

**Mill Valley Oral History Program**

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**MARTY BALIN**

**An Oral History Interview  
Conducted by Debra Schwartz in 2017**

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INTERVIEWER: Debra Schwartz  
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In this oral history, musician and songwriter Marty Balin shares stories from his life at the center of the rock music scene and hippie culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Born in 1942, Marty grew up in both San Francisco and Richmond. He describes himself as having been a very musical child, born with “a song in [his] heart.” Marty began his musical career in the San Francisco folk scene. When the clubs he was playing at in the early 1960s did not support his transition to amplified rock music, he opened his own nightclub called The Matrix, where all the new bands began performing. Marty recounts his formation of the legendary band Jefferson Airplane in 1965, sharing the genesis of some of Jefferson Airplane’s — and later Jefferson Starship’s — most memorable songs. Throughout this oral history he discusses his friendships and working relationships with many of the period’s biggest names in music. In 1968, Marty moved over to Mill Valley, where he began taking daily hikes on Mt. Tam with his dog. He was living in Mill Valley when he received the news of Janis Joplin’s untimely death, an event he describes movingly here. At the time this oral history was recorded, Marty was living in Florida with his family, recording a new album and still performing. As he reflects on the course his life has taken and the wisdom he has gleaned from it, he expresses his continuing love for Mill Valley and Mt. Tam, and his heartfelt intention to keep coming back to visit — and to keep on rockin’.

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## Oral History of Marty Balin

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**Oral History of Marty Balin**  
**June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**Editor's note:** This oral history was conducted over the telephone. The transcript has been reviewed by Marty Balin, who made minor corrections and clarifications to the original.

**Debra Schwartz:** Today is June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017. My name is Debra Schwartz and I'm here on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society and the Mill Valley Library. I'm most pleased to be talking with a wonderful musician, artist, sculptor, dancer, founder and lead singer of Jefferson Airplane, winner of multiple awards including Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, creator of platinum and gold records, inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and longtime Mill Valley resident. I'm speaking today with Marty Balin. Marty, thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy life to sit and talk with the Mill Valley Historical Society.

**Marty Balin:** Oh, my pleasure Debra, my pleasure.

**Debra Schwartz:** Marty, I'm a woman of a certain age and I have to say that I think some of the most poignant moments of my life have been accompanied by your beautiful music. So first of all, I just want to say thank you for that. Thank you for bringing a little bit of your creativity into all of our lives.

**Marty Balin:** My pleasure.

**Debra Schwartz:** Marty, to get a little context, do you mind telling me just a little bit about your family? Your parents, your grandparents —

**Marty Balin:** My parents?

**Debra Schwartz:** Yeah.

**Marty Balin:** Well, my dad was a lithographer and my mom was just a housewife but you know, quite a force of nature. He worked from San Jose up to Contra Costa, Oakland, and then we moved to Frisco, and I mainly grew up there. He was always you know, big plans.

**Debra Schwartz:** He was what?

**Marty Balin:** I just came to San Francisco when I was about four, I think.

**Debra Schwartz:** Four years old in San Francisco. What year were you born, Marty?

**Marty Balin:** 1942.

**Debra Schwartz:** So, you're coming in to San Francisco in close to the late '40s, it must've been. Do you recall what it was like as a child in San Francisco and what part of San Francisco you lived in?

**Marty Balin:** Well, we first just lived in the Tenderloin. I have a picture on my wall of the first day we arrived in San Francisco and we're walking down Market Street and they had a photographer and he was taking pictures of families — they give you a card, you know — I have that picture. I was about four years old, my sister, my mother, and my father, walking down Market Street, first day we came to San Francisco.

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow.

**Marty Balin:** Very interesting.

**Debra Schwartz:** Does that picture, when you look at it, evoke memories for you of your childhood in San Francisco?

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah. Then you know, growing up, from San Francisco we moved over to Contra Costa, just past Richmond, and then we moved up to Richmond. We were there for a few years and then we came across the Bay to San Francisco.

**Debra Schwartz:** Richmond. What was Richmond like for you? What years were you there, do you remember?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I went there in junior high. And it was quite adventurous for me, growing up in the age of teenage rebellion, years when rock 'n' roll was starting, and all that was kind of exciting. But Richmond was a quiet little place at that time. A very black-oriented place. I had a lot of friends and I had some exciting times delivering newspapers there. I remember the projects, singing with black guys, it was kind of fun.

**Debra Schwartz:** So were you singing from an early age? Is this something that —

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. My mother said I sang, I whistled before I talked.

**Debra Schwartz:** [laughs] You whistled before you talked?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. But my mom said I was always — even today I'll be shopping and people will go, "Oh, you're a happy guy!" I was always humming or singing a melody or something in my head. But I find myself always, you know, playing with tunes.

**Debra Schwartz:** I guess that just was your natural born gift, huh?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I just, you know, got a song in my heart.

**Debra Schwartz:** You got a song in your heart. Oh that's sweet. So, now you're in San Francisco during the beatnik era, then?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, that was great. That was a fun time.

**Debra Schwartz:** Tell me about that.

**Marty Balin:** Well, I grew up in the era when — in fact, I was just saying something to Ralph Mathis, who is Johnny Mathis' brother, was one of his brothers. We were the same age, Ralph and I, and we hung out together. I used to hang out in Johnny Mathis' house over on — what was it? — 32<sup>nd</sup>, going up to the Legion of Honor, I remember.

**Debra Schwartz:** 32<sup>nd</sup> Street, you mean? Johnny Mathis, the singer?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh my!

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, his family lives there, and Ralph lived there with his mother and father and Johnny would come to see her and have all his paintings [of himself]. His cool suits Ralph and I would borrow and wear 'cause we would go down to Broadway and hit the little jazz clubs and try to catch a jazz trio or something, you know? So, we wore his suits, they just fit perfectly!

**Debra Schwartz:** You were wearing Johnny Mathis' super slick, interesting and awesome clothes?

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh you must've felt like a million bucks.

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, we did.

**Debra Schwartz:** And so you were singing then in clubs? You were jumping in where you could. And did Ralph sing with you?

**Marty Balin:** No, Ralph had his own thing. He had made records and he had his own style and he just never pursued it, I guess. I don't know what happened to him.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh, you lost touch over time, huh?

**Marty Balin:** Well, you know one time — I loved the guy so much and I was in L.A. I was a big deal in the [Jefferson] Airplane at that time, living in this mansion in the Ivory Hills. And I researched where Ralph was and I found out he was in Hollywood and he was a preacher. So I went to his house and I went and knocked on his door. And because I was a hippie with you know, wild clothes and long hair and beads and you know, he was offended by me and the publicity that we had gotten, being "Kings of acid" and "Your mother's worst nightmare," stuff like that. You know, he was really not very

friendly to me. I was really eager about getting him a contact, but he was offended I even came to his house. So, that didn't work out at all.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did that hurt?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah it did, but you know, I went on. I haven't been in this business and not been hurt by almost everybody I've worked with. So you know, I'm kind of used to it.

**Debra Schwartz:** And you're at the vanguard of a rock 'n' roll era change. I guess you probably offended — you have a wake of offended mothers and fathers and preachers behind you.

**Marty Balin:** I've played with people and they would come up to me and say, "Yeah, I wanted to come see you when I was a kid. At the old Fillmore or at Winterland, and my mother wouldn't let me. And my kids now are into you and they brought me here tonight, you know." And I'll say, "Oh, well it's about time," you know?

**Debra Schwartz:** Interesting. So, you're growing up; you come to San Francisco as a young boy; you have a momentous opportunity to have that photo taken of you and your family that very first day; you settle in; you kind of travel around the Bay a bit, get acquainted with lots of different areas of the Bay; and back in San Francisco, hanging out with — close friendships with some pretty famous people. I mean, Johnny Mathis was big.

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, man. He would have parties and he was pals with all the great jazz people, jazz singers, you know it was quite something. And everybody would get up and sing and dance around, even little kids and grandmas. You know, black people were just so much looser. In fact Johnny was one of the first guys who said to me, "Hey kid, you oughta try singing, you know? You got a pretty good voice." That was the first pro that ever gave me some confidence.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did you ever think you were meant to be a singer? I mean, when he said that did that —

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, I always liked singing. My father tried to get me to be a printer and have a profession, and I would always be working at these presses in downtown Frisco, and you know, I just said, "not for me." You know, they kept promoting me up and wanted to put me in the office and I said, "I gotta get out of here." I said, "What do I want to do? What do I like to do? You know, I like to sing. I know that's odd, but of all the things I've ever done, I like to sing, it's something that's so real for me. You know, I think I'll give it a try." So you know, I did. I said, "Hey, no looking back."

**Debra Schwartz:** So how did you go about it? When you decided, "this is what I want to do," you're in San Francisco, what were your next steps?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I was living with a couple of folk guys who were singing and playing folk. They had a teacher, a guitar teacher, down in Fargo who came, and I was singing with him. He took me down to the Old Drinking Gourd on Union Street in San Francisco. We used to have hootenannies and sing-alongs and all that. And he organized a group, a folk group, that I was in at the Drinking Gourd, called the Town Criers. And we played and played around all over California, Hawaii, Nevada. You know, it was a lot of fun and we even played the old Hungry Eye, the old Purple Onion, Jazz Workshop, all those great clubs, you know. That was my first real exposure.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did you wear the outfits — what were the clothes that you wore? I remember some of those bands, they all dressed in a band uniform. Did you dress that way too with your band?

**Marty Balin:** Well, a couple of times they had these women who would come and want to dress us and, you know, make us all up in pastel colors or something. We just used to do what we were — you know, we were never really folk era, so you wore what you wanted.

**Debra Schwartz:** You wore what you wanted.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. It wasn't anything fancy.

**Debra Schwartz:** So, you're getting the taste. Did it feel at that time — did you think you would be doing anything else, or was that just it for you, you knew where you wanted to be?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I was singing and having fun doing that. And, you know, that was my fun until that broke up. And then I decided I wanted to pursue singing and work with a drummer and electric guitars. So I began organizing a bunch of people in a band. But I went back to Hungry Eye and Purple Onion, and I couldn't get hired because we were so loud — you know, the electricity and the drums and everything. So I couldn't get hired anywhere.

**Debra Schwartz:** So the Hungry Eye and The Purple Onion, you said?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** Those were smaller venues, were they?

**Marty Balin:** They were popular nightclubs in Frisco. And we played with all kinds of great people.

**Debra Schwartz:** Didn't you — oh sorry, go on.

**Marty Balin:** Anyway, I couldn't get any work because I went electric, and drums, and we were kinda playing rock 'n' roll — my version. So I decided to open my own club to



play anything I want and do what I wanted to do, which was electric and drums and just have a very good band, you know? So I was playing at the Drinking Gourd, I had my own special night. These musicians come and they would watch me — I'm in my set — and be fans of mine. One time they brought their boyfriends, and I was talking to the boyfriends during the break. And each one swore they had \$3,000 and they were looking to invest it. So I jumped up and I said, "Hey, give it to me!" "Well, what would you do?" they said. And I said, "Open a nightclub. You can have your club, and I'll open a band with it. I'll keep the band." And they said okay.

**Debra Schwartz:** So, how much money was that all together? Each one of the boyfriends had \$3,000?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, there was four of 'em.

**Debra Schwartz:** So, you had enough. And these were absolute strangers, you're basically saying, like, "Wait, I know what! We'll open up a club. You run the club, I'll do the music, and that'll be that."

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. And I went around a couple weekends after that to different bars and clubs and I found this one place that was not doing too well all weekend. So I told these guys, I said, "You've got license there." So it became The Matrix. And as we were working on it, you know, other people came out of the woodwork, looking for a place to play their own music and do what they were doing. I mean, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead, who were the Warlocks at that time. And you know people would just come in while I was working on the place and say, "Hey, I play the cello, could I do a set here?" And I would say, "Yeah." And I put these people on and we mainly hired a blues guy, we hired some great — Lightning Hopkins and people like that. And the Airplane was forming, and it would play with these old blues guys, so it was learning about the sixteen and half bar blues, and stuff like that. It was kinda fun.

**Debra Schwartz:** So you basically, you captured a niche right at the right time, it seems like.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** Because you're in the process — you haven't even gotten the building together, called the Matrix? Like the movie? Matrix?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** How interesting. So, while you're building it, people were —

**Marty Balin:** So the funny thing was, we went around with stickers all over town that said, "Jefferson Airplane Loves You." And I think people wanted to know what a Jefferson Airplane was because at the opening night of the Matrix, the place was packed, and almost every record company was sitting in the audience, offering me a contract.

**Debra Schwartz:** So you're speechless. Okay, we're going to backtrack for a minute. I'd like to know how it is that you met the other band members. While you're opening up your club, while you're in the process of physically putting it together, people are coming to you, great bands, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Grateful Dead —

**Marty Balin:** Steve Miller.

**Debra Schwartz:** Steve Miller. They want this place to play their electric music, and you're like, "Sure, sure, sure. Come on over."

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, right.

**Debra Schwartz:** Whose idea was it to put stickers that said, "Jefferson Airplane Loves You" all over? I mean, that's kind of brilliant promotion, really.

**Marty Balin:** Ah, it was my idea, my jazz friends' and mine. And, you know, they were hard to take off, too. [laughs]

**Debra Schwartz:** Say that again, I'm sorry?

**Marty Balin:** They were hard to take off.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh, the adhesive.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, the stickers you could put on your bumpers, I remember.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes, right. I remember. Once it was on, it was on forever.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** So, Jefferson Airplane was adhesively attached to San Francisco. You tattooed San Francisco with that, basically.

**Marty Balin:** Well, the city was a great shipboard for whatever went on at the club. It was amazing. It wasn't my band. It was people that play hybrid soul that I wasn't playing. It just grew, you know?

**Debra Schwartz:** I have to ask. I've always wondered. Where did the name Jefferson Airplane come from?

**Marty Balin:** Well, Jorma Kaukonen, the guitar player, had a friend who was a guitar player, who had a dog named Thomas Jefferson Airplane. And one time, we were looking for a name and Jorma just turned and said, "Why don't we call it Jefferson Airplane?" And we all just fell out laughing, you know, thought it was the most hilarious

thing. But as we asked the people, they all too thought it was great. So we said, “Okay, Jefferson Airplane. That’s the spirit we want to convey.”

**Debra Schwartz:** So your band is named after a dog with a rather lofty name! Thomas Jefferson Airplane.

**Marty Balin:** Right.

**Debra Schwartz:** [laughs] That’s funny! That’s so funny. That’s great.

**Marty Balin:** Remember that song by Donovan, “Fat Angel,” and he’s talking about flying the airplane, and in the end he goes, “Fly, Jefferson Airplane, fly”? He was talking to the dog who was in the studio of that guy, the guitar player. Just calls out and left it on track.

**Debra Schwartz:** “Fly, Jefferson Airplane!” Wow. That’s really good, interesting thing to know.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, it was a pretty little plug for us.

**Debra Schwartz:** How did you meet your band members? Did you have your band when you started?

**Marty Balin:** Ah well, I was looking for a 12-string when I was in folk. I worked with a 12-string player, and I loved the 12-string. So I needed to find a 12-string player to do what I wanted. They were having open auditions at the Drinking Gourd once a week and I would go down and watch the people audition. And this one guy came up with a six in one hand and a 12 in the other and he wanted to audition. And the doorman — I was standing by the doorman, fortunately — he said, “Oh we’re all full up.” I said, “Hey, give him my spot, I gotta see this guy.” So, the funniest thing, this guy, Paul Kantner, he stopped to do his bit, and he opens his case, takes his time, like he always did, you know, pulls out his guitar, makes sure it’s tuned up, he’s taking his time, and then he looks out at the audience and he goes, “I can’t do this,” and he puts his guitar away and goes off stage. I said to myself, “That’s the guy. That’s the guy I want to work with right there.” So I went backstage and I introduced myself and I said, “Hey, I want to play with you.” He said, “What?” You know? I said, “Yeah, let’s share some ideas.” He agreed and I went over to his house and we went over different ideas we had and traded off.

And the first day we were there, down the stairs came this guy, Jorma Kaukonen, with his guitar case, and his wife, and they went down the stairs, out the door. I said, “Hey, who’s that, Paul?” He said, “Oh, that’s Jorma Kaukonen, he’s a guitar teacher. I said, “Wow, we should ask him to be in the band.” ’Cause he looked fantastic. He looked like every lead guitar player should look like, you know? He was just great. And Paul said, “Oh no, he’s really good. He’s too good for us.” I said, “No, no, Paul, that’s what we want. We want really good people.” So I called him and went to bug him and went by his house and even picked him up the first few times and drove him to rehearsal, just to get him interested.

You know, he was a hard nut to crack. But he was helpful in that, we couldn't find the right bass player and he said, "You know, I used to play with a guitar player in Washington D.C., Jack Casady, who went to bass and he was a great guitar player. His father's a good bassist." So we decided to call Jack up — he was in college — and we called him up, and wake him, and we hear him go to the sink, wash his face and hands, come back and say, "What?" So I was telling him about this Matrix Club we were building and we were gonna have a great success, and we needed a great bass player. He said, "I'll come up and check it out." And we said we were making \$300 a week each, which was a big lie, we weren't making a thing. So he came out, and I was at the Matrix, and brought him to the Matrix, and he had his hair over one eye, and a big handlebar mustache, and one of these old shirts from Penny's or something, and he looked like the biggest dork I ever saw. But he started to play, and I said, "You want a chart or the chords or anything?" He said, "No, no, I'll just follow along." So, we started to play songs and he was it, you know. Because I grew up around jazz clubs and I knew great bass players from the jazz trios in jazz clubs. This guy was great and he was unique, and it's just what I was looking for. He was powerful. So he decided to hang out and do it, and that was great, that was a big benefit, 'cause he was a genius bass player.

**Debra Schwartz:** So, listening to this story, I'm gathering that you see Paul Kantner, you give him your spot when it's time to perform, and he chokes. He doesn't even perform.

**Marty Balin:** Right.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yet you follow after him for some reason and say, "You're the guy." And then, basically, there's another guy that goes walking past looking hipper than hip, slick as can be —

**Marty Balin:** Well, I've always been an intuition person.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, I guess that's what I'm getting to. I mean, it seems that way. Logically, you've never even played music with these people, but in your mind you say, "This is the one."

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I just seem to know the right person.

**Debra Schwartz:** Are you a kind of —

**Marty Balin:** I'm a good collaborator. I can bring people's music out and get them involved. I enjoy musicians so much and I love, I love to hear what they do, especially with my songs. [laughs]

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow, that's interesting. I don't know much about musicians and music, really, but do many musicians really work from that instinctual sort of non-thinking place where you —

**Marty Balin:** I think some do, yeah. I think you try to, you get yourself into an inspirational state. You can wait for it to come or try to work at it every day. I'm not really much of a work at it every day guy. I kind of go with the moon. When the moon gets full, I get working.

**Debra Schwartz:** [laughs] Okay, so —

**Marty Balin:** No, it's true. I feel the moon. When the moon gets full, I get a lot of energy. I love to perform when the moon is full.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh, interesting. So now you've got your band, you've got Jefferson Airplane, and you're performing. And there are a lot of other great bands at that time as well.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** So, you're living in San Francisco and it's basically the birth of rock 'n' roll is happening right there, and you're part of the egg that's hatching in every way, correct?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. It was great. Exciting. Very exciting.

**Debra Schwartz:** Tell me what that was like, just the ambience. I mean, from your perspective as a young person, what did that feel like?

**Marty Balin:** Well, it was very exciting, you know, 'cause people were doing great things. The clothes we wore were handmade. The poster scene. The light shows in magazines. The music, you know. And then, after we met Bill Graham, we had the ballroom's opening. And we had all these great places to play and to go hear others play. So, it was quite a scene, San Francisco. You didn't want to leave it.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did you feel like you were in a world of your own making in a way?

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, I feel I was in nirvana. I was part of a great movement of West Coast music that was happening.

**Debra Schwartz:** Who were some of your favorite performers back then?

**Marty Balin:** Oh God. I loved Janis, you know. Janis was a monster. And Jim Morrison and I were good friends, and I thought he was brilliant. Jerry Garcia and I were friends, and in the early days I used to just stand in front of the stage and listen to Garcia just take me up to heaven. But that was before he got into smack and everything. But you know, gosh, we had these great people like Otis Redding, great to play with him. And Jimi Hendrix, I got to play with him. The Who, all these great people. Butterfield Blues Band, my God, you know. And Graham, he would have the weirdest shows sometimes. He would have us play with Mayakovsky the Russian Poet and La Flamencas flamenco

guitar player or something. He would mix things up. Some orchestra or something, you know. He was good at having interesting bills of different acts, and it worked. It was interesting.

**Debra Schwartz:** Wow, interesting. So a lot of the bands were living in San Francisco. Where were you living? Were you living with your band?

**Marty Balin:** I was living in the Haight, mainly. And then I ended up in — the Airplane had a mansion on Fulton Street, and we all ended up in there at one time. That's right. I think Grace had a fire in her place, and Jorma couldn't pay the rent in his place. The place had plenty of bedrooms, and we had a studio in it by the basement where we could rehearse, and we had a pool table. And there was a shed and jazz was coming. We all had parties over there. It was great.

**Debra Schwartz:** [chuckles] Sounds so fun. Now, we haven't talked about Grace Slick yet. So when did she enter into the band? And how?

**Marty Balin:** Well she had her own band, the Great Society. They played a lot, and we played together a lot. In fact, Grace would just sit right in front of the stage and watch me. It was very fun. She was very intent on staring you down, you know? When we decided to let Signe Anderson go because she was pregnant and she didn't want to tour — we were starting to get offers to tour and make money and go play, you know, Chicago or New York — she didn't want to tour, so we had to let her go. We wanted another girl, and there were only a few girls working. There was Grace. She had her own popular band, and there was Janis, she had her own popular band, and she was real boozy. And there was Cold Blood —

**Debra Schwartz:** Lydia Pense.

**Marty Balin:** Lydia Pense. And those were about the only girls I knew working. And the only one I could imagine singing with would be Grace Slick. She's not that weird, or boozy. But she's got her own hip band with her husband and her brother in it. And Jack said, "Well I don't care, I'm gonna go over there and ask her right now." So he went over and asked her in the afternoon, after a meeting, and that evening at our gig, Grace was on stage performing with us.

**Debra Schwartz:** Ah, so you really have an angel watching over you with everything that seems to go on with this band, I tell you. What year did you actually start the band, do you remember?

**Marty Balin:** '65.

**Debra Schwartz:** '65. And then Grace joins what year?

**Marty Balin:** I guess '67? Something like that. '68?

**Debra Schwartz:** So then things started to get pretty big, didn't they?

**Marty Balin:** Oh they got so big, it was amazing. I couldn't even walk out of my house sometimes on the street. I mean, we were like gods to people. It was amazing.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did that mess with your head at all?

**Marty Balin:** It started to. When my parents started treating me kind of weird and I said, "Hey, it's just me. Treat me like you always did, the old Buck." And they calmed down, and I was home again. But you know it didn't mess with my head as much because by the time it got really hurtful, and everyone stabs you in the back. There's nobody you can really trust, even in your own band. And in those days, everybody was on cocaine and meth. I was a drinker and not much of a coke person. But people on coke were crazy and all these people were — like even roadies who worked for us were acting like Hitler. It was crazy. You couldn't talk to anybody, especially to my own band, you know. I would walk around and just look around the back of the amps and there'd be a pile of coke, a pile of meth, a little acid over here. I said, "Okay, I can see what kind of night this is gonna be."

**Debra Schwartz:** Do you think that when drugs started to become so overabundant it sort of singed things back then? That sense of, you know, the Summer of Love, if you want to say, or that feeling of unity? Do you think that those drugs started to erode away all that?

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah. 'Cause after that, I noticed the heroin. People came in — you know, all those kids on heroin sleeping in Golden Gate Park, on the streets, Haight Street. You know, it was real sad to watch the growth of drugs. And then acid was a big draw for people, too. One thing about the band, we were taking acid that was given to us by Owsley himself. It was purer than, I don't know what those kids were getting on the streets.

**Debra Schwartz:** Remember Window Pane?

**Marty Balin:** Oh God, yeah. That was even later, in those little pills.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yeah.

**Marty Balin:** I can remember standing on stage with a bag of acid pills and Grace with a bag of acid pills, playing outdoors at Griffith Park, throwing these pills to these kids. 'Cause acid wasn't illegal yet. And these kids just dancing naked in the mud before the stage, and the FBI watching us from the hills and the trees up above, and me pointing it out to people, "Hey, give a cheer to the FBI! Yayyy! F-B-I!" Oh, they hated it. But it wasn't illegal, yet. So it was crazy times.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes, crazy times. So, have you read David Talbot's book, *Season of the Witch*? I think you're in it, right?

**Marty Balin:** I don't know. I don't read that stuff.

**Debra Schwartz:** Well his book is actually a really interesting book of history. I've interviewed him. He lives in San Francisco now and he talked about when things started to get a little weird in San Francisco, a lot of musicians moved over to Marin County.

**Marty Balin:** I moved over in '68.

**Debra Schwartz:** When you left San Francisco, when was it and where did you go?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I moved right to 180 East Blithedale. I had a little house on the corner. Eventually I bought the house and eventually renovated it. And the guy who owns it now ruined it. But someday I'll buy it back and show him how it should be done.

**Debra Schwartz:** It's the one over by Pharmaca pharmacy? What used to be Lawson-Dyer?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. It was mine on the corner. Right across from Scout Hall.

**Debra Schwartz:** Right across from Scout Hall, right.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** So you went in 1968 to Mill Valley?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I went right to Mill Valley.

**Debra Schwartz:** What brought you to Mill Valley?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I was going with a nurse and we were living in an apartment in San Francisco and she wanted to get a place together, you know, a nice place. And she came back and said she found this place, and it happened to be in Mill Valley. And when I saw the old house and the beautiful light, and it was warm over there every day, I said, "Hey, this is for me." I couldn't believe it 'cause in Frisco, you know, I didn't know it was sunny every day across the bridge.

**Debra Schwartz:** Different weather over here.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, totally.

**Debra Schwartz:** So you became a Mill Valley resident.

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, I fell right in. I loved it, had a great time. And I got to play the Sweetwater and had bands living all around and music going on and a couple of



restaurants, and it had a couple of bookstores, I remember. Galleries. It was very quaint. Very simple.

**Debra Schwartz:** Are you an outdoorsy guy?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I love going up to the mountain. I've walked the mountain almost every day, me and my dog. We'd hike up, 18 miles up, 18 miles back. That was a great thing to do every day. I was young, I had a lot of energy. I remember I quit with the Airplane for a while, and I hadn't joined Starship yet, so I used that mountain a lot. Hiking, going to the valleys — ah yeah, beautiful, wonderful times.

**Debra Schwartz:** What was your dog's name, that you hiked with?

**Marty Balin:** It was John Dog.

**Debra Schwartz:** John Dog?

**Marty Balin:** Dog. People called him Buck. B-U-C-K. But he was John Dog.

**Debra Schwartz:** John Dog. You and John Dog hit the trails. Which of your San Francisco friends were in town?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I remember Grace moved over eventually. And she had a place up on the hill.

**Debra Schwartz:** The Dead were here, right? Were the Dead later?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, the Dead. You know, some great writers, and players, Mike Bloomfield. Oh, Garcia would drop by sometimes, you know, we'd play music and share ideas. It was kind of fun. I had the house on the corner. It was always open; the doors were open in the summertime, people came walking in all the time.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did you ever have fans just show up?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I had fans. One time I was sitting, watching TV and some girl came through the window or something while me and my buddies were watching TV. And one guy said, "What's she doing?" And one time I had this fan pick up my garbage can and throw it through my kitchen window. This giant crash. The cops were very quick in Mill Valley, and they zoomed over, and this guy was a big fan of mine and he just loved me so much he wanted to tell me that. So he threw the garbage can through my kitchen window to get my attention. There were people like that every once and a while.

**Debra Schwartz:** Didn't that bother you, when he did that? You're on the main road there. Did you ever feel vulnerable?

**Marty Balin:** No, it never did. I never felt threatened or anything. I always felt quite safe, myself, where I was.

**Debra Schwartz:** That's nice. Did you know David Crosby? He was here in Mill Valley as well.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, kind of.

**Debra Schwartz:** Janis Joplin didn't live too far away. She was in Larkspur, right?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, she'd come by sometimes. In that painted Porsche of hers and give me a ride, take me riding.

**Debra Schwartz:** In that Porsche she had? Some people don't know about that Porsche. Would you mind describing Janis Joplin's Porsche to our listeners?

**Marty Balin:** Well, it was painted by some psychedelic artist to have psychedelic designs all over it. It was really sharp, kind of a cool-looking thing. I saw it years later at the Museum of Modern Art — no, the Whitney Museum. They had a show, and they had that Porsche there. It was very interesting.

**Debra Schwartz:** Was it hard for you when she died suddenly?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, it was, I was playing at the time and I heard she died and I couldn't — we had played Friday and we were supposed to play Saturday at Winterland. Friday I felt was so badly done, everybody played so poorly, and I didn't want to go back Saturday. Then I heard she died, and I just went up the mountain with my dog, went to the top of Mt. Tam —

[long pause]

**Debra Schwartz:** That's how you grieved for her?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. [weeping]

**Debra Schwartz:** So that's how you grieved. You took it to the mountain.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, but I couldn't, I couldn't — I just felt so bad. It was funny, though, people came and filled my house and cooked and sat around and played music. Sat with me. We sang songs and had food. And Bill Graham left Winterland, came over, and he saw how upset I was, and he said, "Never mind coming, you don't have to sing." And I thanked him.

**Debra Schwartz:** It's sad to think about, even today. How sad it is to lose such wonderful people, so young.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, especially when they were so powerful.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes. I'm sorry for your loss, too. She was a great musician.

**Marty Balin:** I never saw anything like when Janis would sing "Summertime." My God, I sat on the stage and just — feeling her shake, you know, it was amazing.

**Debra Schwartz:** I think I've heard that song five thousand times — her "Summertime" — and I didn't get to see it live, but it is one of the most chilling and beautifully haunting songs.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. She adored the idea it'd be like, whoa, just shattering, unbelievable. And then she'd walk off and say, "Ha, ha. How was that Marty? Ha, ha! Do you ever hear anybody sing as good as that?" I'd go, "No, Janis. You're the best."

**Debra Schwartz:** [laughs] You know you have sung some pretty amazing ballads yourself, I have to say, equally powerful in their own way. "Coming Back to Me," and "Today." Did you write those songs when you were here in Mill Valley? 'Cause whenever especially I hear "Coming Back to Me" it really makes me think of Mill Valley. And I have always wondered if —

**Marty Balin:** Actually, no, I was in Hollywood, recording. I was recording with the Airplane and I went back to the motel after the session, and I ran into Paul Butterfield, Paul Butterfield Blues Band guy. And Paul said, "Hey Marty, smoke this man." He gave me this joint, he rolled it up, said, "This is the greatest stuff in the world." And so I went to my room and I smoked it. And I couldn't find my legs, I couldn't move. And I made it to my guitar, and out in five minutes came the song, "Coming Back to Me." So I found my way to my car, went back to the studio, and they were just closing up. I said, "Wait, wait just a second in there, turn on that machine." Grace was still there and Jerry Garcia was there, and Jack Casady was there. I said, "Hey guys, play this with me." So we sat down, in one take, no rehearsal, we did the song and that was it! And that was the recording that got used.

**Debra Schwartz:** I'm seriously getting chills hearing that right now.

**Marty Balin:** It just was one take, one moment, five minutes it was written. I just put it down. But those are the good ones, you know, ones that come that quick.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh my gosh, it's the most beautiful song.

**Marty Balin:** And "Today." "Today" we were in the studio, Sunset and Vine. In Studio A was the Rolling Stones, and we were in Studio B. And Studio C was Tony Bennett and his orchestra.

**Debra Schwartz:** Tony Bennett? No!

**Marty Balin:** Yeah. So, me and the Stones, we all went to meet Tony Bennett, you know. I thought, “Well maybe I’ll write him a song, that way I’ll get to see him.” So I wrote “Today” thinking of a Tony Bennett-kind of song that he might do. And I gave it to the drummer on the session to give to him. I don’t know if he ever got it.

**Debra Schwartz:** This is so interesting to hear the history behind these songs. Who would’ve thought “Today” would have been inspired by Tony Bennett? What a great musician! How about “Miracles?” Another great song.

**Marty Balin:** “Miracles,” yeah, well that was a strange pattern I was playing on the guitar, and I was very involved with an avatar in India, Sathya Sai Baba. They called him the Man of Miracles. And I actually sat darshan once with him, in India. My whole life was changed by him and what I read about him. I began to write the song — I was very in love with the Persian poets and how they would write about God, but they would write about making love to a woman and that woman was God. So I wanted to write a song like that where it was about a woman, but there was a spiritual depth to it. And I was very involved with Sai Baba, so I began to just concentrate on Sai Baba and get myself into a trance and just have words come and flow through me. After about three days, it did. I got that song. I took it to the Starship and played it for them and it got on one of the albums, and became a big hit.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes, but I guess one of the biggest hits for the band — I’m a lover of ballads, so I’ll gladly talk about —

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, a ballad is hard to do. People don’t realize how hard a ballad can be.

**Debra Schwartz:** Why is it hard? Tell me.

**Marty Balin:** Well you have to have a lot more control. You know, when you’re rocking there’s that beat, that rocking raucous rhythm you can never get out of, you know, and don’t have to and you don’t want to. But in a ballad, you’ve got phrasing, you’ve got breath, you’ve got science and you’ve got emotion. You can move to four or five different notes to express what you want. There’s so much more control and there’s more technique that’s involved.

**Debra Schwartz:** Have people been less supportive of your ballad performances versus your rock ’n’ roll? Cause the Starship — “White Rabbit” is you know, just one of those iconic songs. And it’s got an amazing beat and it’s so powerful and then you have this song “Ballads.” Have you ever taken any flak for mixing the two in your records?

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah. But you know, people play my stuff just as much, so what do I care? I don’t care.

**Debra Schwartz:** You didn’t write “White Rabbit” though, did you?

**Marty Balin:** No, I didn't. Grace did.

**Debra Schwartz:** And how did it go with — you were the founder of Jefferson Airplane and lead singer and then Grace comes in. And she's a very powerful personality in her own right and the song was a huge hit. How was that during the band years? Was there ever a problem with you guys?

**Marty Balin:** Well, soon as we had those hits, "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit," I was the invisible man. And everybody was on their own because nobody had a contract, nobody was in charge, and I never had anybody under contract or in charge. So I totally had nothing to say, and it became a madhouse. And that was pretty much, as far as I could see, the end of the band 'cause we made some records but we never really lived up to the potential that the band had. Everybody went off on their own. Jorma went to do his blues and Paul his dramatic, powerful songs, which were fun to do, and which became all that we did, pretty much, at the end. And my ballads, one or two, here and there. And I did actually write a bunch of them for rockers, so you know, I had my share of fun.

**Debra Schwartz:** And when you weren't playing in the band and you were living in Mill Valley, did you used to go visit Prune Music? I've interviewed Larry Cragg who owned Prune Music.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I drove by there. That was quite a place.

**Debra Schwartz:** That was a small town music store.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I wish I'd bought more now, when I think back. [laughs]

**Debra Schwartz:** Larry talked about the back room at Prune Music. Do you remember the back room at Prune Music where the musicians used to gather?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I remember it. But I don't think I was ever there that often.

**Debra Schwartz:** Where were the places you liked to hang out in Mill Valley? Were you a 2 A.M. man? Or at the Brothers —

**Marty Balin:** Oh, well I went by there a few times. Mainly the Sweetwater and the Mill Valley bar on the corner, which is —

**Debra Schwartz:** O'Leary's?<sup>1</sup>

**Marty Balin:** I don't know what they called it then. That was the bar where Bodacious took a photograph for an album cover.<sup>2</sup> We hung out in there a lot. That was it — and Sweetwater and 2 A.M. Club.

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<sup>1</sup> O'Leary's, at the time in question, was named The Old Mill.—Debra Schwartz.

<sup>2</sup> Bodacious was one of Marty Balin's bands.—Debra Schwartz.

**Debra Schwartz:** Did you used to go by the music store? John Goddard's?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** How about the Arts Festival? Did you ever go to the Art Festival in the Old Mill?

**Marty Balin:** Oh God, yeah. It was a great, especially [unintelligible] and Airplane played a lot of those, and even Starship. You know, I loved playing those outdoor festivals around the Bay.

**Debra Schwartz:** Things have changed here in Mill Valley a little bit. There's the Throckmorton Theater now. I think you've been —

**Marty Balin:** I've been playing there, yeah. I've played there a few times. I love that place. Huge scene, I love playing the Throckmorton. In fact, I haven't gone back to the Sweetwater or any of the rock clubs even though I've been invited 'cause I enjoy the Throckmorton more than anywhere else.

**Debra Schwartz:** What is it you like about it?

**Marty Balin:** The ambience, the vibrations in there, the history of it, the feeling I get when I work there.

**Debra Schwartz:** You really are a bit of an intuitive aren't you? You feel things.

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, I have to feel it. You know, he who feels it knows it, is my feeling.

**Debra Schwartz:** "He who feels it knows it?"

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** And do you collaborate with other musicians here that are still in town? Are you still in touch with locals?

**Marty Balin:** I am in touch when I come to town. I stay in the Mill Valley Hotel now. I used to stay with my friends but they sold the house up the hill so now I just stay in the Mill Valley Hotel and you know, travel around and go over to Frisco and see friends and do some shopping, and just take it easy for a few days.

**Debra Schwartz:** We've still got our musicians here, not as many as back in your day. I've interviewed a few: Lorin Rowan is —

**Marty Balin:** I know. I just recorded one of his songs.

**Debra Schwartz:** You did! You just recorded one of his songs?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** Oh, which song was that?

**Marty Balin:** “Sleepwalking.” And “Gold.”

**Debra Schwartz:** “Gold”?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, a song called “Gold.”

**Debra Schwartz:** Ah, yes, so we’re blessed still with some local performers. He’s quite active and others are active in the area. You know, Bill Champlin grew up here too. Did you know him?

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, God, the Sons of Champlin were the scariest rock band I’d ever heard. My God. If all the other bands I ever saw were heavy, they were a heavy band.

**Debra Schwartz:** Were they?

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah. They could rock the place apart.

**Debra Schwartz:** [laughs] I’ll have to tell him you said so.

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, man. It was a scary band, Sons of Champlin. Ohh!

**Debra Schwartz:** [laughs] Funny, knowing Bill now, I can’t hardly imagine that. Such a more affable man you’ll never meet.

**Marty Balin:** Well, those were those young days. The glory days.

**Debra Schwartz:** Uh-huh. When you think back, you’ve had such a, you could say, glamorous life. I mean, at the very least, you are a very gifted, creative person who has actually been able to actualize your gift, I mean, to live your gift. So many artists have to work another job, to do what they want to do. And they scramble —

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, I’ve been lucky, very lucky. But I’m still recording. I’m working on an album now with a bunch of people around here, a bunch of musicians. And I go play down here and I come out to Throckmorton, you know, a couple times a year. I used to until last year. But I’ll be back. And I go to the clubs and up and down to L.A., go play a few places. I get my rocks off that way. And people come out, actually. It’s very fun.

**Debra Schwartz:** I see here in Mill Valley, with a lot of performers from back in the day who are performing, and their fan base is just as strong as ever. Everybody looks a lot older but they’re still rocking.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** Is that what you find with your performances as well?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I have up until last year. But I haven't played all year, so. I took a whole year off this year —

**Debra Schwartz:** You've had some health issues —

**Marty Balin:** Recording and you know just relaxing. I had enough touring for a while with Starship, I'll tell ya.

**Debra Schwartz:** We didn't talk about Starship. We talked about Airplane. Do you want to talk a little about the switchover from Airplane to Starship?

**Marty Balin:** Well, I left the Airplane and eventually Jorma and Jack and others left. Paul and Grace, who were teammates, they performed together for a while. We carried Jefferson Starship to update it, we updated its name. You know, it's funny, I read some reviews of the recordings and the live shows and the reviews would go, "Oh I miss the days when Marty and Grace would sing together!" "Oh, I miss the days when Marty and Paul would write these songs together!" "Oh I miss the days — " So I thought, "You know, one of these days you're going to come knocking on my door." And sure enough, one of these days, Paul came knocking on my door and handed me a piece of music. He wanted to know if I would write the lyrics for it, and I said sure. So I wrote "Caroline" for him and I sang it on the album for him. They were touring and trying to do that song, and David Freiberg was trying to do it, couldn't do it. So they came back from the tour and said, "You've got to join our band 'cause we can't do that song!" And we're sitting at the airport, and I said, "Well I will join if you let me do my kind of songs," which was, you know, "Miracles," "Count on Me," stuff like that, "With Your Love," "Runaway." So they said "Okay, then, whatever." So I came and I brought "Miracles" to them. At first they all were like, "Uh, I don't know about that, man. That's pretty weird, you know." Even the record company said, "You've got to put Grace on all over it. So I knew Grace hated singing the words, "Baby" or "I love you," or anything of those kind of sentiments, in a song. So behind the song "Miracles" I had her going, "Baby, baby, baby. I love you, I love you, I love you." All these icky sentiments she couldn't stand singing. But she did and it was a crackup. So she was all over the record and got all of the attention for the record after. But anyway, that was fun. And we put strings on, which was a new idea. And people laughed at it, but suddenly it was on the air, and it was everywhere.

**Debra Schwartz:** I remember well.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, every station played it, and every time they'd play it they'd say, "That's Grace Slick and the Jefferson Starship." Never once would they mention my name. Boy, that pissed me off.



**Debra Schwartz:** Ouch.

**Marty Balin:** But nobody cared. Same old, same old. I was shafted but I was used to it by then, you know. As long as the royalty check came to me and not to Grace, I couldn't care less. I learned to live with it.

**Debra Schwartz:** And you have your own life. We haven't talked much about your personal life, but the rock 'n' roll world has got all kinds of temptations but yet some people manage to have relationships and families. Did that work out for you or —

**Marty Balin:** No. It didn't until about six years ago when I met the perfect woman. But up til then, I was always singing and concentrating really on myself, you know, being kind of selfish, actually. I don't think I devoted enough time to a woman to have a real solid girlfriend. I had some good relationships, for a while, but it wasn't anything that ever lasted. Until Sue.

**Debra Schwartz:** Now you've got Sue in your life.

**Marty Balin:** Now I've got Sue in my life, yeah.

**Debra Schwartz:** And I know Sue because we've been collaborating about this interview for months now. She's the one that really made it happen.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, she's a wonderful woman. I must say.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**Marty Balin:** Gave me the urge to keep on going, keep on living, and keep on creating. My God, I have so many new songs and ideas, things I want to do with her and we're a great team. It's wonderful to find that person that makes you really create with love and see things and travel. It's just so wonderful to share everything, you know, to have the same feelings and desires. It's wonderful. They say opposites attract, well so do the same old same old, I'll tell ya. Find someone who's got the same life, makes it much easier.

**Debra Schwartz:** Looking back now on your life and the various iterations, the different selves you've been over time, as we all change through time, would you have done anything different?

**Marty Balin:** Oh yeah, of course, yeah. I would have signed contracts with people, for one thing. I never was one to sign contracts and I got away with it for a while. It was that hippie ideal, but everybody took me for a ride because of it. So I would've conducted business much differently. But, you know, I got something out of it, and I have a nice home and a nice life. I don't have to worry about struggling and digging a road every month just to make it. And I can keep a band going. People I'm playing with now, they're not holding it over my head to make them a living. They play because they want to.

We're at that age where all of us don't give a damn. [laughs] It's a great place to be. We're playing music because we love it, and we play what we want.

**Debra Schwartz:** When you were a young, hot rock star, could you have imagined — thrust yourself into the future — that you'd still be rocking in an older age?

**Marty Balin:** I always imagined it, you know.

**Debra Schwartz:** You always imagined it.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, because when I grew up, I saw all the older performers and where would I have been if I couldn't have seen Muddy Waters or Lightning Hopkins or all the greats — John Lee Hooker, Ed James, Ray Charles. I got to grow up on these people.

**Debra Schwartz:** Now you're one of those people.

**Marty Balin:** Well —

**Debra Schwartz:** What would you say to the young people listening today, the musicians? It's a wholly different world now, but yet they may have the same passions and impulses you did as a young person.

**Marty Balin:** Follow the passion. You can do anything, communicate to a whole world now. It doesn't really matter where you are, do it from your bedroom, anything you want to express. You know it's amazing: I have a bedroom that I converted to a studio — I call it Marilyn Monroe Studios — and after one year, computers and new devices, I make a whole album right there, next door, and send it out to the whole world. It's amazing.

**Debra Schwartz:** Any words of advice? What if someone starts to make it? One of my son's friends is doing quite well in the music world. Any words of advice you'd say to someone that's starting to get a level of fame?

**Marty Balin:** Just the words I always held onto, which were: "What gains a man who gains the world but loses his soul?" I always held on to that, and it guided me through. I had a lot of spiritual guidance in my life. I was always guided by spiritual people and spiritual friends, and held true to my gurus and my avatar. And in the heyday, I felt just like it was water off a duck's back, you know. I always thought of words of advice from my guru: "He who seeks no importance, can never lose that." So I didn't really seek importance, all I thought was, "I just want to become a great singer." And I learn as much as I can, do as much as I can. I really don't care about the fame. To hell with it! Give those people the credit. I don't care. Just send the check to me and let me sing. [laughs] No, I have photographs of Grace Slick on stage and down in front of her, hanging on the lip of the stage, will be me, leading the crowd through the song, you know? But on the picture, it'll say, "Grace Slick," and they won't even mention me. But down there, leading the crowd who Grace Slick is waiting to join, is me. So I'm there, I just didn't get the mention.

**Debra Schwartz:** When did you leave Mill Valley, Marty?

**Marty Balin:** About '99. I had a baby girl in Florida with a woman. And the girl had spina bifida.

**Debra Schwartz:** Spina bifida.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, and needed care, you know. Such a great kid, I just wanted to be with her more. She has a wheelchair and crutches, and San Francisco and Mill Valley are not exactly the best places for a wheelchair person.

**Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**Marty Balin:** Out here it's flat and easy for her. So I began to come out here more and more.

**Debra Schwartz:** To Florida.

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, and I eventually got a condo and bought a house out here. I bought a big house where she'd be comfortable. I kind of live my life for her.

**Debra Schwartz:** That's daddy's love.

**Marty Balin:** Well it's — the payback is enormous.

**Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm. Do you ever think about coming back to Mill Valley? Does Mt. Tam call to you?

**Marty Balin:** Well I'd definitely buy the house on East Blithedale again. I'd fix it up the way I'd always envisioned it and make it the beautiful home it should have been. Yeah, I think about Mill Valley. I love Mill Valley. It's just, you know it's gotten so cold, I couldn't take it. I'd go to rehearsal every day; I'd have to go to a tanning booth and lay in a tanning booth before rehearsals, I got so cold! I'm one of those people who can't take the cold. So the weather down in Florida treats me fine. It's always warm, people don't wear much clothes here. It's very tropical and very pleasant and very flat for a wheelchair girl — my girl. But I'm beginning to travel with her so we could take her out there. I want her to see San Francisco, Mill Valley, and great places. But if I had to go back to Mill Valley and stay there in the summer — there's nothing like an Indian summer in Mill Valley.

**Debra Schwartz:** Smell those bay leaves!

**Marty Balin:** Yeah, and the film festival up the way, and great restaurants — I love D'Angelo's. My favorite.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes, and the Art Festival under the redwoods?

**Marty Balin:** The Art Festival under the redwoods. You don't get stuff like that out here. You get things, you know, but there's something about the earth out there, the people.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes. Well if you ever decide to come back, Mill Valley would be very happy to have you and your family.

**Marty Balin:** I'm looking forward to it.

**Debra Schwartz:** Well Marty, I think that about wraps it unless there's something that we haven't talked about that you wish we had? Is there anything we've missed here in this conversation?

**Marty Balin:** No, just look for my new albums.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes!

**Marty Balin:** I got new stuff coming out. You can go on my website and you'll probably pick up on my new stuff. Keep up with me, 'cause I'll be out at the Throckmorton again. Probably the end of this year, I bet.

**Debra Schwartz:** And the website is [martybalinmusic.com](http://martybalinmusic.com).

**Marty Balin:** [martybalinmusic.com](http://martybalinmusic.com).

**Debra Schwartz:** There you are. I just brought you up, and there you are as a young man in those hip clothes you were talking about, and there you are now, I believe. I can't quite tell. And all that beautiful art. So that's good to know. And thank you so much for sharing your story, Marty. Thank you so much.

**Marty Balin:** Well, thanks for having me on! Thanks for talking to me and thinking I could be a part of the history. It's an honor. It really is.

**Debra Schwartz:** You are absolutely part of our history. You're part of the history of millions and millions. I'm a California girl, born and bred. Your music is in my bones, as all my friends, and almost everybody I know. You're a part of us all.

**Marty Balin:** I'm in your DNA.

**Debra Schwartz:** Yes, you're in our DNA. So thank you so much, Marty. It's been great. Come back to Mill Valley.

**Marty Balin:** Alright. Send me a copy if you will.

**Debra Schwartz:** You will be getting a copy of this audio and the transcript.

**Marty Balin:** Alright, Debra, thank you. You have a great year and summertime. And I appreciate you calling me.

**Debra Schwartz:** Thank you so much, and keep on rockin', Marty. We'll talk soon.

**Marty Balin:** Alright, thank you.

**Debra Schwartz:** Thank you, bye-bye.

**Marty Balin:** Bye.