

Mill Valley Oral History Program

*A collaboration between the Mill Valley
Historical Society and the Mill Valley
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HUEY LEWIS

**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, singer Huey Lewis recounts his life in Marin and his career in music. Born in Manhattan in 1950, Huey's parents Hugh and Magda moved to Marin when he was five years old and the family settled in Strawberry Point. Huey evokes the distinctive character of Mill Valley in the 1950s and '60s. With a musical father and a bohemian mother, Huey first started playing music at the age of 11. Huey attended Strawberry Point School and then Edna Maguire before going to a preparatory school on the East Coast, returning to Mill Valley for the summers. After a year bumming around Europe and North Africa and playing his harmonica, and then a few years at Cornell University, Huey moved back to Mill Valley and started his musical career. Huey recounts his years playing with the local group Clover during the 1970s and then the band that made him famous, Huey Lewis and the News (going on 38 years at the time this oral history was recorded). Huey shares his memories of the bands, clubs, and recording studios that existed during the heyday of Marin's music scene as well as his reflections on how Mill Valley has changed over the decades.

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Oral History of Huey Lewis
October 15th, 2017

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

0:00:00 Debra Schwartz: Today is October 15th, 2017. My name is Debra Schwartz. I'm sitting here on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society and the Mill Valley Library. And I am pleased and honored to be sitting with one of Mill Valley's musical sons, Huey Lewis. Huey, thanks so much for sitting down with me today.

0:00:20 Huey Lewis: Very nice to be here.

0:00:22 Debra Schwartz: You are quite well known in Mill Valley, certainly, and beyond. You are a musician, an actor — how do you see yourself?

0:00:39 Huey Lewis: Well, I don't really. That's your job. [chuckles] I just do what I do. I was a songwriter a little bit too, but all those things. Mainly, I'm a singer.

0:00:54 Debra Schwartz: A singer? You're a singer. You're a good singer too.

0:00:58 Huey Lewis: Mainly, I'm a singer. A harmonica player, too, but mainly I'm a singer.

0:01:02 Debra Schwartz: Well, you certainly embody a time in Mill Valley's history, and as do many of your bandmates and the people that you've known over the years. And you're here in town today to perform in Mill Valley tonight, correct?

0:01:20 Huey Lewis: Exactly. We're gonna perform downtown Mill Valley at the Sweetwater, and I just realized this morning that the last time I performed downtown was 1977, approximately, at the Old Mill Tavern. So that's how far I've come in 40 years. I've come from the Old Mill all the way down to the Sweetwater.

0:01:43 Debra Schwartz: Yeah. And that's about less than a block.

0:01:46 Huey Lewis: No, that's a good couple — that's two blocks, I think. Well, yeah, a block and a half.

0:01:51 Debra Schwartz: You've gone a whole block and a half in all these years.

0:01:54 Huey Lewis: Pretty good.

0:01:54 Debra Schwartz: Congratulations. Right back to the start in some ways, because you grew up in Mill Valley, did you not?

0:02:01 Huey Lewis: Yeah. Well, I was actually born in Manhattan, but we moved to Marin in 1955. I was five years old. And we lived in Tam Valley for a minute. First of all, we lived in the hotel which is now the Peppermill — my family did — while we would shop for a house.

0:02:22 Debra Schwartz: In Corte Madera?

0:02:24 Huey Lewis: My dad rented a house in Tam Valley for about a year, and then we bought a house in Strawberry. And I grew up in Strawberry Point, which is in the Mill Valley School District. But it was not strictly in Mill Valley, it was across the freeway, across the 101, which then was a two-lane freeway.

0:02:44 Debra Schwartz: Yeah. So, in 1956?

0:02:47 Huey Lewis: Yep.

0:02:48 Debra Schwartz: There was some action going on in Mill Valley at the time. I interviewed Locke McCorkle who owned a house where Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder and some of the Beat guys lived in Homestead. They had their life there. Tell me a little bit about what Mill Valley was like for you as a kid growing up, your impressions, if you can remember.

0:03:12 Huey Lewis: It was very blue-collar place. It was magnificent outdoor stuff. We fished and sailed and hunted. It was so close to the city, and yet it was just a paradise to grow up in Marin County, in Mill Valley. It was on fire, but it was a very blue-collar place. There were hardware stores, there were no boutiques, there were no coffee places. Pat and Joe's was the only restaurant downtown Mill Valley, which would stay open all night. So later when we'd have gigs, that's where everybody would meet after gigs. It was at Pat and Joe's in Mill Valley.

0:04:01 Debra Schwartz: Where in Mill Valley?

0:04:02 Huey Lewis: It was where the bank is, right across from Lytton Square, right there, just the opposite parking lot from the Depot.

0:04:09 Debra Schwartz: Oh, contiguous right there?

0:04:11 Huey Lewis: Yeah, contiguous right there. That was Pat and Joe's. It was a restaurant. Everybody'll remember that. That was the place in downtown Mill Valley, Pat and Joe's.

0:04:24 Debra Schwartz: Mill Valley has changed quite a bit over the years, no one can deny.

0:04:27 Huey Lewis: Unrecognizable. It's absolutely unrecognizable.

0:04:29 Debra Schwartz: What was the population about when you were —

0:04:31 Huey Lewis: I have no idea, but there wasn't very many people. But I have no idea. No idea. It was a completely different place. Imagine, I live in Montana now, and where I live in Montana has more in common with the Mill Valley I knew than modern Mill Valley. There was a big influx, of course, in the '60s when there was Summer of Love. Remember "New Yorker go home," and all that kind of stuff? Remember that?

0:05:06 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:05:07 Huey Lewis: It was all that, and of course, who won? Well, boom. Now, today, there's very few real local people around. A lot of people moved to Marin and Mill Valley in the '60s even. But before '66 and '67 Mill Valley was a very blue-collar place, and a wonderful place to be brought to live.

0:05:31 Debra Schwartz: What brought your parents here? May I ask the name of both of your parents?

0:05:34 Huey Lewis: Yeah. My dad was Doctor Hugh Cregg. He was a medical doctor, a radiologist, but also a jazz player who loved music, and kind of a bohemian. My mother was an artist. Her name was Magda Cregg, and she was Polish, born in Poland, escaped during the war, and was a commercial artist in New York, real hot. And then they got married, moved out here and became one of the very first sort of beatnik bohemian-going-to-hippie types. And the appeal for them was they were both black sheep or bohemian types in their family. He had been out here during the war, my dad, and he loved Europe. He'd been to Europe and Asia and all that stuff. And he was stationed in Alameda, and he saw the diversity here. Marin County was very Bavarian. There were a lot of Europeans. The first Volkswagen joint ever was Elmer Fleegof's, a Volkswagen dealer, a repair shop, what became Sonnen BMW. Elmer Fleegof, I think was his name. It was the very first BMW dealership, maybe in America, was right there in Marin County. The Mountain Home on the mountain was a Bavarian-style eatery. And then Marin Joe's came when Romano came from Italy. Romano and his kids run the place today. So it was a lot of Europeans and a lot of kind of bohemian stuff. And my dad loved that and so did my mom.

0:07:16 Debra Schwartz: So they chose it for that.

0:07:18 Huey Lewis: They chose it.

0:07:19 Debra Schwartz: Because they wanted that ambiance in their town.

0:07:20 Huey Lewis: That's it. They wanted to live in a cool place like that.

0:07:21 Debra Schwartz: So when you were growing up, who were your parents' friends?

0:07:26 Huey Lewis: A lot of doctors, 'cause my dad was a doctor. But really an interesting group. And musicians. My dad hung out with musicians. He played drums with Ralph Sutton who lived in Larkspur and played in the “World’s Greatest Jazz Band” and was an unbelievable piano player. And his kids and me were friends. And then my dad would have jam sessions in Mill Valley at the Outdoor Art and Garden Club. He would rent it for nothing, whatever they charged on a Sunday, and my mom would make a big bunch of spaghetti and corn and they’d have beer and wine. And he’d invite a bunch of musicians, and they would set up and have a jam session. The kids would run around and blah, blah, blah. And they’d just play all afternoon and drink beer and eat spaghetti, and drink red wine and eat spaghetti and jam. That was Ralph Sutton. And Eddie Figueroa played bass, Byron Berry the trumpet player, my dad on drums, and a bunch of other musicians — real good cats, man, he worked with real great cats. [chuckles]

0:08:33 Debra Schwartz: That sounds so fun, describing that.

0:08:37 Huey Lewis: Yeah. It was an amazing place to grow up. It was a very bohemian community, all kinds of cool people around and good restaurants for the first time and all that stuff. Really, really good.

0:08:47 Debra Schwartz: Did you play in these little jams? When did you start playing music?

0:08:51 Huey Lewis: No. I first started playing music when my parents got divorced. I guess I was 11 — 11, yeah, something like that. And my mom rented out a room to a guy called Billy Roberts, who wrote “Hey Joe.”

0:09:21 Debra Schwartz: “Hey Joe.” Oh, I love that song.

0:09:21 Huey Lewis: And he was on the folk circuit, Billy Roberts was.

0:09:10 Debra Schwartz: Would you sing just a little bit of that song for the people listening?

0:09:12 Huey Lewis: “Hey Joe, where you going with that gun in your hand? Hey Joe.” You know that was the story of Joe —

0:09:18 Debra Schwartz: Jimi Hendrix sang that.

0:09:21 Huey Lewis: Well, Hendrix covered it, but it was first this folk song that Billy Roberts wrote. Somebody else pinched it, or he lost credit for it or something. But he always claimed he wrote the song, and I think he did. But that’s his story, and we’re sticking to it. This was folk. This was ’62. There wasn’t any rock ’n’ roll. There was folk. There was rock ’n’ roll, but rock ’n’ roll was like ’50s rock ’n’ roll at that time. The bohemian scene was folk inspired. And that’s who Billy Roberts was. And he played acoustic guitar and had one of those harnesses, played harmonica in the harness, and a

bunch of harmonicas. And so he moved into the house as a boarder and he gave me a bunch of old harmonicas.

0:10:09 Debra Schwartz: Your mom was renting out a room?

0:10:11 Huey Lewis: That's it.

0:10:12 Debra Schwartz: And in comes this funky musician.

0:10:13 Huey Lewis: That's it.

0:10:14 Debra Schwartz: And he gives you a harmonica.

0:10:14 Huey Lewis: That's it.

0:10:16 Debra Schwartz: Oh.

0:10:17 Huey Lewis: That's it. That's exactly right. And then I started singing and playing harmonica. My dad, see, was a musician all the time, and had a drum set up and stuff, but he hated singers. He just liked big band jazz. He didn't hate singers, but he was into the big band. He was in the band. The music he played around the house, there were never any singers. It was just big band stuff. And then every once in a while, I'd hear Jimmy Rushing, or a singer. I'd go, "Whoa, that's great!" So that's kinda what I took for myself — the singing part.

0:10:48 Debra Schwartz: So it just lit up a little something in you, hearing that.

0:10:51 Huey Lewis: Yeah. It was in my body always, 'cause my dad had played even when my parents were together. He had a set of drums in the living room, and he would sit me down on the drums and make me play time and just swing — swing time. He said, "Man, if you can play swing time, if you can play time, that's it. That's what you gotta do. You gotta have time." And so I had been trained a little bit by my dad.

0:11:18 Debra Schwartz: What do you mean by, "You gotta have time"? I don't know music.

0:11:20 Huey Lewis: Rhythm. Time. You gotta be able to keep click, keep time and be steady with it.

0:11:29 Debra Schwartz: It's like it has to be in you.

0:11:31 Huey Lewis: [snaps fingers] Yeah. You gotta feel that. You gotta feel that feel. If you do it good enough, if you're good enough, you can make it feel. You can make that thing swing, and it feels great. And that's rhythm, that's time. You gotta have time. Time, pitch — arguably, music stuff can be taught a little bit, but time has gotta be in your blood, or so they say. But that was my dad's thing. So I always had time.

00:12:03: Although I was from Mill Valley, I went away to prep school. But my parents divorced, my mother became this wild bohemian [chuckles] hippie, and my dad wanted to get me out of there. He was worried about me and all this stuff and said, “You have an opportunity to go away to this private school.” And so I did. I went away to prep school, and then I’d come back summers.

0:12:21 Debra Schwartz: When you went to primary school, which was your primary school?

0:12:24 Huey Lewis: I went to Strawberry Point Elementary School.

[phone rings]

0:12:24 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:12:24 Huey Lewis: Strawberry Point Elementary, and then I went to Edna Maguire, which was a junior high in those days, not one middle school. And then I went to summer school at Tam, that summer, took machine shop. Back in the day, they had machine shop. What a cool class that was.

0:12:41 Debra Schwartz: Oh yes, I’ve heard about the machine shop.

0:12:43 Huey Lewis: So cool.

0:12:44 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:12:45 Huey Lewis: Yeah, right.

0:12:46 Debra Schwartz: It’s like a trade school.

0:12:47 Huey Lewis: Yeah, that’s it. And high schools had that, which was a great idea. Tam had a great machine shop, and what a neat thing. And then, I went away to prep school for four years at Lawrenceville School in Princeton, New Jersey — Lawrenceville, New Jersey, right next to Princeton. And I’d come home summers. When I graduated from prep school in 1963 — is that right? I’m sorry, ’67. I graduated from prep school and I was gonna go to Cornell. I was gonna go to school, but my father said, “Congratulations, you graduated, but you’re a year young. Only one thing I’m gonna make you do and then, as far as I’m concerned, all your decisions, you can do whatever you want. You’re grown up but one more thing.” I said, “What’s that?” He says, “Don’t go to college.” I said, “What?” He said, “Yeah. I want you to take a year off and bum around Europe.” I said, “But Dad, I’m gonna go to college. I’m gonna play baseball.” But no. He made me do that. And I took the harmonica and I just played for a year, busked my way through Europe, down North Africa, and just played harmonica.

0:13:52 Debra Schwartz: So you were playing on the street or you just played for yourself?

0:13:55 Huey Lewis: On the street. I'd sit in with some bands once in a while. I met a guy in Spain, a harmonica player — American harmonica player in Spain — who was really good and taught me some stuff.

0:14:06 Debra Schwartz: His name?

0:14:07 Huey Lewis: I can't remember. I don't know. How good was he — I don't know. I was learning. He knew he was better than me. [chuckles] I learned some stuff from him, that kinda thing. I can't even remember now, it was so long ago. I was 16 and in Spain, so I had no clue. But I was playing every day, and I enjoyed it so much and I actually paid my way. I could actually busk in Marrakesh. I can get three dirhams playing harmonica in the square, and it only cost me one dirham to stay in the youth hostel, and for another half a dirham, I could eat all the food I wanted and I was fine. So I thought, "Hang on, I had a dirham extra, this is working out." So I went back to Cornell for five minutes over a two-year period, and played in bands, finally dropped out and came back to Marin, where it was now 1969. Everything happened, and I joined a band.

0:15:17 Debra Schwartz: You don't go to college, you are a student of the world.

0:15:24 Huey Lewis: Right.

0:15:25 Debra Schwartz: You're bebopping around, and paying your way with your harmonica.

0:15:29 Huey Lewis: That's it.

0:15:30 Debra Schwartz: And then you come back, and you enter into the Summer of Love and all that rock 'n' roll. And many of the musicians, by the early '70s, who were living in San Francisco, were now moving to Mill Valley.

0:15:46 Huey Lewis: Right, that's right. When I was in Europe, which was '67/'68, I represented the thing San Francisco was on fire. I was there it was Summer of Love. I was in Spain, France, Greece, and so people were reading about it and hearing about it in Europe. And I personified that, because I was, number one a musician, and number two came from San Francisco. I had the connection with that a little bit. My mom was the first Deadhead so I knew what was going on there. I was sort of the first harbinger of that stuff, growing my hair long, doing all those things.

0:16:32 Debra Schwartz: Yes. I wanted to ask you what you were wearing back then.

0:16:35 Huey Lewis: Yeah.

0:16:35 Debra Schwartz: I like to get the picture of —

0:16:36 Huey Lewis: I can't remember what —

0:16:37 Debra Schwartz: What was your —

0:16:38 Huey Lewis: Well, it was kind of very hippie-dippie stuff. I had a leather beaded thing —

0:16:46 Debra Schwartz: For around your neck, and bracelets —

0:16:48 Huey Lewis: Bracelets, yeah. And like a work shirt.

0:16:53 Debra Schwartz: Open?

0:16:54 Huey Lewis: I can't remember. [chuckles] It depends on how hot it was.

0:16:57 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:16:58 Huey Lewis: If it was open or not.

0:16:59 Debra Schwartz: Your mother really interests me.

0:17:01 Huey Lewis: Yeah, my mom is the most interesting member of our family. Her story's amazing, but very long and complicated.

0:17:12 Debra Schwartz: She later remarried too, right? To a beat poet?

0:17:17 Huey Lewis: No, they never married, they co-habitated — Lew Welch, the beat poet, and my mother. They met early on and she bought a house in Marin City. She always said she was gonna reintegrate, a white family gonna move back into — so we lived in Marin City for a while, which is wild. I was away at prep school and summers I'd come home to Marin City — Summer of Love, Marin City. And Lew, the beat poet, with a living room full of poets drinking red wine and smoking pot and taking turns reciting poetry around the coffee table. Amazing stuff. Allen Ginsberg and the people who sat around the coffee table were amazing. [Robert] Creeley, and Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Lew Welch. All the poets and musicians. John Handy. My mom dated Charlie Mingus for a while, and that kind of stuff. Before Lew, I woke up one morning and there was Dizzy Gillespie — at home, Dizzy. Mom brought him home. Dizzy. Pretty cool.

0:18:45 Debra Schwartz: Do you have siblings?

0:18:45 Huey Lewis: I have one brother. He was a great drummer. Lives in Oregon.

0:18:51 Debra Schwartz: Well, this is a very Californian experience you're describing.

0:18:55 Huey Lewis: Oh yeah. It was very Californian for sure.

0:18:58 Debra Schwartz: So you come back in the late '60s, you've got your harmonica thing down, and you've got the time too, right? You got your time?

0:19:05 Huey Lewis: Yeah. Well, now I go to Cornell 'til — and I play in bands at Cornell 'til '70, I guess. Is that right? Something like that, 'til '70. Then I come back to Marin, Mill Valley, and I meet the — what became parts of Clover, which was the Hereford Hartstringers. We were a bluegrass band, big bluegrass band. I started playing harp with them. We would go to Ghirardelli Square and we had a 10 piece bluegrass band. It was really pretty cool. We had a couple fiddles, harmonicas, a stand-up bass, two guitars, Dobros. And the core of that band was Clover, and we would be signed by Fantasy Records. So they asked me to join Clover in probably '72, maybe. And then I was with Clover all the way through 'til '77.

0:20:04 Debra Schwartz: And the band members of Clover at that time were —

0:20:06 Huey Lewis: Alex Call, John McFee, John Ciambotti and Mitch Howie. And then I joined. And Sean Hopper, who now plays with me still, joined at the same time.

0:20:19 Debra Schwartz: And that is when I met you, so many years ago.

0:20:22 Huey Lewis: Yeah, that's right. That's when we met.

0:20:24 Debra Schwartz: You were playing in Clover.

0:20:25 Huey Lewis: And we tried every which way to get a record deal and we couldn't make it happen. We finally got signed by Jake Riviera and Dave Robinson, two managers who decided to go partners on us. Jake was managing Elvis Costello, and Dave was managing Graham Parker and The Rumour. And Jake was managing Nick Lowe. And together they went partners on Clover, and we flew to Britain, made two records there, and toured extensively, but never had a hit. Came close, but no.

0:21:09 Debra Schwartz: I remember seeing you a couple years ago. We saw each other at the health food store. And I recall, when I was 18, helping you guys get to a gig. There was no bus or anything, it was —

0:21:22 Huey Lewis: This was probably in Fresno, right?

0:21:23 Debra Schwartz: In Fresno, yes.

0:22:24 Huey Lewis: Yeah. I know the gig, I think. I can't remember the rooms. Not the Wild Blue Yonder, was it?

0:21:31 Debra Schwartz: There was a Wild Blue Yonder. I don't remember where the gig was. I just remember trying to put instruments in my Karmann Ghia, at the time. And anyway, we were talking about this a couple years ago, and to my astonishment you remembered every name of the venues in Fresno, which I've long forgotten.

0:21:49 Huey Lewis: Yeah, I don't remember them anymore. I don't remember any of the places I play anymore. Those were formative times. My lights were on back then. We were trying to make a living, and trying to make it to make a living. And when you think back to those times — we came from the '60s. We were friends first. We came from Marin County. Sean is from Sausalito, Billy's from Mill Valley, Mario's from Mill Valley, Johnny's from Fairfield, but he was living in Mill Valley, and I'm from Strawberry Point. We were a very, very local band. We didn't answer ads in newspapers or music papers or any of that stuff. This was our thing. And we had to figure out a way to compete and make it in a radio world. 'Cause people forget, but in those days — it was the late '70s — there was no internet. FM radio, which was started in the '60s as with anything and everything, by the late '70s was programmed. Top 40 radio was invented with the advent of push button radio. Push button radio spawned Top 40 playlists because now programmers reckoned that as long as you didn't play something they didn't wanna hear, the public wouldn't change the dial. But now if they heard something they didn't like they could immediately switch to another station.

0:23:30: So the idea would be narrow your playlist and play the same hits over and over and over again. And that became Top 40 radio. By the late '70s and '80s it was called CHR, contemporary hit radio. And all the AM stations — but by now the FM stations, which were the business — were all programmed. There was no more KSAN playing hippie-dippie stuff. It was all programmed. So if you wanted to exist as a band, you had to have a hit record and on a CHR format, period. MTV had just started and their playlist mirrored radio and records' playlist, exactly. The number one record on the radio got the number one showing on MTV videos. That's why there's so many of those cringe-worthy videos that you would see over and over and over again. You're thinking, "Why are they doing that?" Because the song was a smash. And so it was a radio world and you had to figure out how to make a hit record.

0:24:33 Debra Schwartz: You had to penetrate that barrier.

0:24:35 Huey Lewis: That's it.

0:24:36 Debra Schwartz: And so everybody was looking for that song.

0:24:39 Huey Lewis: Yeah, you had to do that. And so we figured out how to do that ourselves. We wanted to make those decisions ourselves. And we didn't wanna have to go to L.A. to do that, we wanted to do that in Marin County. We wanted to do it, make all those decisions ourselves. Because we knew if we were gonna flirt with that kind of commercialism, which we needed to do, if we're gonna have to sing this song for 20 years, we wanted to like it at the same time. And we did that. We produced our *Sports* album and aimed every track right at radio. Six of 'em. And we knew we needed a hit to

exist. We didn't know we were gonna have six of 'em, but we knew we needed one. And so that's what we did. And now you listen to *Sports* album which was released in '83, and it sounds like a record of its time. A collection of singles. And that's the kind of world it was.

0:25:35 Debra Schwartz: And did you record that at The Plant?

0:25:37 Huey Lewis: Yeah. Well, we cut tracks at Fantasy and The Record Plant and The Automat, as I recall, in San Francisco, and Studio D probably too in Sausalito. But Record Plant, Studio D, Fantasy, and The Automat.

0:25:59 Debra Schwartz: Living here in Mill Valley now, people that have moved here recently would not know of the history of recording studios that was in Marin County.

0:26:09 Huey Lewis: Right right right. There used to be a lot. And there used to be a lot of live gigs, and that's it. That's the thing we're proudest of, because in those days if you wanted to compete in that radio format, you had to get a known producer with a track record, a guy with a track record. And the only reason we got away with it is 'cause we were signed to a British label, private British label, Chrysalis Records. And Chris Wright, frankly, and Terry Ellis, were in no position health-wise to worry about what we were doing 6,000 miles away. And our manager fought for us, so we got to produce our own stuff and we stayed out of L.A. We did it all right here in Marin. We wrote most of the songs ourselves, produced them ourselves, shot the album cover ourselves, did the mark, and handed it to him. And so we've always been a northern California band, and we wanted that to emerge.

0:27:09 Debra Schwartz: I think that's why so many people in Mill Valley are so connected to your band.

0:27:14 Huey Lewis: We shot the cover at 2am Club.

0:27:17 Debra Schwartz: 2am Club.

0:27:17 Huey Lewis: We had the thing we did at the Ocean Beach, our first video which was out. We just would go goof around on the sewage pier at Ocean Beach. And we walked down every side of Potrero Hill for our videos. Everything we wanted to read Northern California, Bay Area.

0:27:39 Debra Schwartz: So were you living in Mill Valley again then?

0:27:41 Huey Lewis: Yeah.

0:27:41 Debra Schwartz: Where were you living?

0:27:42 Huey Lewis: Well, actually I was living in Santa Venetia at the time. And then I moved to Larkspur, and then I moved to Ross, and then Kentfield.

0:27:52 Debra Schwartz: And when you were doing the recording and all that, were you in the company of other musicians that were also making their own music? There was Prune Music where people would go hang out. Did you used to go there?

0:28:06 Huey Lewis: Sure, yeah. And there were gigs, right. On any given Friday/Saturday night back in the day — and I'm talking about '75 now, 1975 — there'd be five places that had live music in them. There was River City, and before River City there was the Sleeping Lady Cafe, maybe, or something in Fairfax. There was always a gig in Fairfax. Then the little Mexican restaurant halfway to San Anselmo was a gig at one point, that was — oh gosh, I can't remember the name of that place, but that was a gig. And the you go down into San Rafael, there was always New Georges and —

0:28:49 Debra Schwartz: The Lion's —

0:28:50 Huey Lewis: The Lion's Share was a big gig. New Georges, whatever that used to be called. Then there was the gig, Scoreboard, on the other side of the freeway right there on Fourth Avenue, and that was a happening gig. Then there was Uncle Charlie's. Was there a gig in Sausalito somewhere? Yeah, there was, and I can't remember what — oh, I'll get it in a moment. But point being there were live shows everywhere in Marin County. Unbelievable. The Old Mill Tavern was a gig. Sweetwater was a gig before it was where it was at. There was a gig there. We played all those places.

0:29:32 Debra Schwartz: And who'd you play with?

0:29:34 Huey Lewis: Well before, let's see. Well, Clover played — it's interesting that we played The Lion's Share. The Lion's Share we played with Clover, and then The Scoreboard we played with Clover. Brown's Hall we played with Clover in Mill Valley.

0:29:57 Debra Schwartz: Oh, Brown's Store. No, Brown's Hall.

0:30:01 Huey Lewis: Brown's Hall with Clover. We played all those, mostly with Clover.

0:30:07 Debra Schwartz: Do you think —

0:30:07 Huey Lewis: Clover's last gig was in Mill Valley at the theater right across from the old Sweetwater.

0:30:16 Debra Schwartz: Throckmorton Theatre.

0:30:17 Huey Lewis: Yeah, Throckmorton Theatre. That was Clover's last gig ever.

0:30:20 Debra Schwartz: And that was what year?

0:30:21 Huey Lewis: 1977, maybe? Let's see, something like that. And Ciambotti famously mooned the audience, maybe on our last song. [laughs] He's not with us anymore, so I can say that. But he literally dropped his trousers and mooned the audience.

0:30:40 Debra Schwartz: And he did that because?

0:30:41 Huey Lewis: That was the last gig Clover ever did. I don't know. It was like he was mooning the world. It was the last Clover thing. Clover was just ill-fated from day one. We never could get it right, somehow.

0:30:55 Debra Schwartz: Well, I hear that some of the songs are being used for a cable show now.

0:31:00 Huey Lewis: No, what has happened is John McFee has re-recorded. And maybe you might wanna interview Alex Call, because he wrote all the Clover songs. John McFee has re-recorded his favorite tunes, but probably unanimously, they're Clover's best songs, only a couple of which were during mine and Sean's time. And he's re-recorded and played all the instruments himself. And then he got Mitch to play drums and Alex to sing, and it's been a long, long project. He's been at it for years, but it sounds amazing. It's amazing, 'cause McFee is one of the amazing musicians in the world. He's really one of the tip-top great musicians on the planet, and he's a wonderful guy, John McFee. Wonderful guy.

0:31:57 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, that sounds good.

0:31:58 Huey Lewis: And has a lot of Marin County history.

0:32:00 Debra Schwartz: I'll get his info from you later. So now you're playing gigs, you've got your hits, and you breach the barrier. You're now on the radio.

0:32:15 Huey Lewis: Right. And we hit it like 12. All of a sudden, oh my gosh, now it's everywhere, and it's boom. And the videos, we had to ask them to not release "Walking on a Thin Line" as a single or "Back In Time." "No, you can't have it as a single." Why? 'Cause we'd had so many singles in a row that we were afraid that they're gonna burn us out, and in fact, that's what happened a little bit. But creatively, we made a deal with ourselves that now we were selling out big places and we could pay the bills, we made a deal to only do things for creative reasons. And so, the next album was *Small World* where we kinda stretched out a little. It was a little jazzier, experimented with some percussion stuff, and we got Stan Getz on a song, on the title track, which was just an unbelievable experience, man. The whole album was worth it for having him blow on this tune that is, to this day, the best probably three minutes of music that we've ever produced, mainly 'cause Stan is blowing over it. And that record was awarded *Rolling Stone's* Worst Album of the Year that year.

0:33:43 Debra Schwartz: Congratulations.

[laughter]

0:33:45 Huey Lewis: And it was our best stuff. I went, “Wow! That’s weird.”

0:33:50 Debra Schwartz: Did that hurt?

0:33:51 Huey Lewis: What?

0:35:51 Debra Schwartz: Did that hurt?

0:35:51 Huey Lewis: Yeah, absolutely it hurt, sure.

0:32:52 Debra Schwartz: *Rolling Stone* is very influential.

0:33:55 Huey Lewis: Absolutely. That was the end of the love affair. We were on the cover of *Rolling Stone* twice, but that was the end of the deal, and I suddenly wasn’t cool. “Hip to Be Square” was the joke nobody got, and we were overexposed, and now we just weren’t that cool. But we stuck to our guns for the most part and did creative stuff. We didn’t do *Dancing with the Stars*. [chuckles]

0:34:22 Debra Schwartz: You’re pretty fit.

0:34:23 Huey Lewis: What?

0:34:24 Debra Schwartz: You’re pretty fit from what I can tell. Don’t discount that yet.

0:34:26 Huey Lewis: Oh, no no no. I literally do things for creative reasons.

0:34:31 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, no, I understand that. I appreciate that.

0:34:32 Huey Lewis: And that serves us well. That serves us well.

0:34:35 Debra Schwartz: When you’re talking about this — with the minimal amount of experience and exposure I’ve had to the music world— that is truly the most difficult thing, to maintain your creative control of what you want to do versus how you’re being packaged and promoted.

0:34:54 Huey Lewis: Yeah, yeah, yeah. There’s 100 people who have good ideas for us to do a Christmas album. Well now, why would a guy do a Christmas album? Is it because you have a version of “Jingle Bell Rock” in mind that nobody’s done yet? Or do you have something to lend to “Little Drummer Boy” that hasn’t happened yet? Why do you do a Christmas album? Money. So why do that? How uncreative can that be? Or other things — cover this or that, or your favorites, or whatever.

0:35:30 Debra Schwartz: I guess it's a "Don't forget me" impulse, as you keep yourself out there.

0:35:35 Huey Lewis: I guess there is that. But I have a life. We have lives, and lives are important things to have.

0:35:42 Debra Schwartz: They are.

0:35:42 Huey Lewis: If you have a life, then you're not so worried about your career all the time.

0:35:46 Debra Schwartz: Let us do talk a little bit about your life because you're a father as well as a musician.

0:35:52 Huey Lewis: I'm a father.

0:35:53 Debra Schwartz: And your children — well, I recall you raising your children in the Marin County.

0:36:01 Huey Lewis: In Marin, yeah.

0:36:03 Debra Schwartz: So what are your children's names? How old are they?

0:36:06 Huey Lewis: Kelly and Austin, and Kelly's married to a lovely guy named Ferdinand, and lives in London. He's a finance guy and they're extremely happy, working on a family. And then my son Austin is working for Jimmy Kimmel. He's a social media guy at the Jimmy Kimmel Show. And he lives in LA.

0:36:26 Debra Schwartz: So that's how you got on the Jimmy Kimmel show, huh? [chuckles]

0:36:30 Huey Lewis: No, Kimmel, oddly enough, has been a fan. He's been a fan since he was a kid. We were his favorite band growing up. And he is an unbelievably sincere, wonderful guy, who you'd never meet in show business in your life. Nobody's like this. Nobody. Honest. There are people who are sweet in our business. Really, artists are generally very sweet. But genuine, Kimmel, and generous, and what's the word? Sensitive. He's unbelievable. An unbelievable guy. And so we've become friends.

0:37:15 Debra Schwartz: That sounds very authentic.

0:37:16 Huey Lewis: He fishes, he fly fishes — authentic is a good word —so he comes up and visits me. I live in Montana now, and we fish together, so we're fishing pals.

0:37:26 Debra Schwartz: Looking back on how things sort of evolved for you, first of all I want to ask you, the guy that taught you the harmonica, the musician, did he ever play with you?

0:37:37 Huey Lewis: Billy Roberts? Oh, the kid in Spain?

0:37:40 Debra Schwartz: No, the guy that lived in your mom's house.

0:37:41 Huey Lewis: Yeah, no, no. I saw him afterwards and he acknowledged all that, got all that done, but I don't know where he is. I think he must be still alive 'cause he wasn't much older — well, he was older than me, but I think he must be alive and out there somewhere, yeah. He was from somewhere in the South and he was just wandering. San Francisco was a magnet for the folk musicians and stuff, and that's how the Jefferson Airplane started, as a folk band. Honestly, in the '60s a lot of people moved to Marin, and then Mill Valley became home for a lot of illustrious people. But before 1967, it was just — Bob Greenwood, you did that story, right?

0:38:27 Debra Schwartz: Yes, Bob Greenwood.

0:38:28 Huey Lewis: That's really important 'cause George Duke and Bill Champlin came from Mill Valley. And Mill Valley had a wonderful musical component because of Bob Greenwood, the musical teacher at Tam, and because they had a black population, an African-American population, who was schooled in church and gospel music. Those two things came together in Tamalpais High School, and that's where George Duke and Bill Champlin and Bill Gibson, our drummer, and Mario Cipollina, and all the Cipollinas, that's where all that came from. And Rob Moitoza, who I know you talked to.

0:39:14 Debra Schwartz: Well, we live in his house.

0:39:15 Huey Lewis: And the Opposite Six, and the Chord Lords. They were '50s bands in Marin and Mill Valley. They were really good. There was Butch Engle & the Styx. When I was a kid, when I was 12 and just starting the harmonics, that's who I was looking up to.

0:39:37 Debra Schwartz: Did you ever play with Bill Champlin or Rob Moitoza?

0:39:39 Huey Lewis: Yeah, many times. With Champlin a lot we did, since that time. We went on the road with Chicago when Champlin was in Chicago, and Bill sat in with us every night. He was awesome. We loved Bill Champlin. Bill Champlin was our hero. He is. We're like sorta the younger brothers of those guys, in a way, but Champlin was our hero, man, always. He's so good.

0:40:04 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, he's a wonderful man, he's a friend, and he has been interviewed, and he came and spoke at the Mill Valley Library.

0:40:08 Huey Lewis: And he's flat talented. He did what?

0:40:10 Debra Schwartz: He spoke at the library.

0:40:12 Huey Lewis: I know he did, at Throckmorton.

0:40:13 Debra Schwartz: No, at the Mill Valley Library.

0:40:15 Huey Lewis: Oh, I thought he did a Throckmorton Theatre thing too?

0:40:18 Debra Schwartz: Well he did perform.

0:40:18 Huey Lewis: He did also, right?

0:40:19 Debra Schwartz: He performed.

0:40:20 Huey Lewis: In Throckmorton?

0:40:21 Debra Schwartz: Yes. He performed at a gala event —

0:40:24 Huey Lewis: But he did an interview, didn't he? With Joan Ryan or somebody.

0:40:27 Debra Schwartz: Oh perhaps, I don't know. I interviewed him as well.

0:40:30 Huey Lewis: You interviewed him a little, but not in a public forum?

0:40:33 Debra Schwartz: No, not in a Q&A in a public forum. But he did speak at the Mill Valley Historical Society's First Wednesday speaker series. Bill and his wife Tamara came to Mill Valley, came to visit our house where he used to practice his band with the Moitoza family. And then he gave a presentation, and Mr. Bob Greenwood was in the front row.

0:40:54 Huey Lewis: He came, right?

0:40:54 Debra Schwartz: Yes, right up front.

0:40:55 Huey Lewis: That's the event I heard about. I wanted to be there, but we talked —

0:40:58 Debra Schwartz: That's right, you couldn't come.

0:40:59 Huey Lewis: We talked, but I couldn't make it.

0:41:00 Debra Schwartz: Bill has always been devoted to the Greenwood family, and attributes his success as a professional musician to Bob Greenwood.

0:41:07 Huey Lewis: Isn't that wonderful?

0:41:08 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm. They stayed close for many, many years.

0:41:13 Huey Lewis: He had an influence on me, but now as a kid. There was a Tam rally for the football game, and there's Champlin. He's the only white guy in a six piece R&B band, playing music for the thing, doing Ray Charles stuff, and I went, "Yeah, yeah baby." It was just like a light went on and wow. How about that?

0:41:39 Debra Schwartz: You guys remind me of each other.

0:41:40 Huey Lewis: Really?

0:41:40 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:41:42 Huey Lewis: We have the same accent. There's a Marin County accent. There really is and you can hear it. You can absolutely hear it. And people who come from other places and live here don't have it. It's interesting, when you go in London, accents go from neighborhood to neighborhood.

0:42:00 Debra Schwartz: They're dialects.

0:42:01 Huey Lewis: Because they're so old and so steeped. And for those of us who are really from Mill Valley from the '50s, who really grew up here, there's an accent. I can hear it. I can't define it. It's part of a general California accent and more specific, Northern California accent. But even more specifically, there literally is a Marin County accent.

0:42:28 Debra Schwartz: I think you're called Mill Billies.

0:42:30 Huey Lewis: Mill Billies? That's pretty good.

0:42:31 Debra Schwartz: Mill Billies, there's a t-shirt.

0:42:35 Huey Lewis: Is there?

0:42:35 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:42:36 Huey Lewis: That's interesting.

0:42:37 Debra Schwartz: Yeah. We've got a band, Dory Coller and the Mill Billies. They're very good.

0:42:41 Huey Lewis: That's interesting. That's the kind of place it was back in the day.

0:42:46 Debra Schwartz: So when you came back and now you still have maintained creative control of your music and you're living in the County, do you have a sense of being at home? How is it for you living in Mill Valley? You're grown, I should say, you're an adult, you're not getting up in the morning and seeing any number of bohemians on the couch. You're in your own home with your own bohemian friends or whomever they may be.

0:43:15 Huey Lewis: The honest truth is, I began to live more in a bubble, because I had kids and I worry about the kids. So we moved to a place that had great schools, and the kids and our lives centered around trying to raise these kids, and me on the road, and blah, blah, blah. And so it was just really family stuff. I'd be on the road so much that when I'd go home, all I wanted to do was hang out with the fam. Go out to dinner maybe. Period. Or not.

0:43:45 Debra Schwartz: Your ex-wife's name?

0:43:47 Huey Lewis: Sidney. We were really in our own bubble at that point. You know what I mean? So I didn't have a sense of being connected. And Marin County was now changing rapidly around us. Becoming more crowded, more — what's the word? More anxious, in a way, and more urban. Coupled with that, I'm now at Peet's and I'm kinda wandering around at 7:30 in the morning at Peet's to get my coffee, which I do now. Now it's the first thing I do is I go to Peet's Coffee or whatever. And now I'm kinda daydreaming because it's early, I'm not up yet, and I'm kinda driving slow. Well, [makes horn noise] I hear a big honk on the horn and this lady, shaking her fist at me, races around me. And her bumper sticker says, "Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty." I thought, "This is Marin now." I gotta tell you, when you go and you come back it's tough, man. It's hard, hard to come back to Marin and look at what it's become. It's very hard for me. I still like it, and there's great restaurants and I have people that I know, but wow. The quality of life just isn't here like it was when we were kids, man. When we grew up here, it was paradise.

0:45:28 Debra Schwartz: Now, there's a band that you've played with that I want to talk about because I am a huge fan. And I know that you did a fundraiser, I believe, with it. You've played with the Rock of Ages, the Redwoods.

0:45:42 Huey Lewis: Oh, yeah, you bet I have. Yeah, they were great.

0:45:47 Debra Schwartz: Let's talk about that.

0:45:54 Huey Lewis: Yeah, and I also —

0:45:55 Debra Schwartz: Because not everybody knows about the Rock of Ages.

0:45:56 Huey Lewis: Well, the Rock of Ages is the vocal band from The Redwoods, the retirement facility, and they're a kick. They're really great. And we did a benefit for The Redwoods, and they opened up for us, and it was really pretty cool.

0:46:19 Debra Schwartz: I think their oldest member is over 100 and the youngest is what? Eighty?

0:46:26 Huey Lewis: Probably. We also shot a video there that's yet to be released for our new album, which is gonna be released next year. We actually have an album that's gonna come out next year, believe it or not, and it's a video that we filmed at the retirement center, almost coinciding with my mother's 90th birthday.

0:47:01 Debra Schwartz: Because she's living at the Redwoods.

0:47:03 Huey Lewis: She was living at the Redwoods. The song is called "While We're Young," and the chorus at one point says, "Let's go out and have some fun while we're young. Let's not wait 'til we're 91." And so it's a mythical 90th birthday party at the Redwoods for my mother, which in fact, it kinda was. So we staged this thing and we filmed it and the Rock of Ages people were our actors in our play. And I asked them, "Imagine you'd showed up for this event and there was a band there, and now you're really disappointed. You hate the fact that there's a band there." But during the song, they sorta warm up to us and eventually have a great time, get up and dance, and so on. So we shot this whole video for the day, and I told 'em we'd shoot it and re-shoot it and shoot it and re-shoot it. We were there for 10 hours, 12 hours. They were unbelievably productive and attentive and sweet and patient. They were fantastic. The best actors. They were really, really cute. It was really sweet.

0:48:11 Debra Schwartz: Every time I hear them play, I cry a little because the lyrics of songs change when sung by people that are at that late stage of life. Somehow they seem more profound and poignant.

0:48:26 Huey Lewis: Yeah, yeah, I'm with you. I'm starting to feel it now, man. We just lost Tom Petty. He's younger than I am. Tom Petty's younger than I am.

0:48:36 Debra Schwartz: Yes. That hurt.

0:48:37 Huey Lewis: Oh man, we're losing people. Glenn Frey was a pal. And we lost him the year before last, or last year, rather. Staying alive is part of it now, and mortality's staring you in the face.

0:48:56 Debra Schwartz: Does it affect you and your music?

0:48:58 Huey Lewis: Yeah.

0:48:59 Debra Schwartz: In what ways?

0:49:01 Huey Lewis: Well, drink the good wine now. If there's stuff that you wanna do, do it. We have this record that we've been working on forever, but we're finally gonna get that out and that'll be our, sort of, probably our final swing at it. And then

we'll just smell the roses a little bit, I think. Slow it down a little bit, take it a little bit easy.

0:49:31 Debra Schwartz: Well you've already moved to Montana.

0:49:33 Huey Lewis: Right.

0:49:34 Debra Schwartz: How long have you been there?

0:49:36 Huey Lewis: Well, I've owned the place for 30 years now, but we just moved there when my wife and I split up, probably 13 years ago, something like that, 12 years ago. And so I moved there permanently and I love it. Although I come back here, we still work here and we have our place here that we make our records here and do our business here and rehearse here.

0:50:00 Debra Schwartz: As I'm sitting in the studio right now, we're talking in the sound studio.

0:50:05 Huey Lewis: That's it.

0:50:06 Debra Schwartz: And in the other room you can see —

0:50:07 Huey Lewis: It's not very glamorous, but it works.

0:50:08 Debra Schwartz: Well, I think it looks pretty much like you imagine every sound studio would look that has a really funky couch and nothing's in order.

0:50:17 Huey Lewis: Yeah, that's right. [chuckles] That's the fun part, we do all this ourselves. It's way more fun that way. It's the way we work. We've just done it ourselves for so long that I don't think we could conventionally make a record with a regular producer or any of that stuff. We're just so opinionated that it would be impossible for somebody to come in here and say, "This is what we're gonna do." We'd go, "Okay, yeah right. What about — I got an idea." [chuckles]

0:50:50 Debra Schwartz: Well, at least you can fight successfully amongst yourselves with your creative ideas.

0:50:53 Huey Lewis: And we know each other. "Now Johnny, may I have a word?" [chuckles] If there's something to be said.

0:51:01 Debra Schwartz: Sounds like a marriage.

0:51:02 Huey Lewis: Yeah, I know. People always say that with a band 'cause it's long. This'll be our — what? — 39th year together. 38, 39 years?

0:51:13 Debra Schwartz: Aren't we coming up to the anniversary of your first Huey Lewis and the News?

0:51:17 Huey Lewis: Our first record came out in '80.

0:51:19 Debra Schwartz: '80.

0:51:20 Huey Lewis: So it's really 37. Coming up 38 years since our record came out. It took us a year and a half to get the record. To get the band together and get the record.

0:51:32 Debra Schwartz: How many years? You said 37, 38?

0:51:36 Huey Lewis: No. January will be the 38th year since our first record came out.

0:51:44 Debra Schwartz: Ooh, you're so old now.

0:51:46 Huey Lewis: I know.

0:51:47 Debra Schwartz: But you look the same.

0:51:48 Huey Lewis: Yeah, let's go with that. [laughs] But the point is —

0:51:54 Debra Schwartz: You worked it out.

0:51:56 Huey Lewis: But people say, "Are you still friends?" It's ridiculous. Friends doesn't even begin to describe it. Or, "Are you like family?" No, no, no. You don't spend this much time with your brother. [chuckles] You just don't. Swear to God. Generally, bands like ours, when you spend this much time together and you're still doing as many dates as we're doing, you work together, you're just fine. And when the dates stop, see ya! You don't speak to one another, you don't see one another, nothing. Why would you? We have more time together than any family or anybody. Husbands and wives don't spend this much time together. Why would they? [laughs]

0:52:39 Debra Schwartz: You're funny.

0:52:40 Huey Lewis: Except that we have to. We have to go from gig A to gig B, and travel on a bus together.

0:52:48 Debra Schwartz: Looking back on your long, expansive career, any regrets?

0:52:54 Huey Lewis: Oh, any regrets? Yeah, probably. I wish I would've written "Hip to be Square" in the third person like I originally wrote it. "He used to be a renegade, he used to fool around, couldn't take the — " I was trying to articulate a phenomenon that was of the '80s, which is the same thing that Brooks' — David Brooks — book, *Bobos in Paradise* articulates, was people dropping back in. It's hip to be square. And I meant it as a gag.

0:53:21: I didn't see what's going on. It's hip to be square. But people thought it was some anthem for square people. Because I thought it would be funnier if I told it on myself, 'cause that's what's going on, people were sobering up a little bit. But that was a mistake in retrospect. And people thought I was trying to write some anthem for square people. But that passed after 15 or 20 years. [chuckles]

0:53:52 Debra Schwartz: Any others? Any wish you could redo?

0:53:57 Huey Lewis: We flirted with Coca-Cola for an ad. So, this was before anybody, any musicians, had done any ads or invited any kinda corporate involvement into their careers. We just didn't do that. Nobody did that. The Doors never did an ad. Nobody did any ads. And so, suddenly, Pepsi signed Michael Jackson, and he did that Pepsi ad. Well, Coca-Cola hit the decks, and we popped out. So they contacted my manager, Bob Brown and said, "How would you like to do a Coca-Cola ad?" And Bob told me, "Look, I don't know that if we ever wanna do any corporate stuff, but if we ever did, this is the call we oughta take." This is Coca-Cola. They owned Columbia Records. Columbia Pictures. So we took a meeting in Atlanta and flirted with an amazing deal, huge money, and said no for some reason. And I think we should've said yes, if you wanna know the truth.

0:55:05: We said no 'cause we had integrity, and we didn't care. We just had hit it, and our star had risen, and we were selling out venues, and everything was great. We turned down millions of dollars that we probably should've taken. And not only that, it would've also branded us as a larger act down the line and all that stuff. But I was so nervous about the corporate thing. And I always have been. I've never really done anything for commercial reasons, other than the way we produced our *Sports* album, as I said.

0:55:38 Debra Schwartz: That's something that might be hard for young people to hear today, that you would hesitate. But back then, there was definitely a stigma to selling out to the man.

0:55:47 Huey Lewis: Exactly. And the people I admired didn't do that. Still don't, really. Bill Champlin never did any ads. I just wanna be Bill Champlin. [chuckles]

0:55:57 Debra Schwartz: I think when he was in his early band, they did a little ditty for a commercial.

0:56:01 Huey Lewis: Which one? Sons?

0:56:03 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:56:03 Huey Lewis: Did they?

0:56:04 Debra Schwartz: He sang it at the First Wednesday. The people that were singing in the ad were in the audience and everybody sang it.

0:56:13 Huey Lewis: Funny.

0:56:13 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, it was very funny. Any other regrets or lessons learned?

0:56:17 Huey Lewis: I think that's it. Let me think. Well, no, I really don't have any other regrets. There were a few nights I can't remember that I wish I could remember. I could've behaved myself a little better, can we say that? I could've behaved myself a little better. [chuckles]

0:56:39 Debra Schwartz: That's nice and polite.

0:56:42 Huey Lewis: And had I, I probably would've enjoyed everything a little better. But I did enjoy it. I remember specifically realizing, because I'd been in Clover, and Clover had had a tickle with success and it hadn't happened, but I'd certainly seen a lot. And I'd seen Thin Lizzy. Phil Lynott took a liking to me and let me play on his soul stuff. I jammed with Thin Lizzy and I watched their scene. So I'd seen people be successful and deal with success and all that sorta stuff. So when it started to happen to us and I realized we were on a roll, I remember specifically having a band meeting and us all saying, "Hey look, fellas, this is it right now, so enjoy this! 'Cause you only go from nowhere to everywhere once. And you can't ever be nowhere again, so enjoy it. It's gonna be a kick."

0:57:43 Debra Schwartz: With all of its challenges.

0:57:45 Huey Lewis: Yeah, with all the challenges. Exactly.

0:57:47 Debra Schwartz: Has that been a problem for you that measure of fame, interfering with quality of life for you at any time?

0:57:53 Huey Lewis: It was for a while in the '80s. Airports were a problem. I couldn't go to a shopping mall without ramifications. In those days it was autographs, now it's photos. That'd be a horrible time to be as popular as — pick a celebrity. Geez, terrible. But my profile has diminished a little bit, which is nice. So I'm okay. I'm fine with it. It's a selfie thing. And now the country guys, they've started this thing where after the show, you go out back to your bus and sign autographs for an hour and a half. [chuckles] We never used to do that, and now the country guys do that, and now everybody's gotta do that now. But it's okay.

0:58:42 Debra Schwartz: Is there anything we haven't talked about in this conversation that you'd like to say?

0:58:49 Huey Lewis: Well, yeah, I think sure. I would make the point — I'm gonna say Bay Area, San Francisco, but this also applies to Marin in a way 'cause Marin is a sub-set of Northern California, which is a sub-set of California, which is a sub-set of the

country, sub-set of the world. In terms of that, what's unique about Marin, in a way, is the diversity of influences that we've had. In San Francisco as well, in sort of a grander sense. When you think back in the first '60s and so on, there was always talk of this San Francisco sound. There's Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger, and I guess it was kind of a folky sound. And the Sopwith Camels. It was probably the Moby Grape, I guess. But it was kind of a folky guitary kind of a thing. And then here comes the Sons of Champlin, here comes Champlin, which is really kind of R&B music with all this stuff, with these new words. Champlin really pushed the ball culturally. Out of our diversity, lyrics like Aquarius, your birth sign. R&B music with birth signs in it. What?

1:00:34: And this was created right here. This came right out of this. This was a major musical thing. Tower of Power, Sly Stone, created funk right here in the Bay Area by going to the Fillmore and seeing these diverse people together. "Everybody is a Star." Different strokes for different folks. Bill Champlin, same thing. "It just takes a match to start a little fire. It's not as bright as the light of your mind. If everybody would recognize their own desire, might start moving up the spine. Turn it on. Turn on the lights in LA." These kind of lyrics with R&B music. Sly created funk, that was that. I mean Hendrix arguably created hard rock with a Bay Area influence of psychedelia.

1:01:32: It was really the last musical revolution, if you will — but for rap — that's happened in the last 40 to 50 years, really. You think about before the Grateful Dead, it was The Beatles and that, "Love, love me do, you know I love you." And then these guys said, "Hey, we don't know where we're going. We're just gonna jam." And the Dead created the country western jam really. [sings melody] It's really a blue-grassy country western jam. Champlin's R&B — different, way different, those slides of pure funk. All this stuff. But yet it had this common sensibility which was, "Hey man, we're just gonna let it go." And that happened right here. Pretty cool.

1:02:26 Debra Schwartz: I'm gonna just ask, not tell, but you must feel sort of privileged to have been part of —

1:03:36 Huey Lewis: Yeah. Well, it was great. We got to see shows at the Fillmore when we were kids. They were unbelievable. I mean unbelievable. I never saw Jimi Hendrix, but my guys in my band did. For some reason I never saw him, but I saw some shows there that were just unbelievable. What does Fillmore hold? 800 people? Or 1,000 max? I don't think you could put 1,000 people in there. And I mean people forget it was a very small little thing.

1:03:07 Debra Schwartz: So there was intimacy. There was a home feeling to it.

1:03:11 Huey Lewis: Absolutely. And something was going on there, man. That was the cutting edge. It was just brand new stuff. Brand new stuff. We were watching that going, "Wow that is cool." It was so impactful, everybody wanted to be in a band. And that's what you did. You got in a band with your nearest neighbors. Everybody was in a band.

1:03:34 Debra Schwartz: It just inspired that.

1:03:35 Huey Lewis: Yeah.

1:03:36 Debra Schwartz: It lit the fire. If you could describe a moment, just any moment, any time in your career or whatever that just somehow stays with you, one of those magical moments that speaks to what you've experienced?

1:03:53 Huey Lewis: Is there a moment, a magical moment?

1:03:57 Debra Schwartz: An experience or a time. Anything that comes to mind.

1:04:02 Huey Lewis: Well, a lot of our big gigs come to mind. We had a jam in Paris. We sold out the whatever it was — the Bercy, I think it is, the big enormodome in Paris, and Springsteen and Bob Geldof came by and jammed. We had a jam, so I remember that night. "We Are the World" was an incredible night. The stories from "We Are the World" are myriad and wonderful. We've had so many career highlights. We did Madison Square Garden like three or four nights in a row. We did the Forum in L.A. three nights in a row with all these great musicians who we idolized, showing up and saying how much they enjoyed our show, and that kind of stuff. That I've had in spades, that kind of stuff. And that's the gratifying thing, I think of all the moments, it's the respect of your peers. When you have people come up and say, "Really dig your music," and people say nice things about you. People who know. That's cool.

1:05:15 Debra Schwartz: That is cool. Do you remember any particular people in Mill Valley that kinda embodied that Mill Valley uniqueness, or somehow stick in your memory?

1:05:31 Huey Lewis: Sure. Charlie Deal, and the record store too. Did we talk about that?

1:05:39 Debra Schwartz: Oh my gosh!

1:05:40 Huey Lewis: Robin Pritzger's husband. Robin, who I went to school with. You're killing me here. [laughs] You know who I mean.

1:05:48 Debra Schwartz: Yes, I know, you're talking about the record store on Blithedale. John Goddard.

1:05:53 Huey Lewis: John Goddard's store. I don't remember the name of it.

1:05:56 Debra Schwartz: Village Records.

1:05:57 Huey Lewis: Oh, Village Records. Village Music.

1:05:59 Debra Schwartz: Village Music.

1:06:00 Huey Lewis: John Goddard and Village Music was the best record store in the country. And he was a wonderful treasure to Mill Valley. Charlie Deal.

1:06:10 Debra Schwartz: Charlie Deal?

1:06:11 Huey Lewis: What a character, Toilet Seat Charlie, who made the guitars out of toilet seats, and then would play, would jam, would sit in and jam at gigs. You'd play a gig at the Old Mill or somewhere, and then Charlie would just get up and jam. He never plugged in or anything, so I don't think anybody knows what he was really playing, but he'd be there.

1:06:34 Debra Schwartz: He talked about it though. You'd see him in town. Little guy.

1:06:37 Huey Lewis: Yeah, he's a great guy.

1:06:38 Debra Schwartz: And he would talk about who he is. I remember.

1:06:41 Huey Lewis: Oh yeah.

1:06:41 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

1:06:42 Huey Lewis: And he'd know everything that was going on. What bands are playing where. That was his thing.

1:06:46 Debra Schwartz: Any other Mill Valley characters that stand out?

1:06:49 Huey Lewis: Well, yeah. Let's see. Let me think.

1:06:51 Debra Schwartz: Do you remember white Jimi Hendrix? John Goddard talked about the white guy that dressed like Jimi Hendrix.

1:06:59 Huey Lewis: Oh.

1:07:00 Debra Schwartz: And he'd come talk to Jimi's poster every day with the —

1:07:02 Huey Lewis: No. But I remember there was a guy who dressed in a white suit all the time. We called him "Man from Glad" [chuckles] 'cause he was super handsome, and he would just kinda stand there at these events. And nobody knew what he did or who he was or anything. He didn't seem to come with anybody else. He'd just stand there in the back. And we'd just go, "Man from Glad." [laughs]

1:07:24: Yeah, there were quite a few characters around during those times. And then the hippies in the mid- to late '60s were really something to behold.

1:07:39 Debra Schwartz: Yeah. It sounds like you had a nice time in Mill Valley while you were there.

1:07:42 Huey Lewis: Oh, I had a lovely time. I will always be a Mill Valley boy. Even though I didn't live there 'til I was five, but I lived there from five 'til — what, 50?

1:08:02 Debra Schwartz: You will always be one of Mill Valley's musical sons.

1:08:06 Huey Lewis: Cool. [chuckles]

1:08:06 Debra Schwartz: Cool. Thank you so much.

1:08:08 Huey Lewis: You bet.

1:08:09 Debra Schwartz: And on behalf of the Mill Valley Historical Society and the Mill Valley Library, thank you so much for this interview and have a wonderful show tonight.

1:08:18 Huey Lewis: Thanks, Debra.