

**Mill Valley Oral History Program**  
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**ANDY BERMAN**

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

TITLE: Oral History of Andy Berman  
INTERVIEWER: Joyce Kleiner  
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In this oral history, former Mayor and City Council member Andy Berman recounts his life of public service in Mill Valley. Born in Stamford, Connecticut in 1959, Andy recalls that he always loved public service, and was even chosen in high school to be his town's "mayor for a day". Andy recounts attending the University of Michigan and later law school at the University of Miami. In 1989, he moved with his wife Sabra to San Francisco, and four years later they relocated to Mill Valley. Andy discusses his extensive public service over the years in Mill Valley and provides an insider's view on the dynamics of city governance. While observing the town's changing demographics, he affirms the stability of its core values. His view for the future of Mill Valley, he says, is the same as his original platform when he was first running for office: health and safety, fiscal responsibility, and maintaining Mill Valley's small-town character. Throughout this oral history Andy powerfully conveys what it has meant to him to be part of the community and how this community has become a very large part of who he is.

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## Oral History of Andy Berman

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**Oral History of Andy Berman**  
**January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**Editor's note:** This transcript has been reviewed by Andy Berman, who made corrections and clarifications to the original.

**0:00:01 Joyce Kleiner:** Today is January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017. My name is Joyce Kleiner and I'm preparing to interview Andy Berman, former City Council member and Mayor for Mill Valley. I'm just going to go over some biographical information first for the record. Your name's Andrew Berman and you currently live at 207 Molino Avenue here in Mill Valley. Your date of birth is August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1959. You were born in Stamford, Connecticut, that's spelled S-T-A-M-F-O-R-D. Your wife is Sabra Grimberg and your children are Hannah, who's currently 23, Morrissa, who's spelled M-O-R-R-I-S-S-A, who's 21. Your son Harley is 19 and your daughter Samantha is 15. And you have an impressive history. You began as an attorney, but you went on to a variety of positions in, it looks like, mostly communications, telecommunications?

**0:01:23 Andy Berman:** I would say digital media and wireless and education.

**0:01:27 Joyce Kleiner:** And currently your current position is —

**0:01:31 Andy Berman:** I'm chief of staff for Cricket Media, which is a digital media business, but it's the education space, children's education media.

**0:01:38 Joyce Kleiner:** Is it the same Cricket as the *Cricket Magazine*? Is it connected?

**0:01:41 Andy Berman:** Yes, that's it, we own all those magazines, yes. I'm so glad you know that. We have *Cricket* and *Ladybug* and *Babybug* and *Cobblestone* and all of those, yep.

**0:01:51 Joyce Kleiner:** And I'll be putting this CV into the documents to go with this.

**0:01:57 Andy Berman:** Okay, sure.

**0:01:57 Joyce Kleiner:** But you did graduate *cum laude* from University of Miami School of Law in Coral Gables, Florida. And you also served on the Law Review and were on the Dean's List. And I will ask you when you decided to stop practicing, or when you moved out of practicing law?

**0:02:20 Andy Berman:** That was 2000.

**0:02:22 Joyce Kleiner:** Alright. So, the first thing I want to do is talk very briefly about your experience before arriving in California. You lived in Stamford, Connecticut.

Can you just tell me a little bit about what Stamford, Connecticut was like when you were growing up and if you know what the population was?

**0:02:37 Andy Berman:** Yes, Stamford, Connecticut was a suburb town. It's 35 miles out of New York, out of Manhattan. When I was growing up there it was still a relatively small town, about 130,000 people, and it was an integrated town. Southern Connecticut has Greenwich and Darien, New Canaan, and a lot of those towns, years ago, were not that integrated. There were African Americans and Jews and Italians in Stamford, and three synagogues. My great grandfather came over from Eastern Europe, he worked his way over in 1917 and left Eastern Europe during the First World War, got through Ellis Island and into New York, and eventually got a little farm going out in Stamford, Connecticut. That's how we got to Stamford. He raised cattle out there and had a little cash and carry store and a little slaughterhouse in the back. My last name's not Hormel, but we were in the meat business, just a regular working class family in Stamford.

**0:03:53 Joyce Kleiner:** Was your mother Jewish too?

**0:03:54 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes, my mom's Jewish, my dad's Jewish.

**0:03:57 Joyce Kleiner:** What's your mother's immigration story?

**0:04:00 Andy Berman:** So my father's side of the family are all Polish, and my mother's side of the family are all Russians, so Russian Jews and Polish Jews and eventually they all got themselves to the United States.

**0:04:15 Joyce Kleiner:** When did your mother's family get to the United States?

**0:04:18 Andy Berman:** Well, that family's been — that was very interesting, 'cause that was my great grandfather. He came to the United States right in 1917, so they've been around awhile. My grandparents on my mother's side were born in the United States, and my mom, so she was third-generation. I was the fourth generation that has been born here. On my dad's side of the family, his parents actually immigrated to the United States, so he was second-generation, I was third-generation on that side.

**0:04:57 Joyce Kleiner:** And so how long did you live in Stamford?

**0:05:03 Andy Berman:** I was in Stamford through 1976 when I went to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where my mother went to school. Stamford today is completely different. It's probably grown by 50,000 or 60,000. During the '70s and '80s, a lot of New York corporations moved out to Connecticut. They put some of those office parks in today, UBS Warburg and some of the big banks and everybody. If you go to Stamford today, it's a bit of a bustling — I wouldn't say it's a bustling city, but there's a lot of headquarters there, folks moved out of New York, and then there's people in Greenwich and Westport and Wilton, and it actually became a place where people commute into now.

**0:05:55 Joyce Kleiner:** Are your parents still alive?

**0:05:57 Andy Berman:** My parents are alive. Their health has really declined. They're in an assisted living facility in southern Connecticut. I've got an older brother who lives in Wilton, one of those nice suburbs. I've got a younger brother who lives in Los Angeles.

**0:06:12 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay. So, a little bit about some of the things that may have contributed to your early attitude about things that became important later. One thing I want to hear briefly about is when you were a kid in Stamford, you were "mayor" for the day. So can you tell me —

**0:06:32 Andy Berman:** Yes. Well, I always have liked public service. I never thought about running for office, I never did. But I always loved public service. I've always loved community. And I've loved having friends. So I did the morning announcements in high school, that seemed like a natural thing. I guess I talk too much, so I did debating. My partner and I won a first-place trophy in the state of Connecticut for high school debating. I did moot court in law school and went to the national competitions. And, yes, when I was in Stamford, you could write in and try to explain why you should be the mayor in the town for a day, and I got that. Louis Clapes was the mayor then, and I was made mayor for the day. Betsy Cutler's got a picture of the photograph.

**0:07:26 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes, you showed it to me. I don't know if I still have it.

**0:07:28 Andy Berman:** Yes, my parents gave it to Betsy at one point and maybe they gave a copy to Dennis too.

**0:07:35 Joyce Kleiner:** Did you get to do much? Or were you really just kind of shadowing the mayor all day?

**0:07:41 Andy Berman:** Oh, no. There was a shadow, but you got to see sort of the inner workings of government and go to the hearings that day, and I wasn't allowed to officially sign anything, but I witnessed all the signings that day.

**0:07:54 Joyce Kleiner:** How old were you?

**0:07:54 Andy Berman:** I was a senior in high school.

**0:07:55 Joyce Kleiner:** Oh, okay.

**0:07:56 Andy Berman:** Yes, I was a senior in high school. By the way, when I was Mayor, I don't think anybody's done it, but when I was Mayor here I had a kid become mayor for the day, and we did the same thing here and had somebody rotate through in Mill Valley as well.

**0:08:11 Joyce Kleiner:** I actually wrote an article about that, so maybe I'll try —

**0:08:13 Andy Berman:** Yes, you did, that's right.

**0:08:13 Joyce Kleiner:** To put it in the file. You often talk about what you kind of consider a triangle of values: family, work and community. Do I have that right?

**0:08:26 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**0:08:27 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay. So can you tell me how you came up with that?

**0:08:30 Andy Berman:** Well, to me they're all the same thing, right? The reason I got involved in Mill Valley wasn't because I wanted to be mayor or run for office. It was because I'd always been a person that wanted to be comfortable in the place that he or she found themselves. And I'd worked for some people that were fantastic at issue-spotting and not being part of a solution. This is a problem, fix it. That's sort of what got me involved in the town. Once we made the decision to live here, and we bought a home here, and we were having our children here, well, then I just thought, "Well, I should just be part of the town." I wanted to be as comfortable in the town as I am in my living room, and I wanted anybody else to be as comfortable when they were interacting with the town as they would be if they came to my house and were sitting in my living room. So I just did it. I just did it.

And they [the values] were all the same for me, though, that's the thing. A family has to help each other and work through issues and you sort of rise and fall with the good and the bad. And I think the reason things have been good for me at work and the work environment is because that's what work is too, right? You sort of rise and fall, it's not about me, it's about "we." You notice I don't really say "I" very often. I'm very conscious about that. Sometimes my wife will say, "Well, my daughter," and I'm like, *our*, you know, "our." And community is that way too, right? You can't do these things on your own. You can't build a family on your own and you can't really get work successful on your own. I haven't been, let's put it that way. I suppose there are icons that do that, it's all about that person. I think a community's that way, too. We all have to be able to die and the entity still exists. I really mean that. I really, really mean that. None of it should just crumble because one person is there or not there. So you just build a little *esprit de corps*, and that's the way families are, that's the way community is and that's the way work can be.

**0:10:58 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, that's the way it should be. So I'm still in the background stage. Why don't you tell me a little bit more about what led you to come to California.

**0:11:14 Andy Berman:** I'll just be completely honest. My wife always wanted to come to California. She always did.

**0:11:21 Joyce Kleiner:** So you were already married before coming out here?

**0:11:23 Andy Berman:** Yes. We were married and we were clerking for federal judges. We were in two different cities our first year of marriage. But these were really prestigious opportunities, clerking for a federal judge. She stopped practicing law very early on, by the way, and I stopped practicing too after a number of years, so law school was great for us, we got to meet each other, it served its purpose. But she always wanted to come to California. And my parents always wanted everybody very, very close to home. I went to school in Michigan, that was far. I got to do that 'cause my mom went there, my aunt went there.

We were traveling around here a whole lot. We had some friends out here and we loved to come out here and see the Grateful Dead and just have a great time. And we just were traveling — we actually finally both stopped working, and had a year to be together. It was our first year, we were a young married couple, but we hadn't lived together yet. And so we took some time off and did some traveling. While we were traveling, we said, "Let's just do it and go to California." I remember calling my dad. We were in Hamburg, Germany. We were in Hamburg and we said, "Okay, let's do it. We're going to move." My wife and I had each had — those were good years. We had done our federal clerkships and accepted jobs and deferred them for a year. That was hard for my father who came from a very poor family. It was very hard for him to even imagine you could do that. And then we told him we were not going to take those jobs, we were going to return to the United States and not take those jobs and drive across the country where we hadn't taken the bar yet, and didn't know anybody. And we said, "Yes." We just did it, and we never looked back. That was 1989 and we never looked back.

**0:13:07 Joyce Kleiner:** I know you lived in Noe Valley for a while, I think you said. So is that where you started?

**0:13:13 Andy Berman:** Yes, we landed right in Noe Valley, loved it and moved over to Mill Valley because it reminded us of Noe Valley, and it was very, very nice.

**0:13:19 Joyce Kleiner:** When did you come to Mill Valley?

**0:13:22 Andy Berman:** That was 1993, we bought a house here. Mill Valley was still — the internet hadn't really gotten crazy yet, and it was still a regular little town. We're trying to keep it that way and that's very, very hard, and you and I can talk about that.

**0:13:40 Joyce Kleiner:** Let's talk a little bit then about that exact thing. What was Mill Valley like in 1993 from your perspective when you arrived here. And did you have any children yet?

**0:13:53 Andy Berman:** Hannah was born in 1993. We were living here then, but we had her in San Francisco. She was born in late 1993, so we made that move earlier in the year. And my wife Sabra was pregnant during that time when we moved in and everything. Mill Valley was still like Noe Valley. Everybody knew each other and it felt like a small town, and that's always been something that's been very hard to maintain. It's like work. People at work will say, "Well, how do you create culture?" Offices and



work want to create culture, and I've always thought culture is very, very easy to create, it's just very hard to maintain. That's been the whole thing we've been trying to grapple with the last 25 years. "How do you maintain the town? How do you maintain the small town character?"

It felt like a small town. It was a small town. The businesses that are largely downtown — there was the Depot Café, there was Peet's Coffee, Mill Valley Market, the hardware store, Barneys. It just felt like a nice small town, and folks knew each other. I think Mill Valley has always had a lot of money, I really do, but people didn't show it here or flaunt it here. The internet was still in its infancy. Because it got a little bit crazy here. I was on the Planning Commission from '98 to 2004, and that was — when you think about the overall economy in those years, I think Mill Valley experienced a rise and a burst, in a good way, with all of that too, because it just — by 1997 there was a little bit of a frenzy, and some of these priority projects that you saw in town, that by the way, I laugh because all the flak we were taking at the time and some big projects that were coming through the pipeline that haven't been built yet. But they were starting then, the real money was starting to flow in, and then all of that kind of disappeared when the bubble burst.

**0:16:38 Joyce Kleiner:** So this was the dot-com bubble we're talking about?

**0:16:41 Andy Berman:** Well, yes. I'm talking 1997 to 2004. But no, 1993, it was still a small town, and we walked everywhere. And we live right off the Molino steps there, so in a lot of respects it's no different today to me. We've been trying to maintain that.

**0:17:04 Joyce Kleiner:** Describe, very briefly, your definition of small town character?

**0:17:08 Andy Berman:** Well, you know it when you see it. Small town character to me is the mutuality and respect in the way the city does business. The city's accessible to its residents. Our people are polite and respectful. You feel safe and you feel secure. You know your fire chief and you know your police chief and you can give them a call. And you're not afraid to walk into City Hall and have a hearing. Neighbors talk to each other before they go and file complaints against each other. If you have to sit there and define it, then I think you've kind of missed it a little bit. There was a — well, I won't go there. [laughs]

**0:18:06 Joyce Kleiner:** You sure? If it's historically important you don't have to name names.

**0:18:09 Andy Berman:** Well, it's not historically important, but it's an analogy. When the Supreme Court first looked at pornography, one of the justices said, "You know it when you see it." And small town character's the same way. You know it when you see it. And it exists all the time. We still have ribbon cuttings and we still have a parade. And you know when you can walk into a store and you don't have your wallet with you, that the shopkeeper says, "Hey, it's okay, just come in next week and pay it when you pick up your shirts." These are all things going on that are just fabulous and wonderful. You know it when you see it.

**0:18:44 Joyce Kleiner:** I'm going to read into the record your service, because I want to get to the City Council.

**0:18:50 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes. Sure.

**0:18:53 Joyce Kleiner:** Your service as volunteer for the city of Mill Valley includes Mayor 2008 to 2009 and 2012 to 2013, Vice-Mayor 2007 to 2008 and 2011 to 2012, Council member 2005 to 2013. And I'll put a little asterisk in here that not everyone understands that we don't elect our mayor separately. The Council appoints a mayor from within the Council. Nearly everyone who serves on the Council will have at least one year as mayor. Public financing authority, and I'm going to list these without dates. Chair, General Plan Advisory Committee, Planning Commission member and chair, Hillside Development Advisory Committee, member of Municipal Services Tax Committee, Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin director, Marin Telecommunications Agency director, Southern Marin Emergency Medical and Paramedic System director, Vice Chair for the Finance Committee, and member of the Finance Committee and Vice Chair, O'Hanlon Center of the Arts advisory board and Master Plan committee, The Redwoods Community of Seniors director, board, secretary and Audit Committee member, Municipal Services Tax Committee. So you haven't done really much for the city at all. Andy, you're a real slacker here. [chuckles]

**0:20:34 Andy Berman:** They asked me to join the Finance Committee at The Redwoods too, and I told them yes and I can't believe I did that too.

**0:20:40 Joyce Kleiner:** What are you doing currently?

**0:20:43 Andy Berman:** No, right now, all the Redwoods stuff you just mentioned is alive and happening now, and they just asked me to join the Finance Committee at The Redwoods. And the O'Hanlon Center is alive right now. And the Southern Marin Emergency Medical and Paramedic System, we run the ambulances and the paramedics for the southern part of the county. That includes unincorporated county, Tiburon, Belvedere, Mill Valley, Sausalito, that's alive and happening right now, too.

**0:21:17 Joyce Kleiner:** And you got a proclamation from the board of supervisors of Marin County, when you were leaving the City Council. Is that something that everyone leaving the City Council gets?

**0:21:30 Andy Berman:** I don't know. I really don't know. Yes, you're right, I do. Mark Levine gave me one, too, from the state.

**0:21:37 Joyce Kleiner:** From the state also? I'll have to look for that one.

**0:21:41 Andy Berman:** I can get you a copy.

**0:21:42 Joyce Kleiner:** It's got some fun quotes in it here. Here's going back to the triad of values. A quote from you that says, "Whether we call it home, family, community, town, fabric, city, or culture, for all of us it's all about being a good neighbor, saying please and thank you, looking for compromise, driving like your kids live here, and recognizing that it's simply getting harder to preserve what we have, so appreciating and nurturing it all each and every day."

**0:22:16 Andy Berman:** Yes, it really is.

**0:22:18 Joyce Kleiner:** You were acknowledged for your promise to build compromise and consensus, and to preserve all that is special for the city of Mill Valley. Those were some of your priorities and it's a nice proclamation with a little bit of humor, which is appreciated. I'm jumping a little out of order, only because —

**0:22:46 Andy Berman:** It's fine.

**0:22:48 Joyce Kleiner:** I would say that this is like a call to serve. It seems like we've talked about, so far, you just feel that it's almost a responsibility to serve your community. Do you feel that that philosophy is continuing with new people that are trying to get on commissions and boards and the City Council? Or do you feel that they are starting to join more because they've got one bone to chew on, or one issue that they want to advance?

**0:23:26 Andy Berman:** I think the folks that ultimately get elected are broad-based. But I do think that I would've answered your question, no, initially, because for two reasons. One is that I think it's very, very hard these days for people to give the most precious resource we have, and that's their time. It's hard to exist these days and we're way too connected and it's very, very hard to find people that are high quality to fill all the boards and commissions. This is all volunteer stuff, but the city has 140 people. We pay a city manager. We have a staff, right? We're a service organization. We spend 75% of our budget on salaries — what a surprise — but the rest of this stuff is volunteerism, so I would've said no, because I think it's getting harder and harder to find people who want to give up their time.

And then, in the last handful of elections across the county, you see it. There are one-issue candidates all the time. And whether it's traffic, or circulation, or building and development, or open space, or lack thereof, there's folks that are running all the time on an issue. And I think that concerns me a great deal. They become the vocal minority on a lot of issues, and then the silent majority can sometimes lose. Now, I'm fine, by the way. I welcome opposition that is constructive and there's discussion around it. The last thing you want is no discussion at all 'cause everybody says, "That's a great idea, let's just do it." Well, that's how you get in all crappy situations, right?

**0:25:38 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes, you need a 10<sup>th</sup> man.

**0:25:39 Andy Berman:** Yes, you need a 10<sup>th</sup> man. You absolutely do, or a 10<sup>th</sup> woman. You need somebody else saying, “Are you sure you’re doing the right thing?” But to run for office, to be involved in the town, there’s three issues that everybody talks about, four issues, five issues in a campaign. There’s some pretty mundane stuff that has to happen to make the city run, so you have to find broad-based people as well, too. I fortunately think the folks that have gotten elected here in town have been broad-based.

**0:26:17 Joyce Kleiner:** And how do you find and nurture new talent — talented, intelligent, open-minded people to continue applying for commission positions, and boards, and City Council? How do you cultivate these people and get them interested in doing this?

**0:26:37 Andy Berman:** Well, we’ve done that very systemically here in town, that is, through all the other boards and commissions that we have in town. We treat them as feeder organizations, whether it’s Parks and Rec, or Planning Commission, Arts Committee, whatever that group is, we’re trying to give people a path, an onboarding path that isn’t really public, that isn’t always controversial. Planning can be a little bit dicey, but you want to give people an on-ramp, and we do that here in town through the boards and commissions. There’s no doubt about it. That’s our bread and butter for getting people involved, and we try to offer them lots and lots of ways. And we did that, by the way, during the General Plan process, in spades. We had 50 meetings. We had lots of subgroups. There were lots of ways to get involved, even if you didn’t want to be involved for 25 meetings a year.

**0:27:44 Joyce Kleiner:** Right. That brings me to a couple of questions, and then I want to get in to some of the meat of your experience on the City Council, and specific experiences, but first, I have two questions.

**0:27:55 Andy Berman:** Sure.

**0:27:55 Joyce Kleiner:** The first one is, do you think that there’s a trend in our citizenship here, it may be true statewide or nationally, but here in Mill Valley? I’m not saying it’s unique to Mill Valley, but here in Mill Valley, do you think that our residents are beginning to think of themselves a little too much like consumers, and not enough like citizens?

**0:28:24 Andy Berman:** Well, I suppose you always see some of that. By the way, I like that you said the word “residents.” Most people say “citizens,” and I always say “residents” as well, too, ’cause not everybody that lives here is a citizen of the United States, and not everybody’s a homeowner, and I really appreciate that you said that, too. I learned that more from my county work, frankly.

**0:28:52 Joyce Kleiner:** But also, I’m talking about citizenship as a state of mind.

**0:28:56 Andy Berman:** I think that people are focused on themselves these days, and Mill Valley — I’m not blind to its reputation in the county, to some people. I remember

the second time around as Mayor, there was that whole thing going on in the county about calling Mill Valley “Me Valley.” It really hurt me, and it really bothered me, and I mentioned that in 2012, when I took the oath for that term as Mayor. I think some of that does exist, Joyce.

**0:29:42 Joyce Kleiner:** A part of it is, it’s been suggested that there was a time, some sort of a shift at some point, where the people that lived in our town, or any town, began to feel like they were paying taxes and therefore they were buying things, and when you buy something you expect it to be exactly what you paid for. But when you’re a citizen you feel like you’re contributing your share of what it takes to make the community work, and the expectation that you personally are not going to get back something from your investment — being the taxes — but that you are just contributing to general civic health. So do you think that people are starting to think too much, “I paid for it, I want it the way I want it”?

**0:30:37 Andy Berman:** I think there’s some people that feel entitled; I think that’s what you’re talking about, where folks are coming into a town where they’ve paid a million dollars for a starter home. And so I think it’s the job of the city, and I think it’s the job of the elected officials, to help correct that. I still believe, I really do, that the town’s a good place, that we have things going on here in town that don’t exist in other places. I joined the O’Hanlon Center, I don’t know if you’ve ever been up there, but that thing couldn’t exist in another town. You couldn’t create an artist community nestled in the woods on four acres in any other town today; you just couldn’t get away with it. So I joined the board and I agreed to help because there’s some magic going on there that I don’t want lost. And I feel that way about The Redwoods too. Our community of seniors that isn’t being run by Kaiser or Sutter. I’m not trashing these places, but —

**0:31:40 Joyce Kleiner:** The Redwoods is pretty unique.

**0:31:42 Andy Berman:** Very, very unique, and a non-profit. And I don’t know if people take advantage of it. Our Fire Chief and our Police Chief will give you their cellphone numbers and you can call them. So I still believe. And we support the arts in a very, very big way. So I think that despite the fact that the town is changing and some of the demographics are changing, I believe that the core values of the town aren’t changing.

**0:32:14 Joyce Kleiner:** I have to pause again because there’s a funny sound coming in — okay.

**0:32:20 Andy Berman:** When you think about the arts and you think about the outdoor living space and you think about tranquility and views and vistas and the schools and education, I think the things that are important to the town are still intact.

**0:32:41 Joyce Kleiner:** We still have some service clubs, too, like the Rotary. A lot of people are losing their Rotary Clubs.

**0:32:46 Andy Berman:** We have a Chamber, we revived the Chamber, and there is a lot of controversy around the Chamber, but we have a Chamber of Commerce that is active. You're right, we have the Rotary. We have small businesses here. This is fantastic. Yes. It's fantastic. I wish it was still that.

**0:33:08 Joyce Kleiner:** I wanted to ask you another question associated — oh, yes, communication. You were on the City Council when they really — I think Anne Montgomery was still there, and you guys really did a huge push to improve communication. The website got really improved. It was while you were on the City Council that the idea of having a camcorder in the meetings was first introduced. There was also the idea of having — do you still have the table on the Square?<sup>1</sup>

**0:33:51 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**0:33:53 Joyce Kleiner:** So, I have two questions about that. The first, don't let me forget to ask both of them, they're both important. The first question is: How effective do you think that these have been in helping the community feel like they are in fact getting important information and do have access? And which ones are you particularly glad have been introduced or improved?

**0:34:22 Andy Berman:** Yes. So by the way, this stuff started the need for broader communication, actually started years and years ago. And some of it came from the development in town, because folks were suddenly finding out that they'd been driving around town and they didn't know that a certain type of building or a certain property was going to be enhanced, or see it across the valley. And so when we were on the Planning Commission and also Hillside Development, we instituted those boards that you see people have. Mail alone wasn't cutting it and the residents that were here used other tools. I was also on the Telecom board, and we had six TV stations. So we own, the county owns six cable television stations, and so I was a very big believer in this — and my background in digital media, I was just a very big believer in all forms of over-communication.

This goes with the triangle, by the way, too: work, home, community. Let folks know what's going on. You sit at the dinner table, talk about what's going on, communicate. Nothing worse than when you're not communicating at the dinner table. Nothing worse than when your boss at work isn't communicating what's going on, "What do you mean we're moving offices or closing this one down, or doing this?" Same thing here. So I do think they're working. What I have found, and when I talk to some of my former colleagues, is that there's always something else you're not doing. You think you're communicating perfectly and somebody says, "Well I didn't hear about it. Why didn't you put it on the banner over Blithedale?" So there's always more and more ways to communicate, but I do think it's working. The website. You know, when I was Mayor I used to do a weekly blog, and that was my response to just like, "Okay, people know Andy," and the Patch told me I was one of the highest followed writers on the Patch.

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<sup>1</sup> Joyce refers to a program in which a council member set up a table at the Depot Plaza to communicate with the community.—Editor.

**0:36:58 Joyce Kleiner:** I've got some of those for you. We were going to talk about it.

**0:37:00 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes, good, I did that every week. But so the answer to your first question is, yes, I think it's working and you have to keep it up. It's persistent and people are always going to demand other forms. What's working? Betsy Cutler always reminded me that there are still people in town who go to their mailbox every day. Don't forget mail, so you have to do mail, you got to do email, you have to do a website. I think having the Council meetings available online — web-casting's nice. What's most important is that people can at least watch or listen online and archived, and I think those are important. And the council member in the Plaza, having done so many of those, I think it's a great and wonderful tool.

**0:38:01 Joyce Kleiner:** At some point you got to feel that some of the stuff that you're giving up your family time for, is just window dressing. Did you worry about that?

**0:38:11 Andy Berman:** Yes, I gave up a lot, I've missed a lot, I have.

**0:38:14 Joyce Kleiner:** And especially some of this stuff you feel like you didn't really have to do.

**0:38:17 Andy Berman:** Yes, believe me, Joyce, sometimes I — now that I've had more time, the last three years, I realized just how much I missed. I don't have any regrets; I love this town, which is why I continue to stay involved. I think it's become a part of me and I don't think I can really exist without it any more. I'm out in The Redwoods, and I stay out —

**0:38:46 Joyce Kleiner:** By the way, I wanted to add that you were a judge for the Milley Awards.

**0:38:49 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes, that's right, I was a judge for the Milley Awards. That's a ton of work, oh my gosh. That is a ton of work, but it was a pleasure working with you. But, yes, we all, we sacrificed a tremendous amount. Ken and I were on the Planning Commission together and Ken and I overlapped on Council for six years.<sup>2</sup> And we always joke with each other, but it's true, I probably sat in 300 meetings with that guy. Think about that. I love it, let's not kid, it's a piece of me, but I gave up — volunteerism is hard. It's very easy to write a check. I wish I had more money to give, I really do, but it's harder to give up your time. People just don't give a lot of their time. And I think that's across the country. Mill Valley's not unique in that.

**0:40:02 Joyce Kleiner:** I agree with you, there's a whole book about it.

**0:40:03 Andy Berman:** Yes. Is there?

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<sup>2</sup> Andy refers to Ken Wachtel, who was elected to the City Council in 2007, re-elected in 2011, and served as Mayor in 2014.—Editor.

**0:40:06 Joyce Kleiner:** It's called *Bowling Alone*.

**0:40:07 Andy Berman:** Yes, every town. How do you get people — and towns are going broke. You need people to volunteer, so this isn't unique to Mill Valley.

**0:40:15 Joyce Kleiner:** So the other question that I wanted to make sure I asked you on that subject was — communication is important, of course, and I agree with you and I think that the website is getting better every time I look at it.

**0:40:25 Andy Berman:** It really is.

**0:40:27 Joyce Kleiner:** I wonder if you feel that there is an unexpected consequence of more communication and putting more of the documents online that are going to be a part of a upcoming meeting, when people complain that those documents that are not legally required to be provided to the public in advance, people sometimes complain that they didn't get them early enough, or that they wanted more. So have you cracked the door to this unintended consequence of people feeling like now that they've got some they want more, and they demand it?

**0:41:08 Andy Berman:** Now, having cracked the door and you just want to sit there and strangle people sometimes, because no good deed goes unpunished. It doesn't. Now, did we need to do a better job of communicating? Yes. Did we need to get packets out for larger building projects? Yes. These are big projects that are happening in town and they're starting to come into the pipeline, and people are really angry and people are really upset. We learned that lesson. We started getting packets out earlier, more out on time, but yes, you're absolutely right. There's an unintended consequence. [chuckles] "But you could have added this, and you could have added that." You're sitting there going, "Well, at some point, you've got to throw in the towel and get the materials out."

**0:42:20 Joyce Kleiner:** Because I've seen people get angry that you didn't give them something that you're not required to give them. You've given them much that you're not required. Is that Robert?

**0:42:31 Andy Berman:** Yes it is. Yes, you're absolutely right, Joyce, and you're absolutely spot on. I think it's happening across the board, and you put it online, but you didn't do something. This comes up in hearing. And by the way, you still have to allow people, right up to the day of the hearing, put in their comments too, right. So you show up as a council member — I used to sit there, I'd show up at a council meeting, and you're having a major hearing on something, and there's a stack of paper three inches thick of more stuff that you just got the day of. I was always honest about it. "There's a stack of paper sitting here, right in front of me, I haven't read it yet. I haven't read it yet. So if you sent your letter in in the last four hours, I'm telling you, I apologize, I haven't read it yet." So there's a balance to be struck there; but no, we haven't cracked the code on that one.



**0:43:24 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, okay, one thing, again, I wanted to talk a little bit more about your individual experience and some of the issues you worked up. And I did have a couple of questions first. I have a note here, "Trampoline."

**0:43:46 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes.

**0:43:48 Joyce Kleiner:** Why don't you talk to me a little bit about what it feels like to have something like a backyard trampoline come before the City Council?

**0:43:56 Andy Berman:** Yes, I was so upset at that. I'll leave names out. And I was unequivocal at that hearing that that shouldn't be in front of a City Council.

**0:44:03 Joyce Kleiner:** Let's kind of review what I'm talking about for the tape here.

**0:44:08 Andy Berman:** Well, it was a dispute between neighbors about the placement of a trampoline between their adjacent yards. That is just not Council business. We have so many things to worry about. My gosh, that's small town character to me. If you can't work out with your neighbor the placement of your trampoline, why waste Council's time? I got to be careful here, because these are people that live here, but why waste Council's time on this stuff? Now, both sides would say because obstinance, and it had to go to Council, but that's not our purview.

**0:44:41 Joyce Kleiner:** But did they go straight to Council or did they go through something else first?

**0:44:44 Andy Berman:** I believe it worked its way through the process, and shame on us for letting some things get to Council.

**0:44:51 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, then, I'd ask the other question then, because a lot more things that start in the Commission level get appealed to City Council than they used to. People years ago used to accept the Commission's decision about something, whether it was a Planning Commission or a Park and Rec Commission, and now, everything, it's almost like you can guarantee that it's going to get appealed to the City Council. Can you talk about that a little bit?

**0:45:18 Andy Berman:** Well, so, there's a couple things going on here, and it's not easy. We got a lot of flak about dealing with the city, and how hard it was to deal with the city, and how do you move things along. The Planning Director actually sits as the Zoning Administrator, depending on whether you have a man or woman, he or she sits and it's a smaller hearing that is publicly noticed, but didn't have to go to the full Planning Commission. I think, and I may be wrong, that that may have gone to the Zoning, that may have been a Zoning Commissioner hearing and then went to the City Council. And then what happened is because we empowered the Planning Director to do more at the Zoning Commissioner level, we got in trouble because people said those weren't as publicly noticed. They are publicly noticed hearings, but it's not like the Planning Commission that met every two weeks on that Monday on the off-time from the

City Council and had all the paperwork that was done by a certain point in time. So, to me, it's balancing process, and that's very, very hard to do. It just is. You have 14,000 people, and you can't please everybody all the time.

**0:46:34 Joyce Kleiner:** Do you always have to agree to hear an appeal, or can you turn it down?

**0:46:40 Andy Berman:** No, I think if you have a right to appeal, you get your right to an appeal.

**0:46:44 Joyce Kleiner:** Alright. One other question that you mentioned and then I wanted to go to —

**0:46:47 Andy Berman:** It's not like certiorari in the Supreme Court, where you can deny a certain appeal.

**0:46:51 Joyce Kleiner:** I bet you'd like to though, huh?

**0:46:53 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**0:46:54 Joyce Kleiner:** You mentioned that the Chamber of Commerce was kind of a controversial issue for a while. You want to tell me about that?

**0:47:00 Andy Berman:** Well, yes, it was. The Chamber was going bankrupt. We bailed them out. It was our little version of Obama bailing out the car companies. The Chamber was going bankrupt, they came to the City Council and asked for money. We entered into a services agreement with the Chamber, and today, the Chamber's a thriving organization. I think chambers in general — it's very, very hard these days. There was a time — I'm holding up what Joyce gave me, a 1950 page out of the *Record* — there was a time that chambers were really a valuable thing for local businesses. You could get insurance through your chamber, you had an employee network through your chamber. It meant something to be a chamber member, and then, chambers kind of died out and there wasn't any value in writing your check to them and having a meeting. And so, yes, we did, we bailed them out. There's a lot of controversy around that. I don't want to disparage anybody, but —

**0:48:05 Joyce Kleiner:** But some people didn't think you should just —

**0:48:08 Andy Berman:** Oh, absolutely not. "Give them money? Absolutely not. They can't run themselves, can't keep a — it's a private organization. It's not a city organization. We gave them an office at the Depot Plaza and why should you bail out any businesses? But we did.

**0:48:23 Joyce Kleiner:** But you did. And you said you had a service agreement with them?

**0:48:26 Andy Berman:** We have a services agreement with them.

**0:48:28 Joyce Kleiner:** Meaning that they provide you with some service in return for what you helped them with?

**0:48:32 Andy Berman:** Yes. I haven't looked at the last version of it, but yes. We helped fund them and we had some agreements around the kinds of things that we would work on together. And how we help some businesses.

**0:48:46 Joyce Kleiner:** And they have a website, Enjoy Mill Valley. Is that something they work with you on?

**0:48:51 Andy Berman:** I don't know who's funding the website today. They hired Jim Welte after the Patch closed down, which I think was great. And so there's still some controversy, but —

**0:49:00 Joyce Kleiner:** So the Patch is gone?

**0:49:00 Andy Berman:** Well, the Patch is not gone, but its Mill Valley chapter was gone. The Patch still exists, I think it's still owned by AOL, but it just crunched down.

**0:49:08 Joyce Kleiner:** Are there any Southern Marin —

**0:49:12 Andy Berman:** I think there's one for the county. I'd have to go check. We can look online right after this meeting. But they used to have Patches for each town. You know for a while there it was really —

**0:49:20 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes, well, that's what your thing was.

**0:49:22 Andy Berman:** Yes. I used to send that to the *Herald*, too. I don't think they published it. I used to send that to the *IJ* as well. I don't think anybody ever printed them on a regular basis.

**0:49:32 Joyce Kleiner:** But the Patch did.

**0:49:33 Andy Berman:** Oh yes, the Patch was religious.

**0:49:34 Joyce Kleiner:** What I'm talking about —

**0:49:35 Andy Berman:** But that was a good time too, because people loved to be online and that's what it was.

**0:49:38 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes. Now, what I'm talking about for the audio here is that you wrote — was it weekly?

**0:49:45 Andy Berman:** Yes, every week.

**0:49:46 Joyce Kleiner:** A weekly review of some of the issues that you were dealing with.

**0:49:51 Andy Berman:** The Mayor's weekly review.

**0:49:53 Joyce Kleiner:** You wrote this, you were Mayor — and whatever happened that week, what was fun, issues that had come up. It seemed like a very good way to communicate and it kind of brings me to the other question. There was once a time when the Mill Valley — then it was the *Mill Valley Record* — they would hold space for the minutes of every City Council meeting and they would cover all of the meetings in the City Hall. And now it doesn't seem like there's much City Council coverage. I mean, you have a website but do you feel that we have suffered, we're suffering, by not having a local news source that people can go to for news about what's going on in Mill Valley that's not necessarily coming from a booster perspective, but more just the news of the day about Mill Valley?

**0:50:56 Andy Berman:** Oh, I definitely do, yes. By the way, it's not just news of the day. It's also constructive criticism and feedback, right? It's not unlike what Dick Spotswood does when he writes a column or what you were doing with the "Civic Lessons". All these things are missing right now. So what the city does is it's on transmit. You turn on the radio and the city is on transmit. And we have hearings where we take this very limited public input. I really believe in, and I know you do too, the fourth branch of government, the papers, journalists. And I think that's such a critical thing for government to work, for cities to work. You need to have somebody out there that is independent, that is following, commenting on, critiquing, informing about. People say, "Well, the *Marin Post*." I'm not going to name any names behind it. And I hear complaints all the time that they're just one-sided. But I read the *Marin Post*. I don't think there's anything wrong with folks that are raising issues of concern, as long as it's done constructively and fairly.

**0:52:22 Joyce Kleiner:** But we are missing an objective perspective.

**0:52:27 Andy Berman:** I mean, you're a journalist. I think so. We take limited public input. We do our best. So the General Plan — which is why when I was running that process, we had many sub-committees and many meetings, because we wanted to get as much input as possible. I did not want to have anybody say, "Where did this come from?" And nobody has. None of the vocal minority in town, I've never heard anybody say, "How did we get here in this General Plan?" Nobody's ever said that. Now, people might say, "Wow, we should've thought about that when we did the General Plan" or, "Well, this needs to be tweaked." Nobody ever says, "How did we get here?" I do think that somebody regularly reporting on stuff would be great and talking about it and raising the issues, objectively and fairly. Instead you have groups, right? You've got Friends of Mill Valley.

**0:53:37 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, that's like having niche news. Like Fox or MSNBC, or something like that. It's not the same.

**0:53:43 Andy Berman:** I mean, whatever your thing is, it's like niche news. Exactly. By the way, there's nothing wrong with that, but it's coming through a prism. It's like the one issue candidate.

**0:53:53 Joyce Kleiner:** I understand that Nextdoor is getting used that way a little bit too for people to vent.

**0:53:58 Andy Berman:** I joined Nextdoor recently. I joined Nextdoor for just that reason, I wanted to see what was out there and what's going on. I think when there's an issue, it does a very good job of connecting people. "I need a baby-sitter, I need a tutor, I'm selling some furniture." It does a pretty good job when there is a need. The folks down in Tam Junction, looking at some of the traffic and circulation issues down there. When there's a meeting, you can post it out there on Nextdoor. But I haven't seen on Nextdoor yet the full, thoughtful critique and reporting.

**0:54:38 Joyce Kleiner:** What I've seen is a lot of classic comments that you would see on a website. A lot of trolling, kind of.

**0:54:46 Andy Berman:** Yes. Right, right.

**0:54:47 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay. Well, let's get to — didn't you say you need to —

**0:54:50 Andy Berman:** Well, I have a 3:30 —

**0:54:53 Joyce Kleiner:** So you would like to stop at 3:15?

**0:54:55 Andy Berman:** No, no, no. I can go right 'til 3:30. I can go to 3:35. I've just got to be down at the high school by 3:45.

**0:55:01 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay, because I want to get into some of your personal experiences.

**0:55:03 Andy Berman:** Yes, go. And I'm happy to come back and do this.

**0:55:07 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, yes. I think this has to be it for the oral history. I would love to keep interviewing you for other things.

**0:55:14 Andy Berman:** Oh, you go, then.

**0:55:15 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay. So, let's talk now — you have all this other experience, but we really have to go to your City Council years.

**0:55:24 Andy Berman:** Yes, sure.

**0:55:25 Joyce Kleiner:** So when you began, what did you hope to accomplish? Your first term in the City Council began in what? 2008?

**0:55:37 Andy Berman:** '05.

**0:55:38 Joyce Kleiner:** '05. So, when you entered the City Council, what did you hope to personally accomplish, if anything? And what were your expectations more generally about being a member of the City Council? And how was that different from what you actually experienced?

**0:55:58 Andy Berman:** Well, that's a big one. I'll try to be brief here. So first of all, I never wanted to be on City Council. That was not my thing — running for office, that was not my thing. I could volunteer up the wazoo, and Dennis Fisco said, "You're going to run for office, you're the guy." And I said, "I don't think so." And he said, "No, Andy." I took his place on Planning, and he says, "Nope, I'm getting off Council, you're the guy." And I'm like, "Nope. You've got the wrong guy." And then Betsy joined him and Betsy said — Betsy, you know?

**0:56:35 Joyce Kleiner:** That's Betsy Cutler.

**0:56:36 Andy Berman:** Betsy Cutler. Those two said, "You're the guy." I said, "No, I'm not." Dennis invited me to his house, and I walked in to his house, and there was about 12 people sitting around the table. It was Dennis and Betsy Cutler, and John Cutler, and Pam Fisco, and John Leonard, and oh, I think David Raub was there. There was just a bunch of community leaders and they said, "We're here to run your campaign." And I said, "You've got to be kidding me." They go, "No, you're just perfect for this." So I did it. Let's just get that on the table. That wasn't what I wanted, it wasn't my thing. I had a lot of trouble asking people for a vote, asking people for money to run a campaign. My wife is a very private person, and we brought everything into the house and we learned a lot about ourselves and about each other in that process.

What I wanted to accomplish was the same things that I wanted to accomplish when I got involved on the Planning Commission, and anything else I'd done, Hillside Development. I realized that that was a better opportunity to be part of the community, to not just see issues, but try to be part of a solution for issues, and to make the town really comfortable for everybody. I'm comfortable sitting in your living room here, you're a wonderful host, you've always been a wonderful host. I wanted the city to be this way too. I realized that some people would only have one chance to ever be in front of a city, and that's when they're coming to a Planning Commission hearing, right? Or a City Council meeting. It'd better be a darn good experience. It better be good. And if it's not, then we failed.

John Cutler, he told me — we were talking about what the primary issues ought to be, and how do I run a platform for my campaign, and at the end of it all, it became nothing more than health and safety. I realized that there's nothing more important for an elected official. That's the number one responsibility. If you're not safe and healthy — if you're

not safe in your town, or the town's not healthy, then you might as well forget the rest of the issues, because it just doesn't matter. It just doesn't matter. You don't have the town. So that became my primary concern. I've always been big on public safety, and I've always been big on the Department of Public Works. And I was gladly on the Sewer Board. I took all the dirty jobs. I didn't care. I really mean that. And you ask the DPW guys today, they made me a sign when I left, it says, "Retired Mayor, Andy Berman." It's one of the street signs.

**0:59:23 Joyce Kleiner:** Aww.

**0:59:24 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes, it's really lovely. It's one of the nicest things I have. It's sitting right inside my gate there. And I love those men and women, but I always treated the Department of Public Works folks just like the police and just like the fire. You've got to be safe in your town. And then you need a healthy town, right? And a healthy town became fiscal responsibility for me, and they were really, really, really, really well run town. And then you asked me about small town character. Well, that feeling of a living room, that comfort, that's what small town character really is for me. And so that was my platform and I never changed that, by the way. That's all I ever cared about, small town character, health and safety, financial stability.

**1:00:09 Joyce Kleiner:** You are often quoted as saying, like a mantra to remind you about your role, you would say, "Policy and direction." I think it was. Was that it?

**1:00:23 Andy Berman:** Yes. I always believed that it's the Council's role to set policy and direction. So my wife and I we should have very, very long noses into our kids' lives, but keep our fingers out of each moment. I think when you're in a company that the board of directors should be the same way: very, very long noses and keep their fingers out of the day-to-day business. I always felt the Council should really be setting policy too. We never sat there and said, "You should fire this person or hire this person." You have to set that vision for the town and you really have to be strong in that vision, strong in setting policy, strong in your direction to that city manager. What you want to have done, got to figure out how to get it done.

**1:01:23 Joyce Kleiner:** And I've said this in my interview with Anne Solem, I just wanted to —

**1:01:26 Andy Berman:** By the way, I did that. I always said that because there's a temptation to get really involved in the nitty-gritty of the town. I don't think that it was a Council member's role.

**1:01:36 Joyce Kleiner:** No, because this is a city manager form of government.

**1:01:42 Andy Berman:** Exactly.

**1:01:42 Joyce Kleiner:** So it's the city manager's job to actually run the city.

**1:01:46 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**1:01:47 Joyce Kleiner:** So you have the City Council that creates the policy and the direction, basically the philosophy for what should happen with the town. They only can hire two people, the city attorney and the city manager.

**1:02:00 Andy Berman:** The city manager and the city attorney, yes.

**1:02:01 Joyce Kleiner:** The city manager hires all of the department heads, and the department heads hire their staff. You also appoint all of the commissions. The commissions function almost like a cabinet, really, they will make some decisions on their own and they will also occasionally bring to you information that you will have to act on, like the Bayfront — well, that was an ad hoc committee. And then ad hoc committee is also, actually even more the ad hoc committees, they function more as an advisory role, right? The blue ribbon committees and the taskforces —

**1:02:38 Andy Berman:** Yes, we had the business taskforce, we have blue ribbon committees. Yes, absolutely, you got it spot on.

**1:02:45 Joyce Kleiner:** The commission, it's not their job to create policy and so when a commissioner begins to say, "Well, I think that we should change the plan for Bayfront Park." That's beyond their purview, right?

**1:03:06 Andy Berman:** Well, unless they've been given that charge by the Council. So this is why —

**1:03:09 Joyce Kleiner:** Right, but again, the Council is really who they refer to.

**1:03:12 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**1:03:13 Joyce Kleiner:** And then we go down to the people in Mill Valley, and they are —

**1:03:20 Andy Berman:** You're talking about residents now or employees?

**1:03:22 Joyce Kleiner:** Residents and business owners. They sometimes feel like they have a vote, but they're really there to inform whoever they're speaking to and make sure that they have all the information when they're making their decisions.

**1:03:38 Andy Berman:** Well, they're our customers, though. I always felt like the residents and the businesses were our customers.

**1:03:43 Joyce Kleiner:** But they don't have a vote.

**1:03:45 Andy Berman:** No, well, they have a vote on the elected, right?



**1:03:47 Joyce Kleiner:** Right, that's where their vote is.

**1:03:48 Andy Berman:** Yes, exactly.

**1:03:49 Joyce Kleiner:** I know that Anne Solem once said, "When people come before us, sometimes they feel that we're not listening. We're always listening, but sometimes our answer is no."

**1:04:03 Andy Berman:** Yes. Well, she had the toughest one of all, when John Cutler brought that chessboard on the Plaza and we all said no, we all know John and Betsy, and Anne said, "Well, if you can't vote against your best friend, then you shouldn't be in office." And we did that. No, you're absolutely right, Joyce; they can vote at the ballot box.

**1:04:25 Joyce Kleiner:** It's because we really are a republic, actually, aren't we?

**1:04:28 Andy Berman:** Yes, yes, we are. Yes, we are. And we have a good democratic process, but the Council makes those decisions, and you're absolutely right. You don't always say yes and we always did listen. Which is why it always grieved me so much when my first Council, which was myself and Shawn and Dick, and Chris, and Anne, and we had all the controversy around the Miller Avenue Precise Plan.

**1:05:00 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes, let's talk about that for a minute.

**1:05:01 Andy Berman:** Because they're good people. I mean Shawn and I were elected and inherited a lot of it, although I had been on Planning for six years and seen it all happening. And actually a democratic process, where we had a Citizens Advisory Committee and a number of people appointed and just like we did in the General Plan. By the way, General Plan, that is the blueprint for everything now.

**1:05:31 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes and we'll touch on that, too.

**1:05:34 Andy Berman:** But I always felt personally upset about the personal attacks that took place at that time, because everybody's got a good heart, these aren't evil people, we were all trying to do the right thing.

**1:05:47 Joyce Kleiner:** Let me just for the record say that the Miller Avenue Precise Plan was a sort of vision for how Miller could be improved as opportunities came along, like empty buildings and so on, and then a general streetscape improvement, which was sorely needed.

**1:06:07 Andy Berman:** Which we scrapped and put the Miller Avenue Master Plan in place, which was done in my second term. And what you're seeing on Miller Avenue today is just the implementation of the Master Plan. And what killed the Miller Avenue Precise Plan was the consultants that were hired from outside of Mill Valley, outside of Marin County. And after all this work, they came in with a very flashy video presentation

and simulation of what Miller Avenue would look like. And people gagged, and people choked. It wasn't anything that they wanted. It just didn't have anything to do with small town character, and people felt that it didn't even respect the input that had been given.

**1:07:01 Joyce Kleiner:** Do you feel that the plan itself did that? Or was it more that they just had chosen very unfortunate renderings?

**1:07:08 Andy Berman:** I think it's the latter.

**1:07:09 Joyce Kleiner:** The renderings?

**1:07:10 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**1:07:10 Joyce Kleiner:** Who picked the drawings and stuff?

**1:07:12 Andy Berman:** Well, and the simulation, really. The simulation just killed things.

**1:07:17 Joyce Kleiner:** Looked a little like Emeryville, I think was the problem.

**1:07:18 Andy Berman:** Yes, and it was a simulation. But to think that that prior Council, which was Anne and Dick and Chris and Clifford and Dennis — these are good people. Their hearts are all in the right place. And then we continued, Shawn and I. That is what spurred Friends of Mill Valley and that's what spurred a lot of unrest and dissatisfaction. And when you look at that period of time, 2006 — remember, by 2009, so a three-year period, the economy tanked and it was a really rough time. It's funny, because I've got this economic thing in my head, because I look at my whole time here, 1998 to 2013, and rise economy, bubble bursting, rise economy. Nearly a bankrupt — Obama taking over — and we didn't fire anybody. I spent my first term as Mayor sitting with Anne Montgomery, our then city manager, contingency planning. 5% reduction, 10% reduction, 15% reduction. Saving jobs. We never fired one person during that time.

**1:08:47 Joyce Kleiner:** That's something to be proud of.

**1:08:49 Andy Berman:** Well, it was all behind the scenes. You wouldn't notice it. The golf course, well, we watered a little bit less. We didn't spray wash the Depot quite as often. But we didn't fire one person. My point is, to bring it back, I don't think the Miller Avenue Precise Plan was the result of evil people doing evil things. There was a lot of stuff going on in the world at the time, the economy at the time. And we had the wrong consultants at the wrong time that had really angered people. We learned some lessons, and we did some things, and you could do things better. And we fixed it. We got a Miller Avenue Master Plan and it's all being implemented today. We rebuilt Blithedale. Everyone's complaining, "What are you doing to Blithedale?" Scraped it down, built it up, it's holding extra traffic. There's a lot of stuff going on in Miller Avenue, there's occasional little gripes, but most of the things I hear in town is it's looking good. It's looking good. And so, yes, that's what was going on with Miller Avenue. It's been a long

history and a long cycle. This goes back from, seriously, 1998 and early 2000. And here we are in 2017.

**1:10:21 Joyce Kleiner:** I'll tell you something. I actually wrote about this. In some ways you could say it goes back to 1918.

**1:10:28 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes.

**1:10:28 Joyce Kleiner:** I'll have to show you that article.

**1:10:29 Andy Berman:** Yes, do show me that. When we were looking at Miller Avenue, we did talk at one point to the architects for the redesign in the '70s, and they just said, "Well, nobody biked then. We didn't even think about putting in bike lanes. Nobody biked then." It was a bedroom community and we didn't have the traffic that we have today. We didn't have everybody getting deliveries to their house, and people coming in to work here like we do today.

**1:11:07 Joyce Kleiner:** That kind of reminds me, retail's become a bigger part of Mill Valley, and that's caused its own problems and complaints. And you share this opinion. There's a lot of feeling that downtown Mill Valley shouldn't have chains. [chuckles]

**1:11:31 Andy Berman:** Well, how do you define chains? It's all about the Subway.

**1:11:34 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, I wasn't going to bring up the subject.

**1:11:37 Andy Berman:** Oh, I don't mind bringing it up. I voted against it.

**1:11:38 Joyce Kleiner:** We used to have a Rexall drugstore downtown, so that was —

**1:11:41 Andy Berman:** It's not chains, because there's lots of things that are chains.

**1:11:44 Joyce Kleiner:** So my question to you is, there's even been some zoning changes to how large a business space can be before it has to get additional —

**1:11:58 Andy Berman:** Yes, well, we have the 1,500 square foot kicks in —

**1:12:00 Joyce Kleiner:** It used to be larger before.

**1:12:01 Andy Berman:** Yes. But that's how we've sort of kept the town the way it is, right? You need a conditional use permit for anything over 1,500 square feet. So that sort of kept out, by the way, going into the planning process, that kept out some folks, because some of these businesses needed a certain style of store and certain size of store. And I think we've just worked through these — knock on wood, right? We've been able to keep an atmosphere, an ambience. And again, it's not chains, because Peet's is a chain and it's been there forever. Equator's now down there. It's about having an ambience and a character, and trying to keep it unique, I think is what it is.

**1:12:56 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay. I have a question. Do you worry? Or have you spoken to people that worry, that serve the city, that by being too concerned with character you are making it hard for bread and butter kinds of services that are boring but useful to go in there? Like for instance —

**1:13:23 Andy Berman:** I hope. You go ahead.

**1:13:24 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, the dry cleaner closed next door to what used to be 31 Flavors, and was replaced with a —

**1:13:32 Andy Berman:** Bike shop. Yes.

**1:13:32 Joyce Kleiner:** A bike shop.

**1:13:33 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**1:13:33 Joyce Kleiner:** And the 31 Flavors closing was replaced by a, it was a spa I think, right?

**1:13:38 Andy Berman:** Yes. But that's not the city, right? That's not, to me, so —

**1:13:45 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, that is a little bit the Planning Commission, though, because —

**1:13:48 Andy Berman:** Well, yes. But we don't own the building. So I hope that's not the case.

**1:13:52 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, there's Subway?

**1:13:55 Andy Berman:** We don't own the building, though.

**1:13:56 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes, but the Subway was rejected, so that's —

**1:13:58 Andy Berman:** Well, yes, it was because —

**1:14:00 Joyce Kleiner:** Subway sandwich shop is what I'm talking about.

**1:14:02 Andy Berman:** Yes, Subway sandwich shop, right. They had a certain branding and look and feel. And I voted against it.

**1:14:12 Joyce Kleiner:** And by the way, I just want to add —

**1:14:13 Andy Berman:** Lytton Square had its own protections in the General Plan, which is how we got —

**1:14:17 Joyce Kleiner:** Now, when you say Lytton Square what are you talking about?

**1:14:20 Andy Berman:** Well, that little area right in front of where Peet's is today, and really Larry the Hat, which is Famous for Our Look over to the — the city does own the Depot Plaza building, so that area there.

**1:14:34 Joyce Kleiner:** You're describing Lytton Square as the area between the Depot building and Peet's, as opposed to the Plaza that Dick Jessup designed.

**1:14:47 Andy Berman:** Well, but I wrap the Plaza into that. I think about that downtown area, and I think about the downtown square, which had some added protections in the General Plan.

**1:15:02 Joyce Kleiner:** Oh, so, when you think of that, you're not saying you think of that as Lytton Square, you're thinking that that area has special needs.

**1:15:10 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**1:15:11 Joyce Kleiner:** Are you concerned at all that it will become a historic district and all of a sudden —

**1:15:16 Andy Berman:** No. Am I concerned that it would become a historic district? Historic overlays, which we have in town, should be protected. I don't know that that area will ever get a historic overlay. I have to say in this interview on the record that the one thing I am — if you ever ask me what's the one thing that I didn't get to accomplish while I was on the Council that I really tried to get done, it was renaming that plaza in honor of Dick Jessup.

**1:15:47 Joyce Kleiner:** Let's talk about that.

**1:15:49 Andy Berman:** But I want to answer that question. So I hope what the city's doing is not keeping out bread and butter businesses. There's a private landlord/tenant dynamic going on in town that's terribly disturbing. The only building the city owns down there is the old train station, the old bus station. And we've kept that. I think it's Poppen Industries. We've given a good, favorable, fair lease rate so they can operate that bookstore in there which is razor thin margins, if they get margins at all, and I love that. If we could do that all over town, I would love that. And it distresses me that the mom and pop shops are disappearing. It really, really distresses me, and that's just a very, very hard thing. So I think we've seen some turnaround, which is why I wanted Miller Avenue actually done, so you could have some foot traffic businesses. Not a suburban setting. So I hope that's not the case. Could we do more? I don't know. We don't own the buildings.

And I wish, if we could own all the buildings in town, I wish we could do that, like we do with the Depot. And yes, Dick Jessup Plaza, that's just a shame. I've been on the record about that. I don't know. That's the one thing that I didn't get done that I wanted to get

down while I was still on Council, was get that darn thing renamed for Dick. Because he deserved it. I mean he deserved it.

**1:17:28 Joyce Kleiner:** Let's talk briefly about why you think Dick Jessup —

**1:17:32 Andy Berman:** See, I got lucky in this whole process because I still had some good connections with all those — there's a whole litany of former mayors and council members, and I got to know them all. They were still around in 1998. And if you join the Council today you may not even know who some of these folks are.

**1:17:58 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay, so let's talk about Dick. Since he never got a chance to get in our office for the interview, let's just take a couple of minutes to talk about who we're talking about. We're talking about Richard 'Dick' Jessup.

**1:18:10 Andy Berman:** Right, Richard. Yes.

**1:18:10 Joyce Kleiner:** Richard, nicknamed 'Dick' Jessup, he designed, and he was the one that raised enthusiasm and implemented our Plaza. It looks like it's been there forever, but it was really in the '80s.

**1:18:29 Andy Berman:** Yes, I don't know what year, I'm trying to think of the year.

**1:18:31 Joyce Kleiner:** I think it was the late '70s or early '80s. And he got it done. It took him years to get everybody on board and he got it done.

**1:18:38 Andy Berman:** Right.

**1:18:38 Joyce Kleiner:** So he recently died, and you share the feelings of many people that knew him that the Plaza, which has never been named — it's unofficially the Depot Plaza, but that's not the official name, and Lytton Square doesn't include that. Lytton Square is between the Depot building and Peet's. You feel that Dick deserves to have the Plaza named after him. So tell me how you're feeling about that. Let's get that on the record.

**1:19:14 Andy Berman:** I feel very, very fortunate that I got to do what I got to do, and it's because people told me I should do it, not because I ever felt comfortable asking for a vote or asking for money. So that's a privilege, because I got to experience the hard work of people before me. And there were certain things that were done, there's the protection of open space in our town, which you can't take for granted. These ridge lines and where we limit the building going up the mountain and protecting those ridge lines is just unbelievable to me. That's not me. I'm the beneficiary of that. And that Depot Plaza, creating just a core, a heart, a place to go, to sit. Well, that was Dick and he faced a lot of controversy getting that done. And you're absolutely right, it's unofficially named the Depot Plaza, okay, because it was a train station and a bus station, [chuckles] but every town's got a Depot Plaza, and I don't know why it's just taken so long. We have parks named after people, we have lanes and steps named after people, why isn't that plaza —

What makes that plaza so special that it doesn't get named? I can't think of anybody really more worthy, because he fought to get that done, and we all take it for granted today.

**1:20:54 Joyce Kleiner:** And also Dick was a real community servant, as well. He was the one that was in charge when Mill Valley had to face Prop 13 and the budget cuts that came with that, and he designed a lot of the buildings that we are so familiar with, including the Marin Theatre Company.

**1:21:15 Andy Berman:** And a heck of a nice guy.

**1:21:17 Joyce Kleiner:** Heck of a nice guy.

**1:21:18 Andy Berman:** I mean, I don't know why. So that's the only thing. I thought you would ask me, "What, Andy, what didn't you get done yet?" And you can still work on these things, but that was the one thing, that last year, and I think we just — the reality is I had to get that General Plan done. I didn't want that to become an election issue, and I really fought and I was pulling out all the stops to get that General Plan done and in place. Pension reform was another one. We laid out, we reduced our other post-employment benefit obligations, we adopted and did some extra work on top of the State Law, the Pension Reform Act that was passed. And there's a resolution 2013-17, I believe it is, which laid out all of our pension reforms. So there were two things I was dealing with in '12 and '13: the General Plan and getting that pension stuff done, and not making either of those election issues. I just wanted people to be able to run for office and say, "Well, that's in the General Plan, I'm going to implement/follow the General Plan or that's in the pension reform resolution." And the third one was getting the Plaza renamed, and there was silly opposition to it, frankly. I still, to this day, think silly opposition.

**1:22:42 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, there is some work being done to have a plaque put in.

**1:22:45 Andy Berman:** Good, well, that's the other piece, right. The silly plaque, it's all been designed. Plaque? Rename the thing. Anyway.

**1:22:53 Joyce Kleiner:** Yes. So there's another person I wanted to ask you about before I finish wrapping up.

**1:22:58 Andy Berman:** Sure. Well, we've still got nine minutes here. We've got 15 minutes here.

**1:23:06 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay, I mean, there's so many things.

**1:23:09 Andy Berman:** Yes, I know you could spend all day. And thank you for letting me do this. I'm very honored and quite touched. You've done an awful lot for the town and I don't even feel worthy to be sitting here and doing all this.

**1:23:22 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, you certainly are worthy.

**1:23:23 Andy Berman:** Thank you very much.

**1:23:24 Joyce Kleiner:** And I understand the need to interview some of the older members of Mill Valley, but I feel when it comes to city governance, there should be some kind of an exit interview at some point for these people before they begin forgetting things.

**1:23:40 Andy Berman:** Yes, and you're absolutely right, the reality is there's lots of folks that have been in town for a very long time, but the daily grind is — it's the Council doing that stuff. There's the high-profile issues and then there is stuff, like just sewage — you know what I mean? — and our waterways and our creeks. All you have to do is go out and walk 20 minutes and go see Cascade Falls right now. It's just glorious out there. All you got to do is spend a day working at the library instead of your house. It's unbelievable what this town is, it's unbelievable.

**1:24:19 Joyce Kleiner:** Were you on the City Council when Mike Moore was asked to leave?

**1:24:25 Andy Berman:** Oh, yes. Of course. Yes.

**1:24:28 Joyce Kleiner:** I have a question here I want to ask you, but I'm going to ask you —

**1:24:31 Andy Berman:** Well, I should say it this way: Mike got us through the General Plan process. He was actually asked to leave after I was off Council, but it was so close in time. Mike was our Planning Director when we did the General Plan.

**1:24:47 Joyce Kleiner:** Can you just answer one or two — imagine a couple of questions about that. How would you just answer —

**1:24:53 Andy Berman:** And by the way, I should also say this. Rory Walsh, who I feel is really a good person and was a good soldier, sat there with tears in her eyes at a city meeting, a community meeting, over the Miller Avenue Precise Plan, and my heart pours out to Rory. She did what she was asked to do, and did not deserve to be personally berated the way she was.

**1:25:16 Joyce Kleiner:** And she was attacked quite a bit, wasn't she?

**1:25:17 Andy Berman:** Oh, she was personally attacked. It was just awful. No reason to make a man or a woman cry in public. She was acting at the direction of Council, and did what she was asked to do. I don't know. People hate Mike and they hate Rory and —

**1:25:40 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, I just would like to have Mike's —



**1:25:44 Andy Berman:** Don was still the Planning Director when I joined the Planning Commission. So Don, that's who got us our open space. Don Dickinson. Anyway, go ahead, yes. I'm sorry.

**1:25:54 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, I just wondered about Mike Moore, because that's the most recent, and just a couple of words about what happened and how it was resolved, for the record?

**1:26:02 Andy Berman:** So Mike was fantastic on advanced planning.

**1:26:09 Joyce Kleiner:** And his actual job title was?

**1:26:11 Andy Berman:** He was Planning Director.

**1:26:12 Joyce Kleiner:** Planning Director, yes.

**1:26:13 Andy Berman:** So Mike was fantastic on advanced planning. You know, the city budgets for two years and we plan for five years. It's always sort of the way we do things. Our mid-year budget review is one year into a budget cycle. You can argue if that's right or wrong, but we've always tried to think ahead, right? Budget for two years, plan for five years. Mike was fantastic on the advanced planning side. He got critiqued for not having his finger on the pulse of the daily stuff. You can look at the record. Everybody loved the work he did on the General Plan. We did that thing in less than two years, under budget, on time, and the document won an amazing award, you know what I mean, for being a fantastic example of what a General Plan should look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**1:27:10 Joyce Kleiner:** You actually won an award for that? What was the award?

**1:27:11 Andy Berman:** Yes, we did. I'm blanking on who gave us the award.<sup>3</sup> I'll have to get that for you. But it's very important. That General Plan won like a first-place award for 21<sup>st</sup> century blueprints for what a General Plan should look like.

**1:27:24 Joyce Kleiner:** I can get that in as a footnote later.

**1:27:25 Andy Berman:** Yes, we should, we should get that. I have a copy of the award at home, and Mike did a great job on that. There was a whole bunch of construction going on on Lovell Avenue, and there were five large projects, five homes being either remodeled or rebuilt or built. And this was all taking place in 2014. Some of the projects had started in 2013 and the neighbors just got very upset. We, by the way, implemented construction management plans. We've had that in place for many years. There's a lot of things we did. I was on the Hillside Development Advisory Committee, you noted that. We put design review guidelines in place. We also implemented construction management plans. We've done a lot. We put notices up so people could see things. It

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<sup>3</sup> The Northern California Chapter of the American Planning Association gave the 2014 Comprehensive Planning Merit Award to Mill Valley for its General Plan.—Editor.

wasn't my decision to terminate him. That would have been Jim McCann's decision to terminate him. I wasn't sitting in the room, so I don't want to state the basis for the termination, but there was a number of folks upset with the layering out of the construction projects on Lovell Avenue and whether they were timed right and whether the approvals were properly done at the Planning Commission level or at the Zoning Commissioner's level.

I guess the City Council can take some blame because we were getting told, at the time, "You're impossible to work with. It takes too long to get plans done. I need a bathroom done. This should be an hour project, a two-day project, it shouldn't be four months to put a new tub in my bathroom." So we put up with a lot. We empowered the Zoning Administrator more. So there were some issues about whether Mike had properly or improperly approved certain building at the Zoning, at the ZA, Zoning Administrator level, that should have gone to the Planning Commission.

**1:29:26 Joyce Kleiner:** We talked about Dick Jessup and, just quickly, because of the timing, Don Solem recently died.

**1:29:33 Andy Berman:** Yes.

**1:29:34 Joyce Kleiner:** Anne Solem's husband. I just wanted to give you a chance to say few things about Don, for the record. Anything?

**1:29:43 Andy Berman:** Well, everybody's got their Don Solem story, right? I'll tell you my Don Solem story. So, a big figure. You're going to see 400 people show up for his memorial. I'm actually going to be out of town and I feel terrible about it but the memorial is on the 29<sup>th</sup>. You're going to see 400 people. It's going to be the biggest thing this town has probably ever seen in terms of somebody dying. When Jim Canepa died, that was probably the biggest thing, standing room only at the Outdoor Art Club. I think Don —

**1:30:21 Joyce Kleiner:** Dick Jessup, too.

**1:30:22 Andy Berman:** Yes, Dick Jessup, as well, too. Don's going to be at the community center because of his political stature. I'll tell you my Don story. I'd never run for office. I didn't know what I was doing. He says, "You gotta come see me." I don't know if folks even know who —

**1:30:38 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, that'll be a footnote too.<sup>4</sup>

**1:30:39 Andy Berman:** But Don was a political strategist, let's just say that, and the ultimate quintessential campaign manager. And I say this in the nicest way, crisis

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<sup>4</sup> Don Solem was an important figure in California politics for five decades. In his mid-20s, he was appointed executive director of the California Democratic Party. He later served as George Moscone's chief of staff in the state Senate. In 1976, he started his own public relations and political consultancy firm Solem and Associates. Over the course of his career, he worked on hundreds of campaigns.—Editor.

management and managing information in the campaign and political sector, a giant. I don't know what I'm doing, he says, "You got to come see me." I show up and Anne's not home. Don kicked her out of the house. He said, "Let's just sit and talk," and he says, "Tell me your platform." And I tell him my platform at the time, which was really — I'd already spoken to John Cutler. I said, "Well, it's going to be health and safety and the health of the city is financial resources and financial stability and small town character, because I want everybody to feel like it's my living room." And he proceeds to dissect my platform word by word, sentence by sentence. And I don't know if you remember, but he gave me my little John Kennedy twist.

Kennedy said, "Ask not what you can do for your country, what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," and so often listening to me, Don gave me my JFK twist, which at the time was, "Don't ask what Mill Valley can do for you, it's what I can do for Mill Valley on our behalf if you elect me."

**1:32:02 Joyce Kleiner:** Seriously?

**1:32:03 Andy Berman:** Yes. And so that was what Don did for me. He really shaped my campaign and shaped the way I presented myself. I'd never done anything like this, and he took those three platforms and refined them. His language is sitting on my campaign collateral all behind the scenes, and he made me stand up and talk to him about it and how to say it, what tone to use and what form of inflection I should use and then that little Kennedy twist, "Right, Andy? It's what you're going to do if you get elected, what you're going to do, because you want everybody to be in your living room." That's my Don story. He's just a giant who's left and we all have our regrets of not spending more time with somebody — I feel privileged for the time we did interact, and Anne, his wife, empowered me on stuff that's still sitting at the city today. I've been very behind the scenes, but all that visioning and mission statements and core values and all that stuff that's on the website, that's all stuff I did in 2005 and 2006, and Anne gave me the power to do it. And he's such a big guy and you know how special she must be, right? Because special people get together and that's why Anne's special too.

**1:33:33 Joyce Kleiner:** So I have two final questions and then we're actually going to end on time. First question is tell me about your buckets.

**1:33:43 Andy Berman:** Oh, well, I always, I compartmentalize things and I was always — I never tried, I know I probably sound like I'm rambling on, but I'm actually very, very disciplined in my public comments, and everybody always made jokes about that, but still to this day. There's a hearing and I would put everything into a few buckets and that was my way of making things accessible to people, because you could just stand up there and talk and ramble on. So there's the road issue here. There's the development issue here. And there's the policy consideration. So here's my three buckets on this hearing. So that's how I got noted for buckets. I just put everything into categories, into buckets, I call them, and that way people when they heard me speak, they would know what I was talking about.

**1:34:30 Joyce Kleiner:** Yeah, you're pretty famous for your buckets.

**1:34:32 Andy Berman:** Yeah, I know. Buckets. [laughs]

**1:34:35 Joyce Kleiner:** And the last question I'll ask you before I will say that if there's anything —

**1:34:40 Andy Berman:** But they're just common concepts that go together into one category.

**1:34:43 Joyce Kleiner:** Right, right. And being able to visualize where they belong. Before I ask you my last question, is there anything you wish I had asked you that I didn't ask?

**1:34:53 Andy Berman:** No, I brought up the Dick Jessup plaque in the Plaza, because that still bothers me. That's like the one thing.

**1:34:58 Joyce Kleiner:** Yeah, you're not alone.

**1:35:00 Andy Berman:** But I had a chance to try and get that done too, because while the mayor is just the first among equals, s/he has influence to set the agenda and that's the one thing I simply did not have support for at the time. That's my only regret.

**1:35:16 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, that would have been my question is what do you regret in not accomplishing, so that's it.

**1:35:20 Andy Berman:** Yeah, so I got that in.

**1:35:22 Joyce Kleiner:** And so then my final question is what is your wish for Mill Valley going forward?

**1:35:28 Andy Berman:** Oh, I just want it to be healthy and happy and safe. I want its "small town character" to continue to be alive and well. It's my same platform health and safety, fiscal responsibility, and small-town character. And I think we can do it. It really just takes electing good people, hiring good people, and appointing good people on the boards and commissions. I'm on a personal mission again right now. I'm doing this little concierge service. I'm not getting paid or anything like that, but a couple of people are coming in trying to get their businesses in town, or homes changed. We must help businesses as well as serving residents well. That's one of the things we learned, that the business community wasn't getting serviced well.

But I'm just trying to do a little concierge service. Get people. If you're moving into town, whether you're a business or a resident, you need help meeting people and figuring the town out, you can call Andy, I'll happily give you time. It's not a business, it's just that I want people to feel comfortable. That is what "small-town character" is all about.

And where I get questions and calls, I'm happy to do it, and stay involved. Stay involved, that's really critical. Stay involved.

**1:36:46 Joyce Kleiner:** And would you say that with things being a little bit dysfunctional nationally, I would say maybe even state-wide, do you feel that if people want to feel like they're making a difference, that civic government is still a place where they can see that?

**1:37:02 Andy Berman:** Yes. It is the only place. I really believe this, Joyce. Local is the only place where stuff's getting done. Stuff's getting done at the local level. You've also got to get out and vote and you need to have your local electeds. It's really critical, because it's where things are getting done. I love that. And yeah, there's a lot of stuff going on.

**1:37:44 Joyce Kleiner:** So you want to see that remain healthy then?

**1:37:46 Andy Berman:** Absolutely, yeah.

**1:37:48 Joyce Kleiner:** Good people.

**1:37:48 Andy Berman:** It's hard to keep what we have, I don't think people realize. People are like, "Why are you doing this and why are you doing this?" I'm like, "You don't realize how hard it is to keep what we have, because the pressure is enormous." Nobody gives a hoot about Mill Valley and Marin. Nobody cares about us. We don't have fracking going on in our county. We don't have high unemployment. I don't think Marin's "high quality" problems are on the top of Sacramento's list. We have quantities of open space. And it's getting harder and harder just to keep what we have. You know, very, very hard.

**1:38:26 Joyce Kleiner:** But your work is rewarding here. You do something you feel like you've made a difference.

**1:38:30 Andy Berman:** You can make a difference. You actually can. All of us can.

**1:38:35 Joyce Kleiner:** And who would you say, if you had a mentor or even just someone that you most admired, if you could name one name that you've met in your days as serving the city, who would it be?

**1:38:47 Andy Berman:** Well it has to be two.

**1:38:49 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay.

**1:38:50 Andy Berman:** Oh, it's Dennis and Betsy. I owe it all to Dennis Fisco and Betsy Cutler. They are my two closest friends in town. They know me for who I am and what I'm not. I can be open and honest with them and I trust them completely. And I

wouldn't be here without them. I just wouldn't. I wouldn't have done any of this stuff without those two.

**1:39:18 Joyce Kleiner:** Well, you'll be happy to know that I'm interviewing Betsy next week.

**1:39:21 Andy Berman:** Oh, good.

**1:39:22 Joyce Kleiner:** Yeah.

**1:39:22 Andy Berman:** Those two. I wouldn't have done any of this without them. Dennis said to me, "You're the guy." Who me? No. "Yes," he said, while he was going down the Memorial Day Parade pointing at me.

**1:39:41 Joyce Kleiner:** Oh, that's cool.

**1:39:42 Andy Berman:** 2005, he points to me.

**1:39:45 Joyce Kleiner:** "I see you." [chuckles]

**1:39:45 Andy Berman:** He's like, "You, here." Yeah, I took his place on Planning. We kept up and he's going down the parade, he's like —

**1:39:55 Joyce Kleiner:** Yeah, they call him Mr. Mill Valley.

**1:39:57 Andy Berman:** Yeah.

**1:39:58 Joyce Kleiner:** Okay, I'm turning this off now.

**1:40:00 Andy Berman:** Alright, turn it off. Bye.

**1:40:00 Joyce Kleiner:** So, bye-bye.