day is P-I. Pi Day: 3.14.

**0:18:17 Catherine Shaw:** 15 —

**0:18:17 Mari Allen:** On, and on, and on. [chuckles] And the "pie" that we're talking about that was brought in is P-I-E. Pie that is eaten.

**0:18:27 Catherine Shaw:** Which is usually round, and therefore appropriate. [chuckles] And we had other round things as well. Pi: Larry refers to it as "the interdimensional rotator." It changes one dimension into two by its relationship between the diameter and circumference of the circle. It also has many other applications, it turns out. And as you pointed out, goes on forever. It never repeats. It is far more random than the best random number generator ever invented. There's a little game of finding one's birthday and hidden things like that, which you can. Any sequence of numbers that can exist somewhere, most likely is in pi. It's been now worked out to, I have no idea how many places, but far more than are necessary to measure the circumference of the universe to millimeters.

**0:19:24 Mari Allen:** Wow! And then I had read that Pi Day was begun in 1988. And then I also read that, I believe in 2009, the United States House of Representatives recognized Pi Day. I wrote down the date. I think it's March — well, it's probably 3/14, March 14, 2009 — Pi Day was given an official recognition by the U.S. House of Representatives.

**0:19:54 Catherine Shaw:** Yes, this is true. And it's also celebrated internationally. Now, many places in the world, of course, do not date things as we do, month/day/year, but rather do day/month/year. So they have to have Pi Approximation Day, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6/22. [laughs] No, July 22<sup>nd</sup>. The real date is July 22<sup>nd</sup> with the day first: 22 July or 22/7, as closely as Pi can be approximated as a ratio. But still, 3/1/4, having been the original one, is pretty much the official Pi Day, even where it doesn't quite match. [chuckles] And so, after a few years of it being just staff, it did occur, of course, on a day when the

museum was open and whoever chanced by were told about it, and invited to eat pie. Eventually, the marketing department came to exist and find out about it. And it got more widely spread, and they even got Marie Callender and Safeway to donate pies. And we started having, we should say, lectures and events in the McBean, the old theater, in the old museum, and then the Pi Parade with a boom box with the digits of pi, to ‘Pomp and Circumstance,’ going up the stairs and around. So it got bigger and bigger. And as you say, now, it’s celebrated everywhere, not just at the Exploratorium. In fact, many people are unaware that it started at the Exploratorium.

**0:21:24 Mari Allen:** Exactly. So I have tried to spread that news, especially through Mill Valley Middle School. It’s something to take great pride in, that it began with an idea from someone from this town. You can tell Larry. He would be excited to know that they have a contest to see who can remember the most digits out. So I think it’s — I’m not quite sure — but I think it’s held by a girl two years ago. She went more than 200 digits.

**0:21:50 Catherine Shaw:** Wow!

**0:21:51 Mari Allen:** Yes. Something huge. It’s a coveted prize.

**0:21:54 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. Often high schools will come with various things. One brought a song one year that they had made up. And Ron Hipschman, who was Larry’s partner at the Exploratorium and with whom we still have lunch once a week, has gotten very involved in Pi Day. And he has a favorite pizzeria. So, they now come and demonstrate pizza-pie making, including how to throw pizza dough. There’s a rubber thing, like pizza dough, that you learn how to throw, so they bring that along. And they also usually bring some real pizza dough. It gets a little messy. [chuckles]

**0:22:33 Mari Allen:** Oh, that’s great fun.

**0:22:34 Catherine Shaw:** Yes.

**0:22:34 Mari Allen:** Well, tell me more about your time in Mill Valley. So at the Oral History Project we really want to know about what Mill Valley was like when you got here, what you’ve seen over the years, and what you think about what’s happening now.

**0:22:50 Catherine Shaw:** I’ve actually given some thought to that. We came in 1975. We paid \$30,000 for our house, which was double what it would have been a few years before. And of course, now, it’s worth an order of magnitude more. Well, it’s still not worth — it’s still a small, little cabin — but still, who knows? The thing that impresses me most, as far as changes goes, is the automobiles. Yes, there are more of them. But more importantly, when we came, no one that lived up in the hills, as we do, drove a large car. Period. It simply does not make sense. There were rich people then, who had very expensive small cars. But no one, no one, would think of driving a large car on those roads. Everyone drove small cars. When the SUV — which I say stands for “Silly, Useless Vehicle” — craze started, I, at first, thought it was a joke! I couldn’t believe

anyone would want one of those things. Now, most of our neighbors drive them. And getting around has gotten very, very difficult. That's the biggest change, in my opinion. There, of course, have been lots of others, that it's gone from being a small, artist, hippie town to being a rich people's town, which makes sense: we're half an hour from the city. I'm surprised that it took rich people that long to discover us. [chuckles] But that, to me, is not as big a change as the cars.

**0:24:20 Mari Allen:** And you and Larry walk a lot in our town, and you know a lot of people who've been here as long as you have. What are their thoughts on the changes that you've seen, do you think?

**0:24:37 Catherine Shaw:** Well, they're disturbed by the big houses. One person commented that every big house doesn't just bring the two cars for the two adults, and possibly two more, if they have two teenagers, but also all the vehicles for all the service people. The pool person, the dog walker, the nanny, the housekeeper, all have to bring their cars.

And our roads should not be any bigger. If they were any bigger, it would harm the hillsides. So I think that's a major thing, and I think almost everybody I know would agree. We have one neighbor, Joyce Britt, who has been very, very involved in town politics, in trying to prevent destruction of the environment. Around the year 2000, she and I and some others, mounted a major campaign to try and get more public open space, particularly in the redwoods. Most of the open space we have now is on the other side of the valley where it's clear. We pretty much failed. It became obvious that it was already decided, and nothing we could do would change it. But we filled the City Council chambers with huge numbers of standing-room-only people and gave well-reasoned, impassioned speeches [chuckles] and so on — to little effect. After which, I said that I wasn't going to be involved in local politics anymore. She, who was an extremely successful trial lawyer, has continued to throw herself against it for years and years, and has had some small success, but nothing like what one would expect for a person of her accomplishments. Sorry.

**0:26:18 Mari Allen:** Oh, no. I want you now, if you wouldn't mind, to tell me about your Master's in Buddhist Studies. And I've read that you're involved in the Marin Interfaith Council, if that's correct.

**0:26:31 Catherine Shaw:** Yes.

**0:26:31 Mari Allen:** And the Buddhist Temple of Marin.

**0:26:33 Catherine Shaw:** That's true.

**0:26:34 Mari Allen:** My mom is Japanese, so, when she first came to visit, she was fascinated that there is a Buddhist Temple in our little town.

**0:26:41 Catherine Shaw:** And a Japanese-oriented Buddhist Temple.

**0:26:44 Mari Allen:** Exactly.

**0:26:44 Catherine Shaw:** Did she come?

**0:26:45 Mari Allen:** She hasn't. The schedule has not made it possible.

**0:26:46 Catherine Shaw:** Oh. I sometimes speak there.

**0:26:50 Mari Allen:** Can you tell me about that part of your life?

**0:26:53 Catherine Shaw:** Our involvement with that?

**0:26:54 Mari Allen:** Yeah.

**0:26:57 Catherine Shaw:** We've been Buddhist our whole adult lives. We weren't involved in Japanese Buddhism before joining this temple, because it's in our town.

**0:27:05 Mari Allen:** So, did you become Buddhist together, or were you Buddhist before you met Larry?

**0:27:13 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. When I was in high school, I thought it'd be nice to have a religion. My parents are committed atheists. My father has said, "My god is still reason." They committed to that way of looking at the world. But I've always been fascinated by religion. When I was a child, *Life Magazine* had a big series on the world religions with pictures. And my grandparents on both sides are fundamentalist Christians, so it was a bit of an issue in that household. So, in high school, I studied them all carefully and determined that Buddhism made the most sense. And so I have often told people, "It was 10 years between when I decided I was a Buddhist and when I met another one," which isn't 100 percent true, but it's close. But it was all in books for many years, and when Larry and I got together he also had had a similar feeling. Let's see, when would that have been? In the late '70s many Tibetan Buddhist teachers started teaching in the Bay Area. Oh, no, not the late '70s, early '70s, and we became involved. Let's see, '74, Naropa Institute, which is a Buddhist university — which is now accredited, it's a graduate school only — opened in Colorado, Boulder, Colorado. Our daughter was one and a half — her name is Tara — who is the embodiment of compassion and mercy. Good for a doctor.

**0:29:00 Mari Allen:** And does she have a middle name?

**0:29:00 Catherine Shaw:** Ananda.

**0:29:01 Mari Allen:** And what —?

**0:29:02 Catherine Shaw:** Bliss. Also the name of Shakyamuni Buddha's cousin and lifelong attendant. A man. [chuckles] "A" is a masculine ending in Indic languages. So

we went to Naropa Institute for their very first session in the summer, that was her first pre-school. Enough of the little girls there were named Tara that if the attendants couldn't remember a little girl's name, they'd say "Tara," and had a good chance it'd be right. [laughs] It's a popular name.

**0:29:41 Mari Allen:** Yeah.

**0:29:42 Catherine Shaw:** Interestingly, in Sanskrit, there's no differentiation between T and D, so it's really "Tdara," halfway between the two. So I joke that she can't pronounce her own name. [laughs] But in this country, it's "Tara." In some countries, it's "Dara." They chose the other one. But here it's "Tara." Everyone says "Tara." She loved it. We loved it.

**0:30:06 Mari Allen:** Did you just stay for the summer?

**0:30:08 Catherine Shaw:** Just for the summer. Yeah, and then toured around a bit, and came back, and bought our house in Mill Valley in 1975, had our second child.

**0:30:19 Mari Allen:** And where did the girls go to elementary school?

**0:30:21 Catherine Shaw:** In Old Mill.

**0:30:22 Mari Allen:** Okay.

**0:30:22 Catherine Shaw:** Just —

**0:30:23 Mari Allen:** Yep, right near the library!

**0:30:24 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah, they both went to Old Mill. They both went to Mill Valley Middle School, where, as I said, I worked as a teacher's aid, teaching ESL and biology, and a few other things.

**0:30:36 Mari Allen:** And when did you get involved with the Buddhist Temple?

**0:30:38 Catherine Shaw:** Right. We were aware of its existence.

**0:30:47 Mari Allen:** So it existed before —

**0:30:48 Catherine Shaw:** Oh, yes. It's been there a long time. In fact, we paid off the mortgage shortly after we joined in '85. It started in people's homes. One of the good people, who's there now, Junko Nakagawa, is the daughter of one of the founders, although one could even say "the" founder, because her father was so involved. And it went around in people's homes.

**0:31:13 Mari Allen:** And what was her father's name?

**0:31:15 Catherine Shaw:** I'm afraid I don't know his first name. Nakagawa. [laughs]

**0:31:16 Mari Allen:** Oh, okay. Nakagawa.

**0:31:19 Catherine Shaw:** He died shortly after we joined. I do remember him. And a tribute to the welcoming of the community. We were the first Caucasians in the *sangha*, that's Buddhist for "community." And I was unaware of that, until somebody mentioned it to me years later. The fact that we were the first hippies, I was aware of that. [laughs] That was a bit concerning. But that we were the first Caucasians, I really did not know this. And that sounds absurd, but it's true. So in '84 my parents, who were retired and loved Smithsonian tours, and they were planning to go on one to Thailand and Burma. Being good academics, they read all the literature ahead of time, of course. My mother was a high school librarian and high school English teacher. And they said, "This is all about Buddhism. Our daughter's a Buddhist, we'll invite her to go with us." And they did. So, I toured all of Thailand and Burma.

**0:32:34 Mari Allen:** And did you go with Larry? Did Larry go?

**0:32:35 Catherine Shaw:** No. He stayed home with the kids!

**0:32:37 Mari Allen:** Oh! And you got to go with your parents.

**0:32:38 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. And one of our Tibetan Buddhist *sangha* members had been a monk in one of the monasteries, what they call *wats* in Thailand. So, from him I got the information about that place, and after my parents flew back to the US, I stayed for another week in that *wat*. Somebody at the Buddhist Association in Bangkok, told me how to get there, and I took a train out to Nanachat, which is a town out to the east, with this wonderful monastery. It was in a haunted forest. And because the forest was haunted, it hadn't been turned into agricultural land, as everything else was. So it was there as a forest for a monastery, and it was a *wat*. It was especially designed for foreigners. The language of instruction was English, because most everybody around the world — they weren't just people from U.S. and other English-speaking places — they were from all over. It was very strict. Men and women did not even converse, let alone touch. There was a guest house. There were *kutis*, little, elevated huts for the monks and nuns.

**0:34:00 Mari Allen:** How would you spell that?

**0:34:01 Catherine Shaw:** Probably K-U-T-I, I would imagine. And a big *salah*, a meeting hall, for everybody. And then a men's guest house and a women's guest house and a kitchen. And of course, Buddhist monks and nuns don't eat after noon, so there's one meal, and villagers brought food, which all of us prepared together in the kitchen, and then that was served in the one meal. It just happened that I was there for one of the holiest days of Thai Buddhism, when everybody from the village came all night to practice. I left the next day with the chants just ringing in my head. There was one old woman who was just really there, really there. Practice and traveling around the paths through the forest. And Thai people, they just love aesthetics. There's nothing, no matter



how simple, that isn't aesthetic. Nothing. Nothing. Even like a beggar's costume, they make sure that it looks good. And the simplest bus stops out in the country, which were simply boards, had beautiful little tops. So, people went around the forest leaving little aesthetic offerings, here and there, and then came back for more practice. And since it was a celebration, it would be good to have some food. But it was obviously not the right time, so, we had chocolate, which was not made with milk, so it wasn't food. [laughs] It's being celebratory, but not breaking any vows. It was really a wonderful thing. So I came back from that. Before going to Thailand and Burma — oh my, I was so moved by the people of Burma. If there were a god, and that god had an idea what people should be, they're it. Have you ever been?

**0:36:03 Mari Allen:** I've been to Thailand, but never to Burma. It's one of the places that I dream about being able to go.

**0:36:09 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. You know how beautiful Thailand is. And how friendly everyone is!

**0:36:12 Mari Allen:** It's magical.

**0:36:16 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. I went from Thailand to Japan. And in Thailand, of course, if you look confused, a dozen people will come up and look at you and try to help. While in Japan, people are a little more reserved. And it wasn't until later, I realized, there were people who were desperate to help me, but wouldn't come up and say anything. And finally, I learned, if you asked —

**0:36:36 Mari Allen:** Then you'd have a throng of people. Yes.

**0:36:39 Catherine Shaw:** There's probably not any two more different cultures than Thailand and Japan. But I had a good time there, too, of course. And walking over snow after coming from the tropics. [chuckles] So I came back realizing what I had not realized before: that Buddhism is alive and well in Asia. My impression from just reading had been that it was a dying religion there. And it isn't. It is very alive and very well. And that encouraged me to come and join the Buddhist Temple here. Despite the chicken teriyaki dinners. [chuckles] They kind of kept us away for a while. We had boxed lunches that we sold in addition to the hot meals. And when I would show people the boxed lunch, they were so delighted. Then I realized, "Yes. This did kill chickens, but it is nonetheless a wonderful offering for these people," and that reconciled me to that practice. A number of the ministers said it's a little odd. And it was wonderful. The whole town loved it. Like we were told, we had the best teriyaki chicken in any of their many Bay Area churches. We had a secret formula [chuckles] which was made in the middle of the night. Before he finally resigned, the one person who knew it taught one other. And people came from everywhere. My husband was one of the ones who went at four in the morning to start the barbecue.

**0:38:18 Mari Allen:** So it's one of the biggest fundraisers for the Temple?

**0:38:20 Catherine Shaw:** It was. We don't do it anymore, but it was. Oh, yes. And it was a bazaar; it wasn't just dinner. Have you been?

**0:38:26 Mari Allen:** When it existed, yes.

**0:38:27 Catherine Shaw:** It had children's games and cultural events. It was really fun, but we're not big enough anymore to mount something of that size. He would come at 4 a.m. and they'd get the coals going, and I guess about 6 a.m. they'd start barbecuing the chickens. They would do the boxed lunch first, which then had to be freezing — well, not frozen, but chilled, to be able to put in the boxed lunch. But meanwhile, the smoke went everywhere, so everyone knew that there's something delicious happening, over there. [chuckles] That was fun. So, I came back in '84, and started — I've been going to the monthly study classes occasionally. I started going regularly to the temple, and it turned out they had a Dharma School. And so both my children were delighted, because their good friend went to the congregational church across from there. Suddenly they were able to do that, too. And they have both, independently of each other, thanked us for sending them to the Dharma School. They've both said that they understand, seeing their parents and seeing themselves, that they learned a more effective approach to life than the usual U.S. approach, which I think is —

**0:39:46 Mari Allen:** And when they say "effective," what do you think they mean by that?

**0:39:49 Catherine Shaw:** Interesting question. Obviously, kindness and compassion are central. Wisdom. Well, a little exercise that the Dharma School does, and that actually is good for adults too, is to think of something like these glasses. And consider everything that had to go into them being here. Into their manufacture, into the transportation, into the retail, into my having to remember to bring them this morning. Everything, in as much detail as you possibly can. And the lesson of this is a Buddhist doctrine called "interdependence," that there's no such thing as an independent entity. And knowing that really helps one to be an effective human being. So, that kind of thing.

**0:40:38 Mari Allen:** Is your daughter with the —

**0:40:40 Catherine Shaw:** Are they practicing Buddhists? No, they are not.

**0:40:42 Mari Allen:** How is she [Tara] raising her twins?

**0:40:44 Catherine Shaw:** Oh, that's a very interesting question. [chuckles] So far, it hasn't come up as nearly as I can tell. They celebrate Halloween, and Easter, as a bunny holiday.

**0:40:58 Mari Allen:** As a cultural holiday.

**0:41:00 Catherine Shaw:** Right. As a cultural holiday. Her wife was raised Catholic and rejected it. The other grandmother, who is a far better grandparent than Larry and I,

is still Catholic. She belongs to a very liberal congregation, as far as I know, that does not object to the fact that her daughter left the church, and really did leave. I don't know what disenchanted her from it. I don't know. All I know is that's her background. They have both occasionally come to my talks when I'm giving a talk here.

**0:41:57 Mari Allen:** And what are the subjects, usually, when you're doing your talks? And are they always at the Buddhist Temple?

**0:42:05 Catherine Shaw:** At the temple, yeah. Although I've given a couple through the — what did you say the name of it was?

**0:42:09 Mari Allen:** The Marin Interfaith Council.

**0:42:11 Catherine Shaw:** Right. [laughs]

**0:42:11 Mari Allen:** M-I-C.

**0:42:12 Catherine Shaw:** Through the M.I.C. The B.T.M., the Buddhist Temple of Marin, and the M.I.C., I've given a couple through that. But basically, at the temple. And also, I was teaching a class in the winter for a while, which I call "Buddhist Basics."

**0:42:26 Mari Allen:** Where was that?

**0:42:27 Catherine Shaw:** At the temple.

**0:42:28 Mari Allen:** Oh, okay.

**0:42:29 Catherine Shaw:** Thursday evenings. The first one was historical, how it developed. The next one was ideas. And the third one would have been the various schools and how people fit into them, but that was after my husband developed dementia, and so I was no longer free to do that sort of thing. I also was the leader of the meditation, Tuesday evenings, for several years. Even while we were most of the time in Bellingham, somebody else would come in and substitute. But it got to where he couldn't sit still for an hour. For a while he could stay home with the radio, and then he couldn't be home alone. So, another person took that over.

**0:43:07 Mari Allen:** And would you be willing to talk about Larry now, again?

**0:43:11 Catherine Shaw:** Mm-hmm.

**0:43:12 Mari Allen:** Because I've lived in our neighborhood — now, it's 13 years. So I've seen you two as a couple walking around all those years, always holding hands. As an example to my children, I always say, "Look at how loving these people are." And tell me about Larry. You mentioned his dementia.

**0:43:39 Catherine Shaw:** Okay, I have to start with my parents. My father died in

2008. My mother lived until 2011. And we still felt we were obligated to be at the house, so we still didn't do anything other than take care of the house. All these things happened end of August, beginning of September, 2008, 2011. 2012, as we were planning the course, I was actually in the kitchen looking at the calendar, planning our trip down, and I heard a thud. Went into the bathroom, and there he was on the floor, dead. I started yelling at him, "Breathe! Breathe!" I started doing chest compressions, brought him back. He opened his eyes and said, "I have to breathe?" [laughs] I said, "Yes!"

**0:44:42 Mari Allen:** Right now!

**0:44:44 Catherine Shaw:** He got up, went over, sat down, we looked at each other, said, "Do you think this constitutes an emergency?" [laughs] So we got in the car, went down to the hospital, walked into the emergency room, the person said, "What happened?" He said, "I fainted." They say, "Here, sit in this wheelchair, we'll take you in right now." Put him up on the table, did every possible test. Nothing was wrong. Nothing. His heart was perfect. We know that he has a really good heart. And they're saying he really should stay in the hospital for observation. So I'm thinking, "How much does this cost?" We're going back and forth, "Should we or shouldn't we?", and it happened again.

**0:45:20 Mari Allen:** In the hospital?

**0:45:21 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. At that time, he's hooked up to everything. So there's this little chart showing this perfect heartbeat, and then flatline. And they say, "Okay, he's staying," and they got him back going again. There's something called "heart block." I've learned a bit about it since then. Unrelated to a heart attack. A heart attack is the heart muscle. The heart has its own tiny brain, a pacer, a pacemaker, which sends an electrical signal to beat. If something goes wrong with that, it doesn't beat, no matter how good of shape it's in. That's what heart block is. The natural pacer, or pacemaker, just stops. And so, they determine he has to have a pacemaker. There's a temporary one they put in through the jugular, and it just didn't work. Never could get it to work. And he was having more of these episodes. And so, instead of putting it in at four in the afternoon, the permanent one, they put it in at five in the morning. And I went home not too long before that, after he'd been taken up to ICU from the emergency room, and slept a couple hours. I got up and called, and the doctor said, "Your husband now has a pacemaker."

And it was a good thing, because when we saw the same man later at four in the afternoon, he looked exhausted. So I'm sure he did a better job at five in the morning than he would've at four in the afternoon. We belong to Kaiser, and through lots of machinations, they eventually paid for everything. And when we got down here, they said, "Oh, that's beautiful!" It happens that Bellingham has one of the best cardiology departments — PeaceHealth — one of the best cardiology departments in North America. So, it couldn't have happened at a better place. So that was the first insult, and he said, "You know, I think I lost a few IQ points." But he was plenty smart enough that he was still smarter than most people, and we went on about our lives. That May of 2013, I was up in Bellingham, giving an award in my father's name in the psychology department. He [Larry] was down here by himself and had a pretty severe stroke. And he didn't tell me of

it until after I got back.

**0:47:38 Mari Allen:** Where was he?

**0:47:40 Catherine Shaw:** He was at home. And what he said, and I have no idea how accurate this is, is that he'd been out to meet a friend at the Exploratorium, and he never showed up, so he was out in the cold waiting for him forever. And then he and his cousin, who was very sick, had a picnic, and she's not too good at sterile technique, and he went home. He said, "I slept for four days, and when I woke up, everything looked different. Nothing looked familiar." I didn't know what that meant until I was reading an article in the *New Yorker* by some neurologist who had had a stroke, and that's the symptom of it. So that's how I knew what it was. It wasn't until sometime later. A friend said, "Well, you must have known. You wouldn't have been reading the article." And I said "No, no." One of the obligations of a Buddhist is to know everything you can about the mind, so I always read anything about the mind. He held himself together for our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration in June, and then, obviously, went into extreme mental decline.

**0:48:40 Mari Allen:** Very quickly from then.

**0:48:41 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. Very quickly. He, in fact, had been noticing it for years. And this is fairly typical of intelligent people. That the intelligent mind is so plastic that when one part is lost, the brain can simply use another part to fulfill that function. The famous example is some chess master who noticed that he could no longer predict eight moves in advance, and had every test done, and everyone said, "You're just fine." But he noticed that. And then years later, very quickly, died of dementia. And so, when he started going down, we went to the neurologist who gave him a little test and said, "Oh, yeah," and then a bigger test, and he did beautifully on it. The doctor actually called us up late at night and said, "No. You don't have dementia. You have mild cognitive impairment. Don't worry about it." And our daughter said, "Why in the world didn't we sign up for long-term care insurance at that point?"

But we didn't. We're doing okay. We'll go off to Bellingham, finish our business and so on. And then the next spring, 2014, we took the ferry into San Francisco to walk to the Exploratorium to plan for Pi Day. It was raining, and Larry fell and got a pretty bad concussion, so that was number three insult. We spent the night at the Kaiser Hospital in the city. They were very nice. They made a bed for me in the waiting room because I couldn't go home. Our car was in the parking lot in Larkspur. And they could see something back here, but it didn't get bigger, so they decided it was okay. Our daughter came and got us, took us back to the car, which had not been towed away, and we went home. So those three incidents. And then over the last year, it's been going very fast. And he now goes to Senior Access, which they call Marin's Premiere Club — they call their clients "club members" — for memory loss. [chuckles]

**0:51:00 Mari Allen:** And where is that located?

**0:51:01 Catherine Shaw:** Lucas Valley.

**0:51:02 Mari Allen:** Okay. And what do you — because he still physically —

**0:51:06 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. And you mentioned we were holding hands. Fortunately, we always have.

**0:51:10 Mari Allen:** Yes.

**0:51:10 Catherine Shaw:** So he probably doesn't notice that I'm now using it to guide him instead of just walking along, [chuckles] but he doesn't object because we've always held hands, so that's very nice. Yeah, it's hard. And he keeps saying, "Why am I so stupid? Why am I so stupid?" Early on I'd say, "It's because you have a brain disease," which was a very good example — our daughter said, "Don't tell him that. Tell him 'You're really smart. You'll figure this.' " Well, he knows better than that. But now I can say, "No, you're not stupid." And he'll say, "Well — " And I'll say, "Yes, you're not stupid." And he's stupid enough, he doesn't know the difference. His great distress is he is a bodhisattva; he is a person who lives for others. And his whole life has been, "How can I help? How can I help?" And now, the best way he can help is to sit still and do nothing, because anything he does is so inappropriate that it's a problem. Almost never can he do anything that's helpful. And that's horrible for him. It's just horrible. So I've determined that anything that isn't terribly destructive, I'll thank him for it. And so things are arranged very strangely in our house. [chuckles] And some rooms, I don't leave him in alone because there could be problems. He has occasionally disappeared while I had my back turned and had to be found. He wears a bracelet with phone numbers on it. It's hard. It's hard. Particularly for a person like him.

**0:52:39 Mari Allen:** And can you remind him, on behalf of the millions and millions and millions of people around the world who celebrate Pi Day, that he continues to help, and continues to give people something to look forward to? Students, it gives them meaning. For a lot of kids, they just see it as part of a formula that they have to memorize, but on that day, it becomes something fun, and enjoyable, and something that they want to know more about. So every year he is giving millions of people something.

**0:53:13 Catherine Shaw:** That's wonderful. That's wonderful. And, interestingly, last year, at Pi Day — he always leads the parade, and last year, the wonderful events coordinator who had helped us plan it the years before, had done all the planning and, in fact, he led it, next to Larry going around. And it used to be that he'd talk on a lot of radio interviews and with all sorts of people. And some young woman from Japan came to interview him, despite the fact that there were plenty of people to see that didn't happen, and she said, "In Asia, we think of math as something difficult, and here, you have this holiday to celebrate it, how can you do that?" And he gave his stock answer to everything, which is: "It's from the heart. It's everyone cooperating together." It's what he says about everything. Because that's what he believes about everything. And it was appropriate. And then next she said, "How many digits of pi have you memorized?" And then we just sort of managed to get out of there. [chuckles] So that was fine. This year, who knows? The last two years, both of our daughters and their spouses, and the twins

have been there, too, which has been very nice. I wonder what it will be like next year. But who knows what it will be like? We're not there yet, but obviously we'll do something. Indeed, it does continue to give people pleasure all around the world and to help them.

**0:54:42 Mari Allen:** It does.

**0:54:43 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. And to make math more accessible.

**0:54:45 Mari Allen:** Absolutely. Can you tell me a little bit about the M.I.C., the Marin Interfaith Council? Because not only does Mill Valley have a Buddhist Temple and many Christian and Catholic churches, we also have a mosque, which for a town of our small size is quite extraordinary. Can you tell me about your involvement in that?

**0:55:08 Catherine Shaw:** Oh, I am just as an occasional speaker. When we became involved, one of our ministers, who's no longer with us, led it. It's a good group, as you say. For a while, or probably still, they have, in addition to occasional speakers going around to places like The Redwoods, big gatherings. They had one on Buddhism, which was at our temple, when people from many, many traditions came and gave little talks about their tradition. One person said, "Well, how can we get more involved?" and our minister said, "Come to church!" [laughs] It's called Buddhist Churches of America because when it started — and it is, by the way, the oldest dharma group in North America, it started in the 1890s. Japanese immigrants petitioned the Hongan-ji, the head temple in Japan, to send a couple of ministers, and they did. So that was the beginning. It's called Buddhist Churches because they wanted to fit in.

**0:56:10 Mari Allen:** That's what I've always wondered, why is it the called the Buddhist Church?

**0:56:13 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah, they wanted to fit in as much as possible. And the service, even, is somewhat similar to a Protestant Christian service. It's different, we chant Buddhist things, we have a Dharma talk about Buddhism and so on, but we don't sit on the floor, we sit in pews. We have an order of service, somewhat. So originally it was thought that it would be like — of course, World War II and the internment camps — was your mother American? Was she in one?

**0:56:45 Mari Allen:** She was in Japan. She is first generation. She was in Japan at the end of the World War II.

**0:56:52 Catherine Shaw:** Which was pretty hard also. Starving, wondering what to do with the rest of one's life.

**0:57:00 Mari Allen:** But what did that time period —

**0:57:00 Catherine Shaw:** People talk about how it was that they came to the Dharma. Being born Japanese or Japanese-American doesn't necessitate it.

**0:57:11 Mari Allen:** Correct.

**0:57:11 Catherine Shaw:** An engineer, who was taken out of graduate school to go there said, “I was there and I kept thinking, ‘How can people be so evil? How can people be so evil?’” And that’s what led him to study Dharma. So, anyway, there was a drawing-in. Lack of trust. “We did everything we could to please them, and they did this to us.” Hard to find more loyal Americans. Hard to find anybody who is more, in fact, referred to as the “model minority,” to some people’s chagrin. [chuckles] It changed the attitude of the people in the temples. There were, at the time a couple of Caucasian ministers who could come to the internment camps and did. If you’ve ever seen the movie *Farewell to Manzanar*, the Quakers, they’re giving out lunches on the way in. Not everybody was like that. One of our Caucasian members, who was a teenager at the time — he’s since died — said, “I knew it was happening. I knew it was wrong. And I knew I couldn’t say anything.” That was in Southern California. My parents, in Kentucky, were unaware it was happening.

**0:58:28 Mari Allen:** Really?

**0:58:28 Catherine Shaw:** Yes, really. They really were unaware until after the war was over that it was going on. And now, there’s reparations for the few surviving people. Yeah, it was awful. It was just awful. And one thing we’re all very proud of, after 9/11, when it looked like the same thing was going to be done to Muslims, the Japanese-American community, who are generally rather retiring, came out in saying, “This is wrong. Don’t do it.” It never had any effect but it was really, really good.

**0:59:05 Mari Allen:** How many members does the Buddhist Temple have now?

**0:59:08 Catherine Shaw:** About 60. [chuckles] Yeah, we’ve slowly gotten smaller.

**0:59:12 Mari Allen:** At its height —

**0:59:13 Catherine Shaw:** Oh, I don’t know, but several times that. Several times that. And the old people were always the heart of it. So, as they have died, it’s just not — those old gardeners, the Kawamotos, they were wonderful. Men are only about this high, and so strong, [chuckles] they’re just up there. We had the canopies that had to be put up. Of course, they had also designed all that. They knew how it was put together. They were wonderful. They really were. We’ve had several appreciation ceremonies for them. We used to have *bonenkai*, end of the year party, and eventually, everybody was too busy. So now, we have *shinnenkai*, the beginning of the year party, when we can get together. And some of those have been honoring the founders, which was good. Asa Hanamoto, who recently died, who was a landscape architect, was one of the first Japanese-Americans to live in Marin County. And it was quite difficult, even though Hanamoto, Abey, who’s another of our members, Somebody and Somebody Landscape Architecture firm is here in Mill Valley to get his place out in Lucas Valley with his other partners helping him. When the building was bought, which was long before our time, the Christian churches



stood up for us, for the group, saying this would be a good thing. So times have changed.

**1:00:50 Mari Allen:** Yes, they have.

**1:00:51 Catherine Shaw:** Times have changed.

**1:00:52 Mari Allen:** So, Catherine, the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in Mill Valley all do a history project, and sometimes students will listen to these oral histories to just get an idea of what things have changed, and what you foresee for Mill Valley, or what your hopes are for Mill Valley. But if you were talk to those 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, or to your 2<sup>nd</sup> grade grandchildren, about our town, what would you want to say?

**1:01:24 Catherine Shaw:** That we live in the woods. That we live in the woods. That's why we're here. Live in the woods. Also, of course, when Larry was working, it was very close to the Exploratorium. When we bought our house, we were living out in San Geronimo Valley, where our older daughter was born. And we've lived in every town in San Geronimo Valley. We were very at home there. We'd looked around, but she was — let's see, how old would she have been? Two. We lost our place in San Geronimo when she was still a baby. But Larry was noticing that he wasn't around enough because it was such a long drive, and that we really did need to be closer. So, various realtors all took us to places in Fairfax that were falling down, and took us to places by the railroad in San Rafael, and so on. But one realtor, I walked in and she was so busy, she just shoved the book at me, and said, "Look in Fairfax." I looked in Mill Valley, and there was one. I said, "Okay. That's what we want to see." She says, "Well, you go and look at it first because I'm not going to bother." So, I called up Larry, I said, "Never mind, let's make the appointment."

When we drove with her, she said, "Well, you've been here before. How do we get there?" I said, "No, this is our first time." We got there. The roses were in bloom! It was May! Cascading around! It was a walk up through the trees! Larry later said "I walked up saying, 'I'll take it, I'll take it.'" [laughs] We got up to the top of the stairs. Here's this tiny house, 600 square feet our house is. The tenants who had been there for the four years that it was rented out knew that they had a good deal, so whenever the realtor called in to arrange to show it, they would lock the house and leave.

And they had a large German Shepherd. Every door and every window had a missing pane that the dog could stick his head out and snarl at you. [chuckles] So we didn't get inside on that visit. We walked all around and could see everything except one corner. And we couldn't see stairs. And it's between two roads. There's a door on the upper road, and a door from the lower door.

**1:03:47 Mari Allen:** One on Hazel and one on Rose Avenue.

**1:03:48 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. And one of the houses we had looked at in Woodacre was like that. It did not have an internal staircase. So we had reason to believe there might not be one in that one corner we couldn't see, but we decided we'd risk it, and

made a bid on the house. After it was finalized, the tenants let us in. [laughs] And indeed, there was a stairway in that corner.

**1:04:13 Mari Allen:** Oh, that's fabulous. [laughs]

**1:04:15 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. So it was a bit of an adventure, buying our house.

**1:04:18 Mari Allen:** Well, you brought some photographs, and I'll take photos of them, but if you can talk about them, it would be nice.

**1:04:24 Catherine Shaw:** Okay, I didn't bring any photos of the house. I should have. It's very pretty.

**1:04:26 Mari Allen:** Oh, that would have been interesting. So we've seen this shrine, which I can describe as, it's like a medallion, but I'll photograph that after we finish recording. So we'll see that. But what else did you bring to show us?

**1:04:45 Catherine Shaw:** Some pictures of Larry.

**1:04:46 Mari Allen:** Okay.

**1:04:52 Catherine Shaw:** This is one of the Pi parades in the new Exploratorium.

**1:04:57 Mari Allen:** Oh, fantastic. So, Catherine is showing me a magazine called *Dimensions* from March/April 2015, with Larry leading a parade of children.

**1:05:10 Catherine Shaw:** Each one is — I'll just get in front of the microphone.

**1:05:13 Mari Allen:** Oh, yes.

**1:05:14 Catherine Shaw:** Each one is carrying a yardstick or a meter stick with a pie plate on top with one of the digits of pi. And these are handed out very carefully, so that no matter how many people are in the parade, it is in the correct order.

**1:05:31 Mari Allen:** And accurate? Okay.

**1:05:32 Catherine Shaw:** He has a banner with Albert Einstein's picture, and a boom box, playing the digits of pi to "Pomp and Circumstance." [chuckles]

**1:05:44 Catherine Shaw:** And then there's 3.1415 on back, behind him.

**1:05:50 Mari Allen:** That is fantastic. So I'm going to photograph that, and then it looks like you have another magazine that you're going to show me as well. I'll take a picture of the shrine also while it's here, because that's so important to photograph. And Catherine, if you wouldn't mind putting your hand next to it so we can see size-wise how big this item is. Fantastic. Okay.

**1:06:18 Catherine Shaw:** Interestingly, this was presented to him at the last Pi Day, half a year ago. When they moved to the new Exploratorium, they had a ceremony of digging this up.

**1:06:32 Mari Allen:** So it's in —

**1:06:34 Catherine Shaw:** It was in the center of the circular —

**1:06:39 Mari Allen:** Building.

**1:06:40 Catherine Shaw:** Building. On top of the circular building classroom. And it was very well attached, of course. [chuckles]

**1:06:50 Mari Allen:** Yes.

**1:06:53 Catherine Shaw:** So they had a ceremony of taking it up and taking it to the new place, but they made a new one for —

**1:06:58 Mari Allen:** For the —

**1:07:00 Catherine Shaw:** Yes.

**1:07:00 Mari Allen:** And so where is that located?

**1:07:01 Catherine Shaw:** It's outdoors.

**1:07:02 Mari Allen:** Oh, okay.

**1:07:04 Catherine Shaw:** The next Pi Day, there was a little hiatus, between when the old one closed in January and the new one opened in May, and of course Pi Day occurs in March, so the first Pi Day in the new museum, the museum was not open, which was interesting. So we did it all outdoors, and told people where the nearest restrooms were. [laughs] And the then director gave a little speech about how amazing it was that we'd put this on in the midst of the move.

**1:07:36 Mari Allen:** Oh, my gosh.

**1:07:38 Catherine Shaw:** But since then, they've had indoors, and big presentations of everything about pi and so on, in the theater in the new museum. The walk, now, is outdoors. If it ever rains, we don't know what we'll do. Now, let's see, what year it would've been, yeah, '15. Last year was a very special year, because the year was 1-5. So, it was 1.1415 for the month, the day, and the year. Then at 9:26 in the morning, the first 53 people to get there had a special pi ceremony at the Pi Shrine. And then they were invited into the museum, which was not yet open since it was too early, to be served pie by the board of directors.

**1:08:32 Mari Allen:** Oh, that's fabulous. So at Mill Valley Middle School, last year, on March 14, 2015, at 9:26 AM, they sounded the alarm that it was Pi Day.

**1:08:45 Catherine Shaw:** Wonderful!

**1:08:46 Mari Allen:** Yes!

**1:08:46 Catherine Shaw:** That is wonderful!

**1:08:47 Mari Allen:** Yes! So let me see this magazine now. So this is *MIC Times* from January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994, and Larry is gracing the cover of this magazine. And Catherine, tell me about this magazine.

**1:09:02 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. This was an interview with him. Here is the interview. Each of these pictures are with an exhibit.

**1:09:10 Mari Allen:** Okay, and these are Exploratorium exhibits.

**1:09:12 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah.

**1:09:16 Mari Allen:** And Catherine, if you can look up as well with that.

**1:09:18 Mari Allen:** That's fantastic. Okay, tell me about this article.

**1:09:21 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. I will leave it with you. We, of course, have many copies. [chuckles]

**1:09:25 Mari Allen:** And this is — or you only have this?

**1:09:26 Catherine Shaw:** Actually, if you would take good care of — [chuckles] By the way, there's no article with this.

**1:09:34 Mari Allen:** It's just the cover.

**1:09:34 Catherine Shaw:** It's just the cover.

**1:09:38 Mari Allen:** So, if this is something that you'd like the History Room to have, it will always live here.

**1:09:43 Catherine Shaw:** My thought, which I haven't done because I no longer have free time was to cut this — the Table of Contents description — out and put it here, bottom of the cover, and frame that together. But I've never done it, so I think if it's happy in the History Room, that's a much better place for it than our house.

**1:09:56 Mari Allen:** Okay. I will leave this with the librarians, then, for them to do

something special with it. And this, you have many?

**1:10:02 Catherine Shaw:** Yes.

**1:10:03 Mari Allen:** Two copies.

**1:10:03 Catherine Shaw:** Yes, so that one, you can do as you please.

**1:10:05 Mari Allen:** Okay. That's fantastic. Well, thank you very much for bringing that.

**1:10:08 Catherine Shaw:** Oh, yes.

**1:10:09 Mari Allen:** Is there anything else before we conclude our interview?

**1:10:12 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. The next is pictures of one of our re-weddings. Actually, also, I've brought some of Larry's art.

**1:10:19 Mari Allen:** Oh! We would love to see them.

**1:10:21 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. He did a series based on the Hokusai *Views of Mt Fuji* of Mount Tam.

**1:10:29 Mari Allen:** How did he do these?

**1:10:32 Catherine Shaw:** Computer manipulation of photographs that he took. So it's Mount Tam from many, many different places.

**1:10:39 Mari Allen:** Have you thought about digitizing these?

**1:10:41 Catherine Shaw:** Oh, of course, they're on the computer.

**1:10:42 Mari Allen:** So you have that as well.

**1:10:45 Catherine Shaw:** Probably. I'm afraid all that sort of [computer] stuff. When this was his part of our lives, I knew nothing about it. And I occasionally asked him, "Am I being too demanding, by having you be the only computer person in the family here?" He said, "Oh, no. I'm glad to do it." So, consequently, once he could no longer do it — I do email, and I do Google, and that's about it. So I'm sure we have this in the computer, I would have no idea how to get to it.

**1:11:14 Mari Allen:** Okay.

**1:11:15 Catherine Shaw:** He did so much art that we have several independent hard drives of his art.

**1:11:22 Mari Allen:** So we are looking at a photo album, filled with digital manipulations of views of Mount Tam. Oh, my gosh, Catherine, these are just extra —

**1:11:35 Catherine Shaw:** Aren't they wonderful?

**1:11:35 Mari Allen:** They're extraordinary.

**1:11:36 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. Yeah. They're really, really wonderful. We go every Wednesday to the noon concert at the Throckmorton Theatre. And one time, they were getting ready for something about Mount Tam, and I brought this along, thought maybe — and she said, "Oh! That room is empty. You don't even have to enlarge them. Just put them in a nice mat and we can put them up. But you need to do it right now." And one of the things he and I use to do together was mount art shows. But I realized I couldn't do it. I actually started to cry. And she advised us to get them out of this and get them into proper archival —

**1:12:15 Mari Allen:** Yes.

**1:12:16 Catherine Shaw:** He does have some bigger ones, not of Mount Tam, which are in proper archival spaces, and then in addition to that, he's done a lot of abstracts, which are based on photographs that he took.

**1:12:31 Mari Allen:** Wow.

**1:12:34 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah, some of these have been made large. And then some of them are not moved around, but just colorized in different ways. He's had one art show. This one, he made huge, and it was there.

**1:12:54 Mari Allen:** Beautiful. So, for someone of his generation, being involved in digital photography and computer-generated art is unusual?

**1:13:03 Catherine Shaw:** Mm-hmm.

**1:13:04 Mari Allen:** Wouldn't you say that he's —

**1:13:05 Catherine Shaw:** It was unusual for anybody, when he was doing these. He was pretty —

**1:13:08 Mari Allen:** So how did he get involved in — ?

**1:13:11 Catherine Shaw:** Well, we've always loved photography.

**1:13:12 Mari Allen:** But in terms of computerized —

**1:13:14 Catherine Shaw:** And he's always loved computers. Actually, I didn't know he loved computers until he retired. [chuckles] This one goes this way, and this one goes

this way. This is a sculpture of the Western Washington University in Bellingham. Noguchi, sculptor.

**1:13:27 Mari Allen:** Oh, Isamu Noguchi.

**1:13:28 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. Ah, and here is the invitation to his one art show in his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**1:13:35 Mari Allen:** Oh, combined. If we can hold that up, because the glare.

**1:13:39 Catherine Shaw:** I could also take out of there, if it's too shiny.

**1:13:40 Mari Allen:** Nope, that's great. Just like that. That's great. Okay.

**1:13:50 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. Let's see. Oh, I can give you one of these. We got lots of them.

**1:13:58 Mari Allen:** Mm-hmm.

**1:14:05 Catherine Shaw:** Ah, here he is, with a couple of them big —

**1:14:07 Mari Allen:** Oh! That's fantastic.

**1:14:11 Mari Allen:** So Catherine, if you can hold that up again. That's great.

**1:14:16 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah, there are other things. So, that's another of his careers. He also, as a retired person, worked as an audio engineer for Dharma groups. He would record a Dharma lesson, even like whole retreat for us, at dharma lessons. And then go through it, and there's a program on the computer where it acts as an oscilloscope, so he would run the whole thing through, look at it on that, every time there was a "agh!" or something like that, take it out. And so it would come out as this beautiful talk that anybody could listen to. In addition doing it for Dharma groups, we were involved in Arlene Blum's attempts to get the toxins out of our furniture. The fire retardant dilemma. She gave a series of seminars where she would invite — she's a chemist, very famous chemist. Also, she led the first women's expedition of Annapurna. Yeah. Very fine person, really. And I'm not sure how we even knew about this, but he purchased a whole good set of microphones, and amplifiers, and so on. And so, initially, they were three a year, and then two a year, and then one a year, and he both recorded and had the speakers, the amplification for those seminars, for years, and finally now California law has changed so it's no longer required that we have toxins in our furniture. [chuckles] As you know.

**1:16:07 Mari Allen:** Yes.

**1:16:07 Catherine Shaw:** So, that was his volunteer career in retirement. One of them. And the photography, as an artist.

**1:16:18 Mari Allen:** So Catherine, as we wind down with our interview, it's very probable that your daughters will read these transcripts, or listen to this, and then your grandchildren as well. What would you like them to know about you and Larry? Just so that they know about your history, or your thoughts, as we end this interview.

**1:16:48 Catherine Shaw:** Let me show you one more thing.

**1:16:49 Mari Allen:** Okay.

**1:16:50 Catherine Shaw:** This is a photo album of our third re-wedding, at Kirby Cove. Here we are getting ready.

**1:17:02 Mari Allen:** So it would be your 21<sup>st</sup>, if it was every seven years —

**1:17:07 Catherine Shaw:** Ah, more than that. Interestingly, this other couple, two other couples, at that point, a good friend of ours, were married seven years after our wedding. So seven years after that, we had a re-wedding with them.

**1:17:23 Mari Allen:** Oh. So if it was your third, then your first would have been your seventh anniversary. So 28<sup>th</sup>, then.

**1:17:27 Catherine Shaw:** Yes.

**1:17:28 Mari Allen:** Okay.

**1:17:29 Catherine Shaw:** And then some good friends of theirs were married seven years after that, so that added a third couple. Our wedding, as I said, was on the slopes of Mount Diablo. The first re-wedding was in Lagunitas. We had friends, they had a lovely house there, and we just went out to the hillside and had the ceremony there. And then the next two were at Kirby Cove. And this is the second one at Kirby Cove.

**1:17:54 Mari Allen:** In "1984," it says.

**1:17:55 Catherine Shaw:** Right. And have three couples, and the children are involved. The first two couples had two children, Tara and Sara, and Jeff, and Ethan. And we spent the night in Kirby Cove. This is mostly getting ready, because by the — no, this is the actual ceremony here.

**1:18:20 Mari Allen:** And so what did the ceremonies involve?

**1:18:22 Catherine Shaw:** Dancing. I always gave a little talk about how this is a turning of the wheel, and a renewal, and leaving behind what one wants to leave behind, and continuing what one wants to continue, and gathering what new one should. It's getting dark now. And then the next day, I took some pictures of the tents. The reason it was only twice at Kirby Cove was because they changed their rules, so it made it very



hard for us to reserve the place.

**1:18:57 Mari Allen:** Oh, to have that big a group.

**1:18:58 Catherine Shaw:** Yes. And so, fortunately, the other couple, the second couple, had in the meantime bought a large and beautiful house in Los Gatos.

**1:19:10 Mari Allen:** Yeah, I'm going to go back to this one. There's one picture, I think this one, of the two of you. There, these two.

**1:19:20 Catherine Shaw:** Ah, yeah. It's a little dark by then.

**1:19:24 Mari Allen:** If you can hold that up again like that. It won't get the glare. The re-wedding. Fantastic. These are fantastic, Catherine. Thank you so much for bringing all of this.

**1:19:52 Catherine Shaw:** The last one, this, had seven couples.

**1:19:56 Mari Allen:** Wow! And where was the last one? Was that in Lagunitas?

**1:20:00 Catherine Shaw:** At Los Gatos. The last three of them were at Los Gatos, at our friend's house. Yeah, here we are. [chuckles] At the time, we thought it was important that men and women be differentiated, so the men got the collars of flowers and the women got —

**1:20:17 Mari Allen:** The headpiece.

**1:20:18 Catherine Shaw:** Yeah. Now, both sexes wear garlands of flowers on their heads. But at the time, the men had these kind of yoke things. [chuckles]

**1:20:28 Mari Allen:** Oh, well, that's fantastic. Well, thank you so much for sharing your memories and your time with us. Is there any last thing you would like to say?

**1:20:42 Catherine Shaw:** Okay. I ended up talking more about my family than about Mill Valley.

**1:20:46 Mari Allen:** That's okay.

**1:20:46 Catherine Shaw:** Until I read the little thing this morning, I'd assumed it would all be about Mill Valley. [chuckles]

**1:20:50 Mari Allen:** No. Because your family and you are also part of Mill Valley. So, it is part of Mill Valley, but not just about the physical community, but about you as an individual within that community, and your family within that community. So it is about Mill Valley. But perhaps in a different way than you anticipated.

**1:21:11 Catherine Shaw:** Yes, yes. And it was a wonderful place to raise children. Because they could be free. I didn't have to accompany them when they went places. Because we were in the woods. And the woods is a good place for children. And I think the children appreciate that as well as having been raised Buddhist. [chuckles]

**1:21:30 Mari Allen:** Yes.

**1:21:33 Catherine Shaw:** So, thank you. This was very interesting.

**1:21:38 Mari Allen:** Well, thank you very much. I'll turn this off.