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ANNE LAYZER

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Joyce Kleiner in 2017**

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In this oral history, longtime League of Women Voters member and activist Anne Layzer recounts her community and political involvement over the course of five decades of living in Mill Valley. The great-great-granddaughter of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, Anne was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Anne recalls getting political in high school, and then going on to major in American Government at Radcliffe. She recounts moving with her husband Bob, a neurologist, and their three children to Mill Valley in 1967. While their children were attending Park School, Anne served as President of the PTA. Anne describes the political culture of Mill Valley in the 1960s, focusing on the heated issue of public education, and notes the transformation of the town from majority Republican to Democrat during this period. In the early 1970s, Anne became active with the League of Women Voters, and she discusses in detail her involvement in the campaign against Proposition 13. Throughout this oral history, Anne expresses her deep political commitment to making democracy functional and effective, and her contentment living in Mill Valley.

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Oral History of Anne Layzer

Index

Beaver Country Day School...p.2
Bob (husband)...p.4-6
Boessenecker, Joan...p.21
Camp Pendleton...p.6
Cutler, Betsy...p.21
Educational Congress of
 California...p.11
Foote, Kathleen...p.21
Garrison, William Lloyd (great-great-
 grandfather)...p.18
Hippies...p.15-16
Kate (daughter)...p.1
League of Women Voters...p.11, 17
Mill Valley Chamber Music
 Society...p.4
Palches, Peter...p.19
Parents...p.2, 4, 7
Park School...p.10
Philip (son)...p.1
Proposition 13...p.13-14, 17, 18-19
Radcliffe...p.1
Robin (daughter)...p.1
Serrano v. Priest...p.11, 14
Solem, Anne...p.21
Trump, Donald...p.23
Whole Tam Family...p.17

Oral History of Anne Layzer
March 3rd, 2017

Editor's note: This transcript has been reviewed by Anne Layzer, who made minor corrections and clarifications to the original.

0:00:01 Joyce Kleiner: Today is March 3rd, 2017, and this is an oral history interview of Anne Layzer from Mill Valley. My name is Joyce Kleiner, and I'll be conducting the interview. Okay, so —

0:00:19 Anne Layzer: So Robin is 56.

0:00:21 Joyce Kleiner: That's your daughter, Robin?

0:00:23 Anne Layzer: Right, and she works for the Country Dance & Song Society. She lives in Massachusetts, which is where I grew up. My next daughter is Kate and she's 54. She's a Congregational Minister without a parish and runs something called the Friday Cafe for the Homeless in Cambridge, Mass, and just got an award from the Mayor of Cambridge. [chuckles] She's very excited. Then my son Philip has just turned 50. He lives in Alameda and he works at a law firm. He's a paralegal in San Francisco.

0:01:14 Joyce Kleiner: I want to put on this form where you went to college because you mentioned Radcliffe.

0:01:23 Anne Layzer: Radcliffe, '59 — at a time when there were only 300 women at Harvard. [laughs]

0:01:32 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah, even the fact that it's called Radcliffe. Do you ever have to explain that to anybody?

0:01:38 Anne Layzer: It's called Radcliffe because the first large donor to Harvard was named Anne Radcliffe.

0:01:43 Joyce Kleiner: But there's no Radcliffe now, it's all Harvard right?

0:01:45 Anne Layzer: There is a Radcliffe Institute, post-grad, which is doing very well.

0:01:52 Joyce Kleiner: Okay, so let's start with your experiences, where you were born, and a little bit about that time.

0:02:05 Anne Layzer: Okay.

0:02:06 Joyce Kleiner: I might stop you at one point.

0:02:07 Anne Layzer: I was born in the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, where my father was on the staff and chief of the diabetes clinic. My mother did things like the League of Women Voters. She also was a dancer and she danced with the New England Conservatory of Music.

0:02:31 Joyce Kleiner: Ballet dancer?

0:02:32 Anne Layzer: It's modern dance, not ballet, but it was classical. Classical modern dance. She danced in some amazing operas and stuff like that. She was a very energetic, almost overwhelming person. [chuckles] There were four children in my family. I went to public school for kindergarten and first grade, and then everyone in my family's circle of friends, the children all went to private school. The private school that I went to suited me very well because it was in a way liberal in its — it was not so conservative, and it was known for the fact that you didn't have to be necessarily brainy to go to this school. But they did love to have artists and drama and the program was extremely rich in those areas. I did a lot of music and drama at my —

0:03:43 Joyce Kleiner: What was the school called?

0:03:45 Anne Layzer: Beaver Country Day School.

0:03:46 Joyce Kleiner: Beaver?

0:03:47 Anne Layzer: Beaver. Because of some connection with Beaver, Pennsylvania, which I can't remember. We were in school from 9 o'clock until 4:00, and a lot of that time was spent with activities having to do with art and music and drama. So in that regard it was a very rich program. But also, there were only 55 girls in the class I graduated from. And now of course the school is co-educational, but in those days that was highly unlikely. We did very well though. There were five from the class of 1955 that went to Radcliffe, so that was a significant proportion, which is just remarkable.

0:04:38 Joyce Kleiner: So this school went all the way through high school?

0:04:40 Anne Layzer: It went from nursery school to 12th grade.

0:04:42 Joyce Kleiner: Oh, okay.

0:04:43 Anne Layzer: So my little sisters were there too. I was not particularly political until high school, and my parents changed their party registration from Republican to Democrat. That had a profound effect on me. The first election was 1952 and it was Adlai Stevenson. Most of the students in my school were Republican. The faculty were Democratic, some of the staff was, and the kids who lived in Cambridge, the Jewish girls, and me. [laughs] And another characteristic of Beaver was that it was the only private girls school that admitted Jews, and they would've admitted Catholics, but

the Catholics all went to Catholic school. It was quite striking that girls who wanted to go to private school went to Beaver.

0:05:58 Joyce Kleiner: Now, was this in Boston or was it in the suburb?

0:06:00 Anne Layzer: It was in Brookline, which is a large suburb of Boston.

0:06:05 Joyce Kleiner: Is that where you lived, Brookline?

0:06:06 Anne Layzer: I lived there. I could walk to school. It was actually called Chestnut Hill, a small part of Brookline, which called itself a town, but it's the largest town in the world. [laughs] So then waking up politically at that age really was life-forming for me. And my major in college was American Government.

[background conversation]

0:06:37 Joyce Kleiner: American Government was what you studied at Radcliffe?

0:06:39 Anne Layzer: Right.

0:06:39 Joyce Kleiner: Okay.

0:06:42 Anne Layzer: And they were exciting times for the 1956 election. The three Stevenson sons were all in Cambridge. The oldest at the law school, the youngest a class ahead of me, and the middle one living a debauched life somewhere. [chuckles] But I was co-chair of the Radcliffe Young Democrats, and the thing that gave my life meaning besides singing, was politics.

0:07:16 Joyce Kleiner: So did you sing in concerts and in performances?

0:07:22 Anne Layzer: Yeah.

0:07:22 Joyce Kleiner: And did you fantasize about becoming a singer maybe?

0:07:26 Anne Layzer: I was very interested in the theater in general, and also in singing, mostly as a chorister, but also good enough to get the alto roles in Gilbert and Sullivan, things like that. And I sang some solos at Radcliffe, which was a great honor, but mostly it was as a choral singer. And it was something that I continued with after college. I was singing in a chorus in Marin County, in the Tam District, that lost its funding with Prop 13. [chuckles] That was the last of singing. But Bob and I are addicts for the concerts, classical concerts, so that was another very profound impact on my life.

0:08:17 Joyce Kleiner: By the way, do you belong to the Chamber Society?

0:08:19 Anne Layzer: No. I don't know under what auspices I would be in the Chamber of Commerce.

0:08:29 Joyce Kleiner: No, no, I don't mean that. The Chamber of Music Society, or whatever it is.

0:08:34 Anne Layzer: Oh, Mill Valley Chamber Music?

0:08:35 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah.

0:08:35 Anne Layzer: Yeah, we go to that. But they are suffering from many of the same things. We were looking at a concert. We were going to a concert in Berkeley, and we couldn't find the hall where it was being held, so we stopped someone to ask directions, and he said, "Just follow the grey hair." I was affronted, and then I looked. And everyone going to the chamber music concert was elderly, and it continues to be true. And they're beginning to die off. At the last few chamber music concerts, they've been giving pep talks about how they're not going to be able to go on much longer unless we start bringing in some younger people. The only young people at these concerts are the musicians, and it is a phenomenon that to me that's very distressing. There's nobody in the League under the age of 50, I'm sure. But I joined when I was 30.

0:09:39 Joyce Kleiner: Let's not get ahead, because I want to make sure we talk a lot about that, so once we're there, we're not leaving. Tell me about when you met your husband, and when you came to Mill Valley.

0:09:52 Anne Layzer: I met him through the Democratic Party. A Harvard political type at the law school had been friends with Bob at college. He went to Harvard, and so did his brother. And I had known him vaguely, but when I was a sophomore in college, my parents were hit head-on in one of the new Volkswagens that had the engine in the rear instead of the front, and they were very severely injured. My father was in the hospital for nine months, and my mother for six months.

[background conversation]

My sister and I got jobs at the Mass General Hospital so that we could visit our parents more easily. And Bob was then an intern at the — I was interested in Bob and told a friend, "Tell Bob I'm working at the Mass General this summer." And we started going out then, and actually it was very comforting to have a boyfriend who was a doctor. He's six years older than I am. And my father really fell for him. That was very striking because my father once said when he was a freshman in college, there were two rules that you must obey: you do not go outside without a hat on, and you are never in the company of a Jew.

0:11:45 Joyce Kleiner: Sorry, who said that? Your dad said that?

0:11:47 Anne Layzer: My father said that was what the main rule was. He said it rather bitterly.

0:11:54 Joyce Kleiner: So he was saying it in a disparaging way.

0:11:57 Anne Layzer: Yes.

0:11:57 Joyce Kleiner: Okay. I think I get it.

0:12:00 Anne Layzer: Right. Because the enrollment of Jews at Harvard was so incredible. And Radcliffe too. The President of Radcliffe said, "I could fill the class at Radcliffe with well-qualified students from a single high school in New York." And I thought I knew which one it was. But anyway, about 30% of the population at Radcliffe was Jewish.

0:12:30 Joyce Kleiner: But your father didn't carry the same bias as the others did?

0:12:33 Anne Layzer: No. And as a matter of fact he would say the best thing I did was to marry a neurologist. Because it was so helpful to him to have a neurologist in the family.

0:12:43 Joyce Kleiner: So, Bob is Jewish?

0:12:44 Anne Layzer: Yeah.

0:12:45 Joyce Kleiner: Okay. Alright.

0:12:49 Anne Layzer: From Cleveland. And his parents, they weren't drummed out by the Nazis but the sort of pre-Nazis. They really had to leave. But I just love the story of America where a family flees essentially from Europe, comes to America and produces three sons who have PhDs in science, or are science professors.

0:13:21 Joyce Kleiner: When I turn off the recorder at the end, ask me to remind you to tell a story, okay?

0:13:26 Anne Layzer: Okay. When people talk about the immigrants, it just makes my blood boil. Because I know why my family on my father's side were Anglicans, Episcopalians. They were immigrants, their ancestors were immigrants, and for good reasons.

0:13:51 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah, my grandparents were from Sweden. Okay so, you eventually married Bob. When did you come out to Mill Valley? I want to get back to the politics, but I want to get the early years in.

0:14:05 Anne Layzer: Well first, Bob, when he finished three years of internship and residency at the Mass General and he had chosen to be a neurologist and decided to go to New York to Columbia's Neurological Institute. So we moved to New York, and then doctors were subjected to the draft, so in the middle of his residency in New York he was drafted into the navy.

0:14:42 Joyce Kleiner: What year was that?

0:14:43 Anne Layzer: That was 1959. And to Camp Pendleton in Southern California, which was very interesting. We had our first baby there and half of the second baby there. [laughs] That was interesting. New York had felt so hectic and so rushed that it was sort of like a vacation, in a way, to be in Southern California. But I never thought we'd end up in California. We went back to New York, and then Bob's boss at UCSF was recruited to be Chief of Neurology at UCSF, which had a very tiny department and it recruited several people that he'd known in New York.

So, to Bob, this was a chance of a lifetime. For me, less of it because I did regard myself, and I think this is what I've told you, that I was an easterner. It was alright to go to California for two years and lie around in the sun and have babies, but to actually live there was a tremendous shock. And some way along this time I got pregnant with a third baby and we put off Bob's going off into the Navy. But we finally went when the baby was 12 weeks old. By then I was really having quite a serious postpartum depression, and was on medication and not happy, and feeling at that point that all the glory, all the praise, would go to the husband, and the wife, she could be a good wife, she could be a good mother, but nothing of the scope and the scale. [pause in recording]

0:17:08 Joyce Kleiner: Okay so, can you remember where you were when I interrupted you? I'm sorry.

0:17:12 Anne Layzer: I guess I was talking about the fact that I was living in Mill Valley and struggling with feelings of depression, both of inadequacy but also a kind of powerlessness.

0:17:29 Joyce Kleiner: Did you feel that, having gone to Radcliffe, that you were putting pressure on yourself to do something? Did that have anything to do with it?

0:17:37 Anne Layzer: If the pressure didn't come from me, it certainly came from Radcliffe.

0:17:42 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah.

0:17:44 Anne Layzer: Radcliffe made a big effort to show that we were as good as the guys. And the fact that one in three applicants got into Harvard, but it was one in eight applicants got into Radcliffe, and that kind of nonsense. I did feel that the fuss was made over the ones who when they graduated from Radcliffe, went to graduate school, and went to medical school, and law school, and stuff like that. I didn't even do that, I got married. But that had a lot to do with what Bob needed. Also, I was the head of the family with my parents —

0:18:28 Joyce Kleiner: That accident?

0:18:29 Anne Layzer: Yes, gravely injured, and my mother permanently brain damaged.

0:18:34 Joyce Kleiner: Really?

0:18:35 Anne Layzer: I became the head of the family, including really helping to take care of my 12-year-old sister. Another sister was at boarding school, and my brother had graduated from college and was gone. So I was the head of the family.

0:19:04 Joyce Kleiner: How were you able to finally move to California under those circumstances?

0:19:08 Anne Layzer: Well, we didn't do it until — we moved to New York after I graduated. And I had a job, actually. I took the civil service exams and was a U.S. government bureaucrat in New York City working in Social Security.

0:19:29 Joyce Kleiner: And commuting back and forth to Boston?

0:19:32 Anne Layzer: A little bit. Some I did, but mostly it was from 161st Street down to Greenwich Village and back. [chuckles]

0:19:43 Joyce Kleiner: Okay. So you were still responsible for managing your parents' care from New York?

0:19:48 Anne Layzer: Well, not as much as I could. But about that time I sort of had handed it on to my younger siblings, and life was so different. The pay of doctors was so abysmal. We were living below the poverty line. And my husband was needy too, because the hours were just impossible, 36 hours on and eight hours off.

0:20:15 Joyce Kleiner: It really hasn't changed either. [chuckles]

0:20:18 Anne Layzer: I don't know if they're allowed to work so long, that they're on for 36 hours at a time. I didn't have any career in mind and I certainly, working at Social Security, knew I didn't want to be a government bureaucrat that was writing, authorizing checks to be sent to beneficiaries, and then stopping their checks because they had been caught having a job or something like that. In a room that was as big as a basketball court with bureaucrats at the desks.

0:21:00 Joyce Kleiner: Sounds like you. [laughs]

0:21:04 Anne Layzer: I know, and I didn't want to do it. But anyway, I was making more money than Bob was at that point. So coming to San Francisco for a while seemed like a disaster. We lived on Paradise Drive in apartments for a year and found this house in Mill Valley.

0:21:22 Joyce Kleiner: And what neighborhood do you live in in Mill Valley?

0:21:24 Anne Layzer: It's called Scott Highlands. It's two blocks beyond the golf course.

0:21:32 Joyce Kleiner: Oh, I know where that is. Yeah, there's a little park there.

0:21:36 Anne Layzer: Yes, that's right. And the owner of the house, I think, had bought the house as an investment, not to live in it, but as an investment. And when we went through the house — I'd been looking for about 14 months because of the prices were so shocking. And when I went through this house, I saw the Harvard alumni magazine on the table and I said, "Oh, we have this one too." When we bought the house, he persuaded the bank to give us a lower interest rate because of the [chuckles] Harvard connection. He had the power to do that because he was the treasurer for BART. So he was always going to Wells Fargo or whatever it was for vast sums of money. He had that kind of power, so we had a quarter percent smaller mortgage.

0:22:33 Joyce Kleiner: What year was this that you had —

0:22:35 Anne Layzer: This was now 1967. We came and bought the house in Mill Valley in 1968. We bought the house and the baby was 18 months old.

0:22:52 Joyce Kleiner: That was your third?

0:22:53 Anne Layzer: My third and final, yes. And the girls were kindergarten and second grade. First grade.

0:23:02 Joyce Kleiner: So which elementary school did —

0:23:03 Anne Layzer: Park School.

0:23:04 Joyce Kleiner: Park School. Was there even Edna Maguire yet at all?

0:23:08 Anne Layzer: There was.

0:23:10 Joyce Kleiner: Park School, of course, yeah, right.

0:23:13 Anne Layzer: It was a kind of junior high school.

0:23:16 Joyce Kleiner: Edna Maguire was?

0:23:17 Anne Layzer: Yeah.

0:23:19 Joyce Kleiner: Okay, so I want to make sure we spend plenty of time talking about your passion. I want to get a little bit more of the background now. Your kids went to Park School. You lived in Scott Highlands, which is above the golf course, which is

Boyle Park area. And you have now three children. So, now Bob, is he commuting into UCSF at that point?

0:23:49 Anne Layzer: Right.

0:23:49 Joyce Kleiner: And so you're getting settled in Mill Valley. So, two questions. One is, what was Mill Valley like in 1968? And what was it like to be a mother for you? Also I know that at one point you told me that there was something exciting about California too because in the East Coast, there were all of these standards and expectations and you didn't feel that here, so I'd like to hear about that if that's true.

0:24:20 Anne Layzer: Right. When we were looking for a house or taking one trip, it may have even been to Scott Highland, I asked, "Where's the Jewish neighborhood?" and not knowing whether we, our family, would be considered Jewish or not. And the answer was, "What's that?" That put a positive slant on moving to California, because I had thought of California as inferior to New England, and that I was not comfortable. But the idea that someone would say, "What's a Jewish neighborhood?" was just astounding to me. Really. I could have drawn in Brookline, I could have drawn on the sidewalk with chalk where the Protestant neighborhood, the Catholic neighborhood, and the Jewish neighborhoods were, and it was not nice. It's much better now, but still. When my father went to sell it, our house in Brookline, a neighbor called and told him not show the house to Jews and my father said, "So, I called every Jewish person I knew to say that the house was for sale."

0:25:47 Joyce Kleiner: Well now, to balance things a little bit, it has to be said that there were probably a lot less Jews in Mill Valley. I wonder how much credit Mill Valley deserves, or any California town deserves, for not having — well, they didn't have Catholic neighborhoods, and we have plenty of Catholics though.

0:26:07 Anne Layzer: But there were plenty — I think that when my children were going through — my children, they just weren't aware in the same way. They didn't know who the Jewish students were, whereas you would be branded on day one [on the East Coast]. And so, in that regard, there was something so much more relaxed that made life easier. At the same time, however, we were falling into tremendous political turmoil over the wars.

0:26:43 Joyce Kleiner: That's right. You were here during a kind of a tumultuous time.

0:26:47 Anne Layzer: Right, and it was tumultuous in the schools for many reasons. The teachers had won the right to collective bargaining, and that was quite disruptive. The population of the school district, for reasons that were poorly understood, began to decline, and declined in a severe manner. So the three elementary schools in Mill Valley were closed. This is a time when I begin to become interested in political considerations. I had agreed to be president of the PTA at Park School without ever having attended a PTA meeting in my life. But they had asked everybody else, and the one who was retiring

was a neighbor in Scott Highlands, and I agreed to do it, and that was the best decision I had made. I didn't know at the time that the principal had actually suggested my name to the desperate nominating committee when they came to say they were empty-handed. He said to try for me, and I don't know why. [chuckle] But that gave me kind of a stature and importance that was missing from my life, and it really helped me to get over the feeling that Bob was getting all the goodies and I wasn't. And it was a terrible clash between the conservatives and the liberals in Mill Valley. The school board meetings were extremely tumultuous.

0:28:45 Joyce Kleiner: Now, at that time, the majority of Mill Valley residents were still Republican probably, right?

0:28:51 Anne Layzer: Well, they were in the process of turning over. The anti-war politics and the Nixon era, that kind of corruption, the differences in politics became much clearer. And the school programs were being kind of dismantled. There were classrooms where they had places where they children could lie down and they could put their desks wherever they wanted to. And the teachers thought that teaching about sort of the politics of liberalism was much more important than teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. The conservative attitude towards the changes that were taking place — and, indeed, it was disturbing. It was similar to this in that what everyone thought of as normal was being dismantled. I remember at a conference with a teacher who opened the drawer and you saw that the whole drawer of his desk, because it was a big drawer, the bottom was filled with bubble gum. And he would throw it to the kids in the class. The middle school was made with an open classroom format, so that it was noisy and disorganized. The teachers had to yell in order to be heard.

0:30:40 Joyce Kleiner: Was that when they had the pods?

0:30:41 Anne Layzer: The pods. Yeah. They did have sliding doors but it really wasn't the same. It was the idea of having a school that was a one-room school, everybody mixed up together. And what you were teaching them was more how to be ethical and how to be generous and how to be noble, and never mind the academics itself. And then you combined it with declining enrollments so that one school after another was closed. I have people who still hate me because they think that I was not ready to defend Park School enough. My attitude was, "I'll send my kids where the school is and it doesn't have to be Park School." I can't tell the school board, "The population has become so small in this school that you cannot have a full kindergarten, you cannot have a full first grade. You've got to have combined some schools." And I felt it was intellectually dishonest to say, "Close any school but Park School." I had to be willing to. And there are people who when they see me in the aisle at the Safeway will turn around because they think, "I was so much betrayed."

0:32:05 Joyce Kleiner: The school didn't even close though.

0:32:06 Anne Layzer: No, it didn't, it just stayed open.

0:32:08 Joyce Kleiner: But just they thought that you were willing to leave it.

0:32:11 Anne Layzer: To listen.

0:32:12 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah.

0:32:13 Anne Layzer: Right.

0:32:13 Joyce Kleiner: Now how many schools were there before they began to close?

0:32:17 Anne Layzer: I think it went from eight to five. Anyway, they closed Alto School, they closed Homestead School. Was it Tam Valley? I think Tam Valley. And other schools were considered untouchable like Old Mill. Nobody would talk about it. Nobody would even think of closing Old Mill. I think Park was somewhat — these are schools on the main drag that you —

0:32:52 Joyce Kleiner: Also inside the city limits too.

0:32:54 Anne Layzer: Right. So I think I was just president for two years, and then I started my new career as a newsletter writer.

0:33:10 Joyce Kleiner: For the PTA?

0:33:11 Anne Layzer: For the PTA. But by this time, because of the tremendous crisis in the public school system in California, people began to cluster, and the school people, the trustees, the PTA, League of Women Voters, many organizations joined together to try and protect the schools from what they were facing, including that there was the dismantling of a kind of academic atmosphere. The closing of schools and a case from the Supreme Court called *Serrano v. Priest*, which said that it's unconstitutional for a dollar on the property tax in a wealthy neighborhood produces 10 times as much money as a dollar on the property taxed in a poor neighborhood. They compared two side-by-side, school areas in Los Angeles, and the Supreme Court said that was unconstitutional.

So I was asked as an American Government major who had read many Supreme Court decisions to read this. That was one of my first assignments with the PTA, to read *Serrano v. Priest* and explain it. And that was another pat on the back that did me good. First I explained it to the PTA. I was asked to explain it to the school board. I went to the teachers' unions. I went all over the place, the League of Women Voters, explaining *Serrano v. Priest*. So I became then a school board regular explaining issues and explaining what was going to go on. I became the newsletter writer for the League of Women Voters, and then there was one time I was writing three newsletters. [laughs]

0:35:40 Joyce Kleiner: Oh wow.

0:35:41 Anne Layzer: The third one was for a schools organization at the state level, the Educational Congress of California. And Elaine Brockbank who was a trustee in the

Tam District had recruited me to do this because she began reading my newsletters. It had the California School Boards Association, the California Teachers Association, the AAUW, the League of Women Voters, the PTA, focusing on the crisis in the public schools. And I would point out that to become an advocate for the public schools was really quite remarkable for somebody who came from a setting where everyone went to private school so you wouldn't have to mix with the riff-raff. [laughs] Of course, there wasn't all that much riff-raff in Mill Valley. But I was going to point out that one of the changes in Mill Valley is there aren't any poor people living here anymore. When I drive around Mill Valley and look at the houses now, every house is as clean as a whistle, spiffy, beautiful landscaping. They look new, or anyway fresh. I can't find old houses in Mill Valley.

0:37:00 Joyce Kleiner: They're there but they're going fast. Most of them are up in the hills now.

0:37:05 Anne Layzer: So in a way, it's very comfortable to drive through Mill Valley and everything looks nice, but it also points out that the kind of separation that is just going on everywhere has been taking place here, including that there aren't any young people who join the League of Women Voters.

0:37:26 Joyce Kleiner: Now you joined the League of Women Voters about the same time you joined the PTA?

0:37:33 Anne Layzer: I probably didn't do it quite then because I still had an infant at home. But it was soon after. One reason was — oh, I know why. The PTA was a wonderful organization but they were very much, sort of, unsophisticated women. Not in Mill Valley but other places. And the difference between the way the League of Women Voters lobbied in Sacramento and the PTA was extreme. The PTA was naïve and unsophisticated in its way politically, especially at the state level. But the League of Women Voters was red hot and ardent. So, I wanted to be part of that. All the trustees belonged to the League of Women Voters and they saw that as a place for volunteer types, community activist types, to be effective at the state level.

0:38:56 Joyce Kleiner: Before I ask you about your experience with that, because that's such a big part of your resumé or whatever you want to call it, I wanted to go back to something that you said to me when we were having coffee one day about this feeling of being able to reinvent yourself in California versus these expectations of what would become of you when you were in the east. Because it sounds like you were a little resistant to California but you did find this to be true. So could you talk a little bit about that?

0:39:28 Anne Layzer: There are still ways in which I wish California had the same kind of intellectual sophistication. But it's not extreme at all, and there are people like me that I can find with no problem. But it's a result, I think, of wealth, and when we pat ourselves on the back in Marin and say, "We had the biggest voter turnout in the state," I say, "It counts as how many voters have college educations." The people who have

college educations feel entitled to vote and also that it's a basic responsibility that other people don't feel the same way. So I don't think we should boast about voter turnout. We feel that the government is ours to tell them what to do. [laughs]

0:40:30 Joyce Kleiner: A little bit more about what Mill Valley was like in the '60s before we go on. It was less populated, certainly, and it sounds like there was a lot of political chaos going on, both in the schools and I imagine other places. Downtown was actually still a commercial area for people that lived in Mill Valley, right? They used it more than they use it now. So, anything else? State of mind?

0:41:00 Anne Layzer: Traditional. One of the changes I've been thinking about was that it was a time when women began to wear pants. [laughs]

0:41:13 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah, it's true.

0:41:15 Anne Layzer: Instead of skirts. That it was all right to do it and it was a statement. At Radcliffe, we were not allowed to wear pants unless the thermometer was below zero, not just below 31, but below zero, or we were on the quad where the dorms were. So, that was a statement of liberation. And also, then, women began to run for political office. They began to run for the school board and the City Council. And that was really quite thrilling.

0:42:00 Joyce Kleiner: And that started right around '69?

0:42:07 Anne Layzer: I suppose if I went back and look through things, I could tell you.

0:42:10 Joyce Kleiner: I think Vera Schultz had already been on the City Council, because she ran for the supervisor by 1969, I think. She was an exception. So it became common for women to run for office.

0:42:32 Anne Layzer: And women were really present at these meetings, at school board meetings. The school board meetings were huge. It was scary for people who were on the school board because of how large the turnout was.

0:42:55 Joyce Kleiner: And was it often rancorous?

0:42:57 Anne Layzer: It was. People were being asked to sacrifice — say, with the closing of schools, and the fact that what perhaps their team did, this was another thing that brought the right-thinking people together. I don't think I've ever worked harder than in the campaign against Prop 13, which was located in the building owned by the California Teachers Association near our Civic Center. The turnout at these kind of meetings was just awesome.

0:43:44 Joyce Kleiner: That was '72 or '73?

0:43:46 Anne Layzer: '78 was Prop 13.

0:43:53 Joyce Kleiner: I remember, okay.

0:43:56 Anne Layzer: We still haven't recovered from Prop 13.

0:43:58 Joyce Kleiner: No, and we're going to talk about it, but I don't want to jump 10 years ahead, I'm not ready to do that yet. [chuckles] So there was a lot of rancor in the school board meetings because the conservative parents weren't excited about the way the classrooms were being run. Everybody was upset about school size, the student body reducing and the schools closing, and there was a third thing you said that was an issue that caused a lot of problems. What was it? Serrano —

0:44:38 Anne Layzer: Serrano v. Priest.

0:44:39 Joyce Kleiner: How do you spell —

0:44:41 Anne Layzer: Priest.

0:44:41 Joyce Kleiner: Oh, it is Priest, okay.

0:44:46 Anne Layzer: Also, the hippie movement. One of my favorite teachers at the middle school once said at the school board meeting, "I have in my class a little girl who comes to school every day with her hair neatly braided, wearing a slip under her skirt. And next to her is a little boy who hasn't had breakfast, whose parents send him to school only because the law requires it. They regard school as an establishment trip, and they just want you to leave him alone. And I'm supposed to come up with a curriculum that fits these two children." [laughs]

0:45:39 Joyce Kleiner: Okay, let's talk about that period. I'm glad you brought that up because you have a very good perspective on the hippie movement, as far as its influence on Mill Valley. As I understand, it really began at the Summer of Love and the Back to the Earth Movement. A lot of people discovered that they could live for free or cheaply in the old shacks and cottages and stuff up in the mountains, and they started either living in those old unconverted barns and shacks or they would set up small communes in larger buildings. So this was the first time, right around then — I'm paraphrasing, tell me if I'm right, the first time that a relatively traditional middle class bedroom community started seeing this influx, basically because of the closeness to nature in San Francisco equally brought all of these free love children into Mill Valley, is that about right? Do I have that about right?

0:46:48 Anne Layzer: Right, it was the sense of discarding the rules and setting new rules.

0:46:53 Joyce Kleiner: Were the people that had already been living in Mill Valley beginning to change or was it the arrival of a new group?

0:47:00 Anne Layzer: No, well certainly I think first it's young couples. There begin to be a lot of failed marriages.

0:47:11 Joyce Kleiner: Okay, so that would be the people that were already here, who were having that change.

0:47:14 Anne Layzer: That's right.

0:47:15 Joyce Kleiner: EST and stuff like that was going on.¹

0:47:16 Anne Layzer: And it was from women becoming rebellious and children becoming rebellious, questioning the things that you had already had up until then observed. But the teachers having the power to bargain collectively also stirred up a lot of anguish.

0:47:52 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah.

0:47:53 Anne Layzer: And that they were going to have a kind of power that they hadn't before. In fact, the district responded to the anguish that the public was expressing about collective bargaining by letting us sit in on the bargaining for a year, which I did. It was the most boring thing I have ever done, and I also observed that the best teachers did not want to be on the bargaining team, so often it was the crappier ones who were. But I can't tell you how much it stirred up people who had regarded teachers as more passive and more obedient and not had such a sense of their own rights. So that split the community too between the liberals and conservatives.

0:48:58 Joyce Kleiner: So then when you had these little wild thing type kids that the teachers were describing next to the kids that came with less challenges or whatever, were these children coming from the new immigrants into Mill Valley?

0:49:17 Anne Layzer: Not so much. I think it was the same kind of families who for the same reason of not wanting to have their children go to private school in the city but come to the better schools out in the suburbs because there was quite a growth of young families moving to the suburbs.

0:49:41 Joyce Kleiner: But they came for the schools.

0:49:44 Anne Layzer: Yes, they did. So in a way they were disturbed that there was turmoil.

0:49:51 Joyce Kleiner: I used to be a hippie, [chuckles] so I'm trying not to use the term too derogatorily, but let's go back to that image anyway. You've got this hippie kid. Now, who were his parents at that time? Were they newcomers probably, or what?

¹ Joyce refers to Erhard Seminars Training founded by Werner Erhard in 1971 dedicated to personal transformation.—Editor.

0:50:08 Anne Layzer: They were often quite young. In my family, I was the conservative and my younger sisters were the liberals. Actually, there was a generation split along those lines, and it was going barefoot, it was smoking marijuana, also. And I wanted to say another thing that was disruptive, the arrival of drugs. I know that my son had his first marijuana in fifth grade. And having kids who had gone into the business of selling drugs, that was one of the things that was causing real anguish, and students died of overdoses or car accidents. They weren't doing well in school because they were stoned. And there were tremendous accusations from one family to another about their attitudes toward it, even providing it or permitting it. I guess "permissive" was one of the war words.

0:51:31 Joyce Kleiner: How did you feel about it all at the time?

0:51:34 Anne Layzer: I was very, very negative about it.

0:51:38 Joyce Kleiner: About the permissiveness?

0:51:40 Anne Layzer: About that kind of permissiveness. And to have kids who weren't being encouraged to do well in school because it was, "What they teach in the schools is crap." And having the dichotomy between the girl with the slip and pigtails and the boy with torn clothes, it was very unsettling. And many teachers just were falling apart and were being criticized for —

0:52:16 Joyce Kleiner: So it wasn't a financial division, it was a lifestyle division.

0:52:21 Anne Layzer: Yeah, that's right. But definitely I think you would say that the Republicans were not nearly as affected as the Democrats. They weren't responding to it in the same way. Republicans were just horrified. [laughs] But there weren't that many. Actually, it was beginning to change in Mill Valley. I think that Mill Valley becoming a Democratic majority is one of the striking changes of my time.

0:53:02 Joyce Kleiner: And that was around 1969?

0:53:05 Anne Layzer: Let's see, 1967. Certainly, as we went through the war.

0:53:11 Joyce Kleiner: Nixon resigned, '70 what?

0:53:13 Anne Layzer: And then the impeachment, yeah.

0:53:15 Joyce Kleiner: That was '74? When was that?

0:53:20 Anne Layzer: When was the war?

0:53:21 Joyce Kleiner: That was when the shift politically — actually, I think the demographics proved that out, that it was actually the Nixon election.

0:53:30 Anne Layzer: Right. And certainly there are towns in Marin County that are different politically from each other, but by and large, not nearly to the extent that they were.

0:53:45 Joyce Kleiner: Now this is a good time to go into your work with the League of Women Voters. You've been a major volunteer and leader in the Marin League of Women Voters for over 40 years. How many years has it been?

0:54:00 Anne Layzer: Let's see. Well, it would begin in about 1972, I certainly by 1975. By 1978, and Proposition 13, I became one of the lead speakers, debaters.

0:54:24 Joyce Kleiner: So did Prop 13 — was getting involved on that campaign the thing that kind of ratcheted up your involvement with the League?

0:54:33 Anne Layzer: Yes.

0:54:34 Joyce Kleiner: Okay. So let's talk about that.

0:54:40 Anne Layzer: When I joined the League and explained the Serrano case, I was tagged as an education specialist and was the Chairman of the League's Education Committee for a long time, and it involved Serrano, and then collective bargaining and all sorts of school issues. Integration was also going on. Tam High was really the only high school in Marin County that had black students. So we were much more keenly aware of the issues of desegregation. Some of the people wanted the schools to go easy around black students so that they wouldn't fail as much in school.

0:55:52 Joyce Kleiner: And let me just, sort of for the record, put in here that one of the issues with Tam High School being more integrated was because the majority of the black kids that were going to Tam came from Marin City, which was the site of low-income housing developments, and so most of these kids were coming from basically the projects.

0:56:19 Anne Layzer: It was because the kids who live in Sausalito go to Tam High, and there was some gerrymandering going on because Tiburon and Belvedere wanted their own school district and they wanted their kids to go to Redwood and not go to Tam. And our attitude was, "Well, let them go." [laughs] But, yes, I was regarded as an education specialist, and at one point was not only going to all the Mill Valley school board meetings, but all the Tam High ones and I was writing the *Whole Tam Family*.²

One of the influences of the League of Women Voters was their statement that, "Good information makes democracy work," and that filled me with a sense of mission that what I could do to make democracy work was to provide good information. And I put a tremendous amount of effort into that assignment. It was as if it was religious feeling.

²² The name of the PTA newsletter was the *Whole Tam Family*, a pun on the 'whole damn family.'—Anne Layzer.

[chuckle] And I was doing very well that the *Whole Tam Family* won a prize for the best PTA newsletter in the state twice, and the League of Women Voters' newsletter, which is called *The Voter*, also won a state prize.

0:58:07 Joyce Kleiner: While you were editing?

0:58:08 Anne Layzer: Right. I was actually not so much editing as writing it, and that made me feel good because I come from a family of writers. Harking back to my great-great-grandfather William Lloyd Garrison who was the founder of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, and wrote a newspaper called *The Liberator*. He has a statue on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston near the Boston Common. And when we drove down Commonwealth Avenue, we would roll down the window and yell, "Hey, Grandpa." [chuckles] So the sense of writing on behalf of democracy, you could say, was my religion. [chuckles]

0:59:01 Joyce Kleiner: It's a good religion.

0:59:02 Anne Layzer: Yeah, it's a good religion. [laughter] Right. It also created something else in my life, which was a computer. I didn't buy the first Macintosh, I bought the second Macintosh, and put out my newsletter using a computer that was — I cannot tell you how it changed my life.

0:59:29 Joyce Kleiner: I can imagine.

0:59:31 Anne Layzer: I don't know if you remember mimeograph stencils where the typewriter makes holes in the stencil. I didn't think, actually, that one or two prizes that I won was because of the look of my newsletter, not just the content of it. So writing for a cause was — in fact, I became too intense. There was one dinner, and I think it was during the Prop 13 campaign or one of them, when my daughter Robin yelled at dinner, "Oh mother, I'm so sick of your high horse." And I had to laugh because I think I was getting sick of it too. [chuckles]

1:00:31 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah, I know the comments. I recognize that in myself. But it was tremendously important what you were doing. Let's talk about Prop 13 a little bit and your involvement in that. You seem to have been able to understand the potential devastation, and see it coming.

1:00:58 Anne Layzer: And it continues. So, we have a house in Mill Valley, 3,000 square feet on a third of an acre, where I can go out of the driveway and walk to the top of Mount Tam. Golf course, parks. That cost \$53,000, and because of Prop 13, our property tax base is based on the value of the home in 1975. We bought it in 1968. 1975 it was assessed at \$125,000 and our property tax is based on that, so that our property taxes have just reached \$4,000, and the neighbors next door, their property tax starts at \$20,000 for similar property.

1:02:05 Joyce Kleiner: Yes. Well, it's ridiculous. I know that part. But when you were fighting the campaign against it, that's kind of what I wanted to hear about. How it failed. They won, Prop 13 won, but what was your experience of trying to convince people to vote against it?

1:02:24 Anne Layzer: Well, for one thing, I predicted what I've just described to you. Pete Palches, the superintendent, took me to talk to a Rotary [club meeting], and I talked about the way Prop 13 was set up, that your house wasn't reassessed until you sold it. Your assessment could go up 2% a year, but the market was going crazy. I pointed out that there was a gas station at the corner of Camino Alto and East Blithedale, at each corner, four gas stations, and if one of them is sold, its property taxes will take a huge jump that the others won't. A simple kind of prediction. And I heard one of the guys say, "That's a very intelligent woman." And I wanted to say, "Duh!" [laughs]

But it was that kind of thing. And then the fact that it was the son of Prop 13 and the grandson of Prop 13 that said that, "Your children, if they inherit the house, their taxes don't go up to their true market value." So it was a protection that was entirely unfair. It wasn't as if the property tax didn't need to have some changes made in it because we were going through a period of inflation. With inflation now, it's a button that's on President Ford's lapel [chuckles] so that people's property taxes were going crazy.

1:04:20 Joyce Kleiner: Right. Some kind of middle ground would have been reasonable. So after Prop 13, what happened in Mill Valley and how did it show itself?

1:04:36 Anne Layzer: It had a tremendous effect upon the schools, because the schools now no longer had any control over the property tax. The property tax had been turned over to the state government. It was Jerry Brown's job now about how the schools were funded, and instead of it being mostly local funds, it became mostly state funds. And for reasons that I don't really understand, there are still low wealth school districts where one district has a lot more money. Novato has never caught up to the others. So there's something that I haven't really been able to understand why the state wasn't able to make a difference so the schools are more equal. But the schools also began to fall behind the schools in other states and it became very, very extreme, to the point that California, with the greatest university system in the world, began to be 49th in funding of the elementary schools and the public schools.

1:05:56 Joyce Kleiner: But then were you still involved with the PTA?

1:06:00 Anne Layzer: When Philip graduated from high school, I pretty much moved on, and I really had been giving more effort to the League of Women Voters.

1:06:11 Joyce Kleiner: So you weren't necessarily in with the parents at the time that the cuts were being made on the schools.

1:06:22 Anne Layzer: Yeah. The school budgets, it was devastating. And it certainly contributed to the turmoil because the school district had to be a beggar to the state. And with the money went a loss of freedom.

1:06:46 Joyce Kleiner: So, I'm sorry, I keep interrupting because I have so many things I want to ask you.

1:06:50 Anne Layzer: Well, go ahead.

1:06:53 Joyce Kleiner: First, I want to get this quote in because I didn't put it in my book when I wrote about you. When I asked you — besides the fact that as an officer in League of Women Voters you can't run for office — but when I asked you why you never ran for office, you gave me the answer that —

1:07:20 Anne Layzer: You can't cry at school board meetings when people are being mean to you.

1:07:23 Joyce Kleiner: You didn't think that you could keep from crying because people were being mean to you?

1:07:27 Anne Layzer: Yes, I was too fragile in that regard. I did not think I could bear the criticism and just the stress of it.

1:07:44 Joyce Kleiner: So, now, I did want to ask you a little bit. You have been in a great position to be an objective observer of Mill Valley's politics. Now, I know that you've worked for the League of Women Voters for Marin for all these years. But you live in Mill Valley and you certainly have been able to observe Mill Valley politics.

1:08:07 Anne Layzer: Not very closely though.

1:08:09 Joyce Kleiner: No?

1:08:10 Anne Layzer: And the reason is that I think the city is so well run.

1:08:17 Joyce Kleiner: Okay. So let's just talk about some anecdotes, moments that you remember in your years of watching the politics from the outside.

1:08:32 Anne Layzer: I don't know if I can describe the sense of change taking place in the same way that I can in the schools. That there was no doubt in my mind that Mill Valley was better governed than many of the other — that it hired wonderful staff. Mill Valley wasn't a government that I needed to worry about nearly as much as other levels of government. Good people ran. If there was a bad person on the board, that person was generally a minority, outvoted meeting after meeting. That the input that comes from the citizens in Mill Valley, watching them approach the microphone, and make a lot of sense. That the City Council has always been extremely respectful in the way that it answers

questions and challenges. I have to say that it's a government that I haven't worried about, and it's one of the charms, [chuckles] that I'm not very often aroused.

1:10:26 Joyce Kleiner: Can you tell me some of the civic leaders that you most admired over the years?

1:10:35 Anne Layzer: One thing that is taking place with me as I approach my 80th birthday in April is that I don't remember names as well.

1:10:48 Joyce Kleiner: Well, I'll throw some out, but I don't want to —

1:10:51 Anne Layzer: Well, the one that first came in my mind was — her name begins with K.

1:11:04 Joyce Kleiner: Cathy Barnes?

1:11:06 Anne Layzer: Not Cathy Barnes.

1:11:09 Joyce Kleiner: Oh, I know. God, now I can't remember the name.

1:11:13 Anne Layzer: She's even on Face — Foote. Kathleen.

1:11:16 Joyce Kleiner: Yeah, Kathleen.

1:11:18 Anne Layzer: I think of Kathleen Foote.

1:11:20 Joyce Kleiner: Foote, thank you.

1:11:21 Anne Layzer: Kathleen Foote.

1:11:22 Joyce Kleiner: Kathleen Foote.

1:11:23 Anne Layzer: As one of the stars. And as matter of fact, she called me once to recruit me to run for the council, she talked for 50 minutes about why it would be good for me. And I said, "No, I'm too happy with the League of Women Voters." Joan Boessenecker is another standout. I would need to actually see lists to tell you who were the ones...

1:11:48 Joyce Kleiner: Well yeah, Betsy Cutler, Anne Solem.

1:11:52 Anne Layzer: Anne Solem was typical in the way that she comes with so much that she's already done, that she brought to it, including that she'd been on the board of the library first, but also dealing with politicians, yes. I think a wealth of experience is one of things that I would say that our City Council members bring. They are mature when they come, and experienced.

1:12:30 Joyce Kleiner: Do you think that's still true?

1:12:35 Anne Layzer: Pretty much.

1:12:40 Joyce Kleiner: Do you think there's been a change in what motivates people now to run and serve in local politics?

1:12:57 Anne Layzer: Are you talking about Mill Valley?

1:13:00 Joyce Kleiner: I'm always talking about Mill Valley in this context. So, yeah, let's stick with Mill Valley, if we can.

1:13:12 Anne Layzer: There are different ways of deciding to run, and one is that you decide yourself because you know what you want to do, you know what's going on wrong and you know what you want to do. But there's another kind where people who don't want to run and recruit others. I think that goes on a lot also. I don't know the extent to which people move from being commissioners, planning commissioners and other commissioners and then go on, that probably happens a lot too, that they've been active at lower levels and so they sort of graduate to the City Council. I think they've chosen wonderful city managers.

I have a feeling that the City Council chambers has a powerful effect on people who are in it. When I go up the stairs or watch people come up the stairs, chat, chat, chat, chat, they enter that room and their voice falls as if they're entering a church. I feel like it was almost designed by God Himself, the effect that it has on what it does to their voices, how they feel somewhat embraced, they're sitting in pews. [laughs]

1:15:01 Joyce Kleiner: I haven't been to that many other City Council chambers in Marin, so I don't know what they look like.

1:15:08 Anne Layzer: Right. But when I go there, I feel that I have reached a really special place. And I think that people who are on the City Council are affected by it.

1:15:24 Joyce Kleiner: Well, this is kind of the perfect time to just sort of wrap up because you've given all of your talent and education to the subject of democracy, and a lot of what you've done, I imagine, is directly towards changing the state level that you had a lot of influence in Marin.

1:15:57 Anne Layzer: Including, instead of running for office myself, being a facilitator of the election process. I thought about having a daughter who is a minister and her father is Jewish, but she's not doctrinaire very much. I'm an atheist and I feel about government the way she feels about the church, [chuckles] that it's a religion, it needs to be protected, defended, explained. And I tell people, "Democracy is my religion." [laughs]

1:16:46 Joyce Kleiner: Now, we are not going to include in this too much, but just for the record, because there's going to be a transcript of this, we're talking during the first two months of Donald Trump's presidency. And so it can be an interesting time for someone that's working on the League of Women Voters because it doesn't feel right now like the average voter is particularly educated in basic civics and government. What's your feeling about that?

1:17:33 Anne Layzer: My husband teases me about something that I have said, that I have observed reading the history of countries and governments, and that is that when countries begin they may achieve greatness, and then if you look at countries like Spain and Turkey that ruled the earth, after a while, they declined. And my husband says it's part of the belief of Spengler and he calls me, "my little Spenglerian."³ But I do feel that Donald Trump seems to bolster the feeling I have that America may have reached its peak in history.

1:18:27 Joyce Kleiner: That's a very short run, isn't it? If you think about between Britain and Rome and the Ottoman civilization and so on, 250 years isn't a long time. [laughs]

1:18:42 Anne Layzer: Well, things move faster. Anyway, it is certainly on my mind that our country might — I wonder, if a country begins its decline, can it recover?

1:19:02 Joyce Kleiner: And do you think that part of it is that we have neglected civics in the schools?

1:19:08 Anne Layzer: People constantly say to me, "The schools don't teach civics." And I say, "The school teach civics, it's a legal requirement that they teach civics." The question is, do the children listen? Do they feel it? And as a matter of fact, when I work at the polls, which I don't do anymore, if a young person came in to vote, we would go bananas, we would give all our cookies away, we would sing to the young person. Young people don't vote. I'd go to talk to a class about democracy and they are not interested. And I don't know if that's still true, but Mervin Field said to the League of Women Voters once in a talk that, "People go along not being very interested until they have their first baby." And then, he did this pantomime of a husband saying, "Where do I vote? Where do I register to vote?" That it is considered an adult occupation.

1:20:16 Joyce Kleiner: The last question on that subject is that lots of people like Obama are saying there's still a lot that you can do on a local level, and that's really what you've been doing for 40 years. So, do you agree? Do you think that we can make a significant difference on a local level? And is that a good place for people to put their frustration?

1:20:40 Anne Layzer: Absolutely. If you make local government work, then local government won't need the state and feds nearly as much. However, one of things that is

³ The reference is to Oswald Spengler who published a culturally influential work in the aftermath of WWI titled in translation *The Decline of the West*.—Editor.

disturbing about this is how different the states seem to be. And I look at the behavior of the Southern states and I think with deep regret, “The Civil War isn’t over yet.” We are still a divided country by geography even. But I do think that if you are attentive to your government at the local level, then the national and state level doesn’t need to come down and discipline you and order you around.

1:21:32 Joyce Kleiner: Okay. Well, we’re pretty much done, Anne, and I know that you told me, “Well I don’t know how much I can talk about Mill Valley, because mine’s been more of a state and county level,” but you’ve lived here all these years. So, I always ask the same question: If you had one wish for Mill Valley, for the future, what would it be?

1:21:55 Anne Layzer: To stay the same. [laughs] In a way, I’m uneasy with how comfortable it has become. My beliefs are not challenged very much in Mill Valley and we’ve become more and more similar. So, in a way, I’m much more comfortable because we all are alike, or more alike. But that also makes me uneasy because we’re alike because our income makes us alike.

1:22:32 Joyce Kleiner: So, what would you wish if you could wave a magic wand and have one big change?

1:22:36 Anne Layzer: Well, yes, maybe that there’s more diversity in Mill Valley, though our kids get more diversity if they stay in Tam High, and not just black kids but kids from West Marin, kids from Sausalito.

1:22:51 Joyce Kleiner: And economic diversity could be accomplished by some —

1:22:53 Anne Layzer: Yeah, economic diversity.

1:22:55 Joyce Kleiner: How do you feel about housing? Do you feel that it’s an important element that should —

1:23:00 Anne Layzer: I don’t know how you solve that problem. If you have the strength to prevent — I’m struggling over the word, not ‘diverse,’ but small building units.

1:23:21 Joyce Kleiner: Infill. Yeah.

1:23:22 Anne Layzer: No, but not infill. What we fight against now is having more people living in smaller spaces. I know the word is there, but I can’t find it.

1:23:35 Joyce Kleiner: Density.

1:23:37 Anne Layzer: What?

1:23:38 Joyce Kleiner: Density?

1:23:39 Anne Layzer: Density.

1:23:39 Joyce Kleiner: Yes.

1:23:40 Anne Layzer: Politically, density doesn't work in Mill Valley, and I think that density, you need to allow density in order to have more economic balance. But in even in Marin, density, even the small places cost a lot. So that's something that we have become too much alike — but it's more comfortable. I feel I don't have to worry that much [chuckles] this way in Mill Valley, living in an upper middle class community. But, on the other hand then, others are excluded. And so, my democracy worries. It's a struggle for me.