

Mill Valley Oral History Program
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Pat Williams

**An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Debra Schwartz in 2019**

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In this oral history, innkeeper, retired fireman, and prolific storyteller Pat Williams recounts his life and expresses his deep connection to Mt. Tam. Born in San Francisco in 1948, Pat grew up in a military family that moved repeatedly during his childhood and adolescence. Pat describes how after high school he joined the Navy which brought him back to the Bay Area, where he discovered his vocation for firefighting, but was then deployed to Vietnam. Following his discharge from the military, Pat returned to the Bay Area, enrolling in the fire sciences program at College of Marin. Pat discusses his career as a fireman in Marin County, including a six-month period in 1969 when he served as a fire lookout on Mt. Tam. He also discusses his family: his wife Colleen and their two daughters Jennifer and Tami (the latter named after Mt. Tam). While still with the fire department Pat began volunteering as an innkeeper at the West Point Inn, where this oral history was recorded, and Pat shares numerous entertaining stories — some true, others invented — from his years on the mountain.

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Oral History of Pat Williams
January 2, 2019

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

0:00:00 Debra Schwartz: Today is January 2nd, 2019. This is the first time I've said this, this year, 2019. My name is Debra Schwartz, and I'm sitting here at the West Point Inn with Pat Williams, innkeeper Pat Williams, on behalf of Mill Valley Public Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society. I'm sitting in this lovely cottage, eating home-made cinnamon bread made by innkeeper David Durr, on a perfect winter's day, with views all around in a building I call the jewel in the crown, which is the West Point Inn. And I'm very happy to be sitting with my friend and mountain lover, Pat Williams. Pat, first of all, thank you for taking the time today.

0:00:56 Pat Williams: My pleasure, Debra.

0:00:57 Debra Schwartz: Now, I know you're a good storyteller.

0:01:01 Pat Williams: You've heard. [chuckles]

0:01:02 Debra Schwartz: I've heard a few. [chuckles] And so this is always fun to interview somebody who's a natural storyteller. But you're more than a storyteller, you were a fireman for 31 years, correct?

0:01:20 Pat Williams: Yup.

0:01:20 Debra Schwartz: And you worked at the —

0:01:23 Pat Williams: I worked for the Ross Valley Fire Department. But before that, I worked for Larkspur and the County of Marin as a fire lookout on top of Mt. Tamalpais. So, my journey to Marin County was a long adventure, but it was a destiny I think I was meant for. I grew up in a family of eight, the oldest of eight. My dad was a military officer, my mom was a nurse, and we traveled around the world. Being the first born, I was born in San Francisco along with two of my sisters.

0:02:05 Debra Schwartz: And what year was that?

0:02:06 Pat Williams: 1948. My dad was a student at the University of San Francisco, and my mom was a nurse at Saint Mary's, and my parents were childhood sweethearts. My mom was 11 and my dad was 13 when they first met, and they were in love their entire life.

0:02:26 Debra Schwartz: Where did they meet, and what are their names?

0:02:28 Pat Williams: They met in Reno, Nevada, and that's where they grew up. My mother's name was Mary Jane Ripplingham. She comes from a long line of miners. They came over for the Comstock Lode. Her grandfather built a house in Virginia City. He worked in Virginia City, and the house that he built is still standing on C Street, the main street in Virginia City.

0:02:51 Debra Schwartz: And what was her father's name?

0:02:52 Pat Williams: Her father's name was Joseph Patrick Ripplingham, and my first name is Patrick, and I was named after him and one of my uncles.

0:03:01 Debra Schwartz: And her mother's name?

0:03:03 Pat Williams: Her mother's name was Josephine Ripplingham, and she came from Minnesota. She came out to Tonopah, Nevada, where she met my grandfather, and that's where my mother was born and lived in Tonopah, Nevada. Then they moved to Reno, and my grandmother worked as a nurse at St. Mary's Hospital, and my grandfather was disabled and ran a small tobacco store right underneath the sign in Reno that said, "The greatest little city in the world." I'm sorry, "The biggest little city in the world." And right under that was a little tobacco store.

0:03:37 Debra Schwartz: Right. And was he disabled?

0:03:37 Pat Williams: My grandfather was on crutches or a wheelchair his entire adult life. So, he ran that store, and everybody in Reno knew him. His name was Joe Ripplingham.

0:03:52 Debra Schwartz: And so, I have to ask, was it a military injury or due to polio or —

0:03:57 Pat Williams: No, no. Nobody quite knows why, but he would get sores on his legs and stuff and eventually had to have his leg amputated. But the doctors could never figure out what the cause was of his illness. Poor circulation in his legs was the cause, but they don't know what caused it.

0:04:17 Debra Schwartz: And again, your mother and father's names?

0:04:20 Pat Williams: So, my father's name is Francis Williams. His father did all kinds of different jobs and traveled a lot. My dad was born in Michigan, at Kalamazoo, Michigan, where my great-grandfather ran a university there and was a pretty well-known mathematician. A story in the family was that he was doing an internship at University of Heidelberg when Albert Einstein submitted his theory of relativity to my grandfather for a review.

0:05:00 Debra Schwartz: And what's your grandfather's name?

0:05:02 Pat Williams: Benedict Williams.

0:05:04 Debra Schwartz: And so, he was living —

0:05:06 Pat Williams: He did an internship. He was at a university in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I think it was Case Western, if I remember right, but I'm not certain on that. I've got family records of that, but I haven't looked at them for a long time.

0:05:25 Debra Schwartz: You're a blue-eyed fair-haired fellow, so I'm guessing your ancestry is —

0:05:30 Pat Williams: Irish. Yeah.

0:05:32 Debra Schwartz: Irish.

0:05:32 Pat Williams: I just recently had my DNA done, and I had thought I was more English than Irish.

0:05:37 Debra Schwartz: Because you look a little English.

0:05:39 Pat Williams: Well, it turns out my genes are 60 percent Irish, which was surprising. I've always considered myself Irish, too, but I assumed it would probably be more English, and then there's German and some Swedish, which I didn't know.

0:06:00 Debra Schwartz: You've had an American ancestry for some generations, then.

0:06:04 Pat Williams: Quite a few. On my father's side, the Williams family came over and landed in Bar Harbor, Maine. And I'm related to Roger Williams, who founded Providence, Rhode Island and is considered the father of the freedom of religion, which is some irony. I've done some family research on that. I'm a direct descendant of Robert Williams who was Roger Williams' brother, so Roger Williams would have been a great uncle, so many generations ago.

0:06:33 Debra Schwartz: We didn't ask about your grandmother on your father's side. I didn't hear about her, did I?

0:06:39 Pat Williams: I don't know, her name was Catherine Locey. She came from kind of an aristocratic family from Reno, Nevada. There were a number of judges in her family involved in law, but I don't know too much about her. She was a wonderful woman, very proper, but I was probably closer to my grandparents on my mother's side.

0:07:13 Debra Schwartz: When you think about Reno as being the "biggest little city in the world," well, they were there before there were casinos.

0:07:21 Pat Williams: I think the casinos were there.

0:07:23 Debra Schwartz: Oh really? Right from the get go?

0:07:24 Pat Williams: Yeah. Casinos go quite a ways back in Reno. And my grandfather knew them all. He knew all the characters and the players in the casinos and was friends with them. He was good friends with Joe Conforte who had a ring of prostitution houses. And he was friends with the priest from the local parish, who would come into his house. And when he finally had to retire, they would just walk in and go to the liquor cabinet, pour a shot of whiskey and then come out and talk to my grandfather. And so I spent a lot of time with them, my dad being in the military. When he was in the Korean War, we stayed with my grandmother in Reno.

0:08:14: Reno was always hometown for me, but I always felt an affinity for the Bay Area because I was born here and had always hoped to come back here. My dad always applied for the Presidio as a job. He did over 30 years in the military, and retired as a bird colonel, and he's still alive today. He lives in Mill Valley. He'll be 94 here in a few weeks.

0:08:38 Debra Schwartz: Oh, my. How lucky for you.

0:08:39 Pat Williams: Yeah.

0:08:40 Debra Schwartz: I mean, how fortunate to have your pops around.

0:08:42 Pat Williams: Yeah. He's not doing well, but —

0:08:46 Debra Schwartz: Do I know him? Would I have seen him around here?

0:08:49 Pat Williams: No, I don't think you would have seen him. He has to have 24-hour care now and lives off over at 3rd and Main in Sausalito.

0:08:56 Debra Schwartz: I see.

0:09:00 Pat Williams: So, we grew up around the world. When I was four years old, we left San Francisco and went back to Reno, because my dad was in the Korean War. And then he was injured in the Korean War and was transported to Kyoto, Japan, to a military hospital. My mother took myself and my two sisters and put us on a steamship out of Fort Mason in San Francisco and the piers there, on a military transport ship, and took us to Japan. And I still remember a little bit of that, even though I was four years old. But she just did this on our own, and I remember we all had to have leashes on —

[laughter]

0:09:50: Because we're on this rolling ship. So here's my mother with three little children, trying to control that. And I was old enough to remember that trip. We got off in Japan, and of course, nobody spoke English, and my mother was trying to figure out

where to go. Everything is in Japanese, and we got on a train and we headed up north, and we got up to that Fukushima area where the nuclear power plant blew up recently.

0:10:20 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:10:20 Pat Williams: This would have been in the early '50s. And we got turned around, and somebody realized we were lost and helped us and got us back to Kyoto. We wound up living in Japan for about a year and a half while my dad recuperated, and he was later assigned there. And I learned how to speak a little bit of Japanese as a child.

0:10:43 Debra Schwartz: Konichiwa.

0:10:43 Pat Williams: Arigato. So, from there we just traveled the world. We lived in Italy for three years. And I was involved with the boy scouts from the time I was 11 years old until I was in my mid-teens. That was kind of a focus; I really enjoyed that.

0:11:06 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:11:07 Pat Williams: So, growing up, we lived in three countries and 14 different states.

0:11:12 Debra Schwartz: Oh, my.

0:11:12 Pat Williams: Yeah, my dad's job — as he advanced through the ranks, he was a nuclear missile officer and was in charge of medium-range nuclear missiles, which is a really important job. He had some interesting stories about that.

0:11:29 Debra Schwartz: So, you're a rather continental fellow, aren't you?

0:11:33 Pat Williams: I guess I could consider that, yeah, international continent.

0:11:38 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:11:38 Pat Williams: So yeah, I grew up and was exposed to a lot of the world and learned that people everywhere are pretty much the same. I did a lot of reading, a lot of studying, growing up. I've loved science, I always wanted to be an astronaut. That was kind of a goal, and I still would like to add that to my resume. But I didn't do well in high school. I goofed off a lot, procrastinated a lot, and I still have that trait. And in traveling the world, it was hard because every year it was a different school.

0:12:23 Debra Schwartz: Right, yes.

0:12:25 Pat Williams: My high school years were in Washington State, and then my sophomore year in Kansas, at Leavenworth, Kansas, where I got in a bit of trouble and stole a car and ran away from home, and a whole other story — stole a car from under the

front gates of Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, and I didn't know how to drive, and the culprit that was with me, we got all the way into Nebraska before we got caught.

0:12:53 Debra Schwartz: And you're how old, what 17?

0:12:55 Pat Williams: I was 15.

0:12:56 Debra Schwartz: Oh.

0:12:57 Pat Williams: Yeah. So, a little influence from my friend who was a year older than I was — anyway, it all worked out. It turned out the car we stole belonged to the provost marshal, which is like the judge on a military base.

0:13:13 Debra Schwartz: Oh, and your dad was military.

0:13:15 Pat Williams: My dad was military. My parents had eight kids, so it was hard. It was hard being in a family with eight kids and on the move all the time, and we were living in military housing.

0:13:29 Debra Schwartz: I've interviewed a few people that have had military histories, and it can be difficult, alienating. I've heard complaints, but you don't seem to be complaining too much.

0:13:41 Pat Williams: No. Well, one of the things you learn to do is you make friends fast.

0:13:44 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:13:45 Pat Williams: You learn how to read people, and you make friends, but then you wind up losing friends after a year because you're moving and you learn to communicate by letters and what have you.

0:14:00 Debra Schwartz: So, in essence, you're kind of an adaptable guy?

0:14:02 Pat Williams: Yep.

0:14:05 Debra Schwartz: What year did you guys graduate from high school?

0:14:10 Pat Williams: I graduated in 1966, but before that I was a junior in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. My dad was doing graduate work at the University of Alabama at the time, and that's when I met Martin Luther King Jr., and I also met Bobby Sheldon, who was the grand imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan.

0:14:35 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm.

0:14:35 Pat Williams: Tuscaloosa was kind of the hub of the universe for all the —

0:14:40 Debra Schwartz: Civil rights, yes.

0:14:41 Pat Williams: Racial stuff that was going on at the time. And so was Birmingham and Selma, which is 60 miles south of Tuscaloosa. That happened all during the time that I lived down there. And I was involved in this secret organization to integrate the high school down there.

0:14:58 Debra Schwartz: A secret organization because had people been aware of what you're doing as a big, tall, blue-eyed white guy —

0:15:06 Pat Williams: And a Yankee.

0:15:07 Debra Schwartz: And a Yankee.

0:15:07 Pat Williams: Because we were guests down there.

0:15:09 Debra Schwartz: So you would've —

0:15:10 Pat Williams: My dad was only at the university to do two years of graduate work, and we were told, "Do not get involved in that." But that's not the way we were raised. We were all raised to be active and participating in things. But my dad was concerned. Both my sister and I got in trouble with — she got in trouble with the Ku Klux Klan, and I pulled some stuff that I probably shouldn't have done, like when they had cross burnings down at the Black Warrior River, we would wait 'til they lit the cross on fire and then stand on this hill and launch cherry bombs down on top of them.
[chuckles]

0:15:50 Debra Schwartz: We being —

0:15:52 Pat Williams: Three of my buddies that I kind of palled around with. Kid's stuff. But dangerous kid's stuff to be exact we were doing at that time.

0:15:58 Debra Schwartz: You were a small cadre of resistance.

0:16:00 Pat Williams: Yeah, well it was more because it was exciting, I think. We didn't like the Klan, we didn't like what they stood for.

0:16:11 Debra Schwartz: So, after you've pelted them with cherry bombs, did you just hightail it and run?

0:16:15 Pat Williams: Oh, I spent the night in a blackberry thicket bush. Yeah, they were looking for me, and had they found us, I wouldn't be here talking to you. They would've tarred and feathered us, wrapped us in chains and thrown us to the bottom of Black Warrior River. That's the way they dealt with you if you were —

0:16:30 Debra Schwartz: That was so brave for a young person.

0:16:34 Pat Williams: More like stupid kids.

0:16:34 Debra Schwartz: And may I ask your impression of Martin Luther King?

0:16:40 Pat Williams: How I met Martin Luther King was — my best friend in Tuscaloosa was a black guy who drove a Cushman motorcycle for Rexall Drugstore, delivered pharmacy stuff on a motorcycle, and at the time I had a summer job working selling ice cream on one of those ice cream carts that you pedal with the bells. He and I became good friends, and we would sit out — because the drugstore was in the front — and around the back was this guy that had a business with all these bicycles and stuff. Anyway, we just hit it off. We were good friends. And so I got to know him and his parents and stuff, but he wound up having to break off our friendship because his boss came out one day, when we were sitting out in front having a Coca-Cola, and his boss came out and said, “If I ever see you talking to this white boy again, you’re fired.” And he couldn’t afford to get fired.

0:17:35 Debra Schwartz: He was a black man?

0:17:36 Pat Williams: Yeah. He was about my age.

0:17:38 Debra Schwartz: Mm-hmm. But he was a black guy.

0:17:40 Pat Williams: He was a black guy.

0:17:41 Debra Schwartz: Oh, so —

0:17:42 Pat Williams: Needless to say, that really upset me.

0:17:51 Debra Schwartz: And then Martin —

0:17:52 Pat Williams: Then Martin Luther King, he came to Tuscaloosa when — Jack Palance was a movie star who was from Tuscaloosa, and he came back there because he had a new Western movie out. This would have been in ’64, 1964. He came out and went to the movie theater with his black nanny who pretty much raised him. And of course, the theater was not integrated: no blacks could go in.

0:18:23 Debra Schwartz: So the actor, the star of the show —

0:18:24 Pat Williams: Star of the movie —

0:18:25 Debra Schwartz: Brings in his nanny —

0:18:27 Pat Williams: Right. Word got out that he was trying to do this, and so the Klan made a big deal, and of course, he made a big deal about it too, and it became

national news, because he was saying, “This is ridiculous.” So the Klan came out and tried to prevent that from happening. There was this big standoff going on. The blacks in Tuscaloosa had had about enough of this separate water fountains and having to ride in the back of the bus and not getting jobs, so they staged a protest during this time because, one, the national cameras were on Tuscaloosa at the time. They had been in the past because of George Wallace standing on the steps of the University of Alabama in 1963. Anyway, there was a big march, protest asking for civil rights, and I was standing on the corner, and I was the only white kid around.

0:19:25 Debra Schwartz: And it should be noted for those that don’t see you. Like I see, you’re not a little guy.

0:19:31 Pat Williams: No, I’m 6’4”. I was tall and skinny, 6’4” at the time.

0:19:37 Debra Schwartz: Hard to miss.

0:19:38 Pat Williams: Yeah. So I was standing on the corner clapping when I saw them walking up the street. Tuscaloosa had two main streets at that time, and the courthouse kind of sat at the intersection of the two main streets. And so I was standing across the street from the courthouse and was applauding and Dr. King came up. There are three black limos that came up just about a block before and parked, and then the group of blacks that were marching stopped, and Dr. King got out of his car with several other people. I think Ralph Abernathy was there and I think some other people. But they got out and they got in the front and they were going up there. So I’m standing there and I just instinctively started to clap, and somebody from Dr. King’s party came over and said, “Dr. King would like to meet you.” And I walked over and he said, “Thank you, son.” He said — I’m getting a little choked up about this — but he said, “Would you walk with us?” And I said, “Sir, I can’t.” I said. I started to tell him about my father being at the university and he’d get in trouble, and he said, “I understand, son.” So I went back over there and went, “Wow.” [chuckles]

0:20:54: But I was disappointed because they got to the courthouse, and then probably because of Dr. King they had something else going on, and they got back in the limo and drove away. And about that time, the Tuscaloosa Police Department showed up and started cracking heads, and it turned into a full-blown riot, and I was witness to the whole thing. It left a big impression on me.

0:21:21 Debra Schwartz: And that Jack Palance is a singular actor. I mean, he has a sort of presence. I guess you could say he’s almost kind of sinister. Can you do an imitation of him?

0:21:38 Pat Williams: No. You know, I never met him. I never actually saw him.

0:21:44 Debra Schwartz: Having an actor of this caliber and with his particular physical presence take a stand, I mean, it’s just —

0:21:55 Pat Williams: Well, there were a lot of people taking stands at that time, and I applaud him for doing that. It needed to happen. And it was a big part of our history in the 20th century, what happened down in Mississippi and Alabama and Georgia at that time.

0:22:13 Debra Schwartz: And radiating in different degrees out and around all over the country.

0:22:18 Pat Williams: Yes.

0:22:18 Debra Schwartz: It may not have been so blatant, but the ubiquitous radiation of that kind of racism.

0:22:26 Pat Williams: So that tells you a little bit about where I'm from. At the time I was struggling a bit at home and at school because of different schools, different curriculums every year. And my dad had told me, "Well, your senior year is going to be split between Tuscaloosa High School or a high school in Virginia," because he was being transferred to the Pentagon, and they were planning on living in Springfield, Virginia. I didn't want to split my year, so I actually joined the Navy when I turned 17 in Alabama. And part of my intent was that I wanted to stay out of the Vietnam War; I wanted to go into submarines. So I went to boot camp and then went on to a Catholic boys boarding school that I had attended as a freshman up in Washington State and graduated from the class of 50 students in 1966. As soon as I graduated, I was Navy property, and I went on active duty, reported to Treasure Island, because one of the first classes I had to take was electronic school. My goal was to be an electronic technician on nuclear submarines. And I'd committed to 6 1/2 years in the Navy because they were going to put me through 4 1/2 years of schooling.

0:23:51: Well, I went to Treasure Island, and it was three months before the next class started. They found out I could type pretty well, so they had me doing yeoman work, doing reports and stuff and tying up ships at Alameda.

0:24:08 Debra Schwartz: You're back to where you were born.

0:24:10 Pat Williams: I was back to where I was born, and I was loving it. And so I would get liberty on Saturday or Sunday night, and I would come over to San Francisco and spent most of my time on Market Street — because I hadn't really experienced a big city before — in San Francisco. And it was my home. It's where I felt my —

0:24:35 Debra Schwartz: Very different from the South in so many ways.

0:24:37 Pat Williams: Yeah, it is completely different. And even as a kid, my dad, he loved Herb Caen, and he had all of Herb Caen's books. He had one that was signed by him. And I wound up inheriting those. Unfortunately, I brought them to the firehouse and they disappeared, but I remember reading those as a kid, and it just made my love for San

Francisco grow that much stronger and making a determination that someday I'm going to live here.

0:25:04 Debra Schwartz: But this is during the Vietnam War.

0:25:07 Pat Williams: It was during the war.

0:25:07 Debra Schwartz: So, you're doing your service, you're typing and all that. But were you ever worried about being enlisted into some action?

0:25:17 Pat Williams: Well, it's one of the reasons I went in the Navy; I was going to be a submariner. Well, I was at Treasure Island and waiting for this, and the Navy had to do something with me. They had a month-long firefighting school at Treasure Island and I went through the structural firefighting school at Treasure Island and came in top of the class. I'd never come in top of the class in anything before. And I loved it. I fell in love with it, and I said, "Wow, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life, is be a firefighter." It was so much fun, and I knew every day would be something different. It wouldn't be a boring job. I was toying with the idea at one time of being a priest because that's what my parents wanted me to do. I also have thought about being a lawyer because the law really interested me. But then I decided I wanted to be a firefighter.

0:26:06: So I went through that. There was a pier facing San Francisco, and I used to go out and sit at the end of that pier every night after chow until the sun went down. I'd be out there, and I taught myself how to play a harmonica, and I would sit at the end of that pier and just play my harmonica very poorly. But there's nobody out there but me. And it would be really cold, and I would just watch the sun go down over San Francisco and Mt. Tam. And I'd look at this mountain off in the distance. I didn't know what the name of it was, but I could see it. I said, "I'm going to be at the top of that mountain, I'm going to climb to the top of that mountain someday." So, anyway, while I was at Treasure Island I never went to ET school because the war in Vietnam heated up and the Navy had other plans for me. So, they sent for me and they said, "You're going to go to Vietnam. You're going to be a riverboat coxswain," which is, you're going to be the pilot of a riverboat.

0:27:01 Debra Schwartz: That's sort of like majorly dangerous, isn't it?

0:27:05 Pat Williams: Yeah, it was very dangerous. So, I wound up being deployed to the Marine Corps and had to go through a partial Marine Corps training for a month down at Camp Pendleton where they kicked my behind big time because —

0:27:20 Debra Schwartz: Is it as brutal as the movies say it is?

0:27:21 Pat Williams: It was. Probably worse. Then I had to go to survival school, which they wound up shutting down after I was in Vietnam because the survival school was actually killing people.

0:27:30 Debra Schwartz: Yes. Is that where they hold you under water for a super long time and then bring you back so you're not afraid of it? Oh, dear.

0:27:36 Pat Williams: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. There is a lot of things they did to you. Because I was a low-rank they didn't mess with me that much. But if you were an officer, you got beat up pretty bad. Anyway, I went through that and January 4th of 1967, I arrived in Danang, Vietnam and got put on, what we called — they called them U-boats, which is kind of irony because U-boats were submarines in Germany. But these were LCUs, landing craft utilities. They're a big boat with a ramp on the front with an open deck and we carried cargo and tanks and stuff to support the Marines. And there were three rivers that we would transport things to. My favorite was the Perfume River, which ran into the city of Hue. And Hue was an ancient city, very dangerous. This was in '67, and you're getting shot at all the time. There were a lot of things that happened.

0:28:41: My first month there I had a grenade go off next to me, literally two feet away from me. It should have killed me. It landed on the deck at 2 o'clock in the morning next to me, because we were stuck on the river. I had piloted the boat into a sandbar, not knowing it, because the river changes all the time, and we were stuck in the sandbar. And so this old grizzly, Chief boatswain that was in charge of the boat was screaming and yelling and said, "You're going to sit up all night on watch." And so I sat on the deck in the pouring rain with a cup of hot coffee in my lap. I was sitting with my legs Indian style, and I had that cup of coffee in my lap and a Thompson machine gun underneath my poncho. Just sitting there dozing off, because I'd been up piloting this boat all day, and here I was all night having to stand watch on the boat while everybody else was asleep. And it's pitch black, pouring rain, and I hear this pop and then this grenade lands on the deck.

0:29:43: Now, mind you, this deck, it's just real small. It's at the very front of the boat on each side of the ramp that drops down, so there was only enough room for me to sit. There probably isn't more than 10 or 15 square feet at the max. It lands, and there's a little lip that's about an inch high that runs along the edge. This grenade lands, and I'm sitting there, staring at it, spin around and figured, "I'm done." And it was like an angel pushed it. It fell through the shackle where you pass the rope, that's the only place it could have gone. Rolled through there, and as soon as it dropped on the other side, it exploded. So, I didn't have any shrapnel damage, but my hearing is — I've got tinnitus, severely.

0:30:26 Debra Schwartz: From that moment on?

0:30:27 Pat Williams: From that moment on.

0:30:28 Debra Schwartz: Is this the U-boats that are in the movie with Martin Sheen? What is that movie called?

0:30:36 Pat Williams: I'm not sure which one.

0:30:37 Debra Schwartz: You know, the terrible one with Martin Sheen.

0:30:40 Pat Williams: Oh, *Apocalypse Now*.

0:30:42 Debra Schwartz: *Apocalypse Now*, yes.

0:30:43 Pat Williams: Yeah. There were a lot of things in *Apocalypse Now* that were true. The helicopters coming in with the speakers blaring. That actually happened. I actually saw that happen. But a lot of it was Hollywood too.

0:30:56 Debra Schwartz: But it was at the time —

0:30:57 Pat Williams: But the boats —

0:30:58 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:31:00 Pat Williams: There was not a U-boats in there. There were a number of different types of river-crafts. A lot of that was based on the river. That kind of took place down in the Mekong Delta downward. John Kerry was on a Swift Boat. I was up north near the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone].

0:31:16 Debra Schwartz: When you're — may I ask?

0:31:18 Pat Williams: Sure.

0:31:18 Debra Schwartz: You're sitting on that deck, half asleep with your coffee and your gun and your rain gear. How old are you?

0:31:29 Pat Williams: I was 18. I was going to be 19 in a few weeks. Oh, I digressed a bit, but the grenade goes off. So, my natural instinct is to pull the trigger on this machine gun which has got 30 rounds of 45 caliber bullets in it on automatic. And so this hot, sizzling coffee that I had sitting in my lap now spills into my groin, and now my groin's on fire, I'm pulling this trigger on this machine gun and all 30 rounds go off in just a couple of seconds. Shreds the poncho that I have in this pouring rain, bullets and traces are flying by my head, just wizz by my face and stuff because it was an ambush.

0:32:11 Debra Schwartz: Right.

0:32:12 Pat Williams: And this went on for — it seemed like forever, but it was probably only about 90 seconds. I just remember, I rocked over backwards because the force of it knocked me on my back, and I'm sitting there, with pieces of my poncho getting in the way and I'm choking on all the smoke from this. It was crazy, but it was almost comical what was going on, and I was scared to death. I was shaking so much I couldn't get the clip, flipping the clip over to get the other 30 rounds in to the gun. And so I just kind of laid on the deck and watched all this stuff and yelling and screaming going on. So what had happened was, Vietcong or North Vietnamese army squad had

come in to ambush our boat and probably try to take it. And unbeknownst to us, there was a South Vietnamese army group that was assigned to counter ambush if that happened because they probably figured it out. So this big fire fight was going on and several people died. I couldn't see because it was pitch black, and we actually were able to pull off the sandbar when the tide got a little higher and get out of there before it even got light. But this big fire fight happened and people died probably 10 feet away from me, and I couldn't even see what was going on. It was crazy.

0:33:28 Debra Schwartz: That's a very intense story.

0:33:30 Pat Williams: Yeah. So, anyway, there were a number of things like that that happened over there that —

0:33:36 Debra Schwartz: How long were you stationed?

0:33:37 Pat Williams: I was over there for 18 months, and I extended my tour. Duty assignment was 12 months, and I extended my tour over there because they would give you a cash reward. They would give you 30 days leave and fly you anywhere in the world that you wanted to go. And they would say, "Well, when you come back, what kind of job would you want?" I said, "I want to be in the fire department at Da Nang." I said I've got the training, and I know some of the guys had made friends with some of the guys that worked in the fire department because they took care — they had a 60-man fire department with three stations stationed around Da Nang area, taking care of the base, the fire protection of the base, and they were really busy. You're one year in a war zone, but you've got all these young kids doing all kinds of jobs that they really weren't trained properly for, and so there were always accidents, and fires and things like that. And then when the enemy would attack with rockets and stuff, everything would be on fire.

0:34:36 Debra Schwartz: So, you extended your time.

0:34:38 Pat Williams: To be in the fire department.

0:34:39 Debra Schwartz: You're 19 when you finally leave the military? 20?

0:34:42 Pat Williams: I was 20.

0:34:43 Debra Schwartz: 20. And where did you go from there?

0:34:50 Pat Williams: While I was in Vietnam, I got ahold of *Lovejoy's College Guide*, and I'm coming back to San Francisco and I want to —

0:34:57 Debra Schwartz: You know this?

0:34:57 Pat Williams: Oh, yeah, that was my goal, coming back to San Francisco. And I looked at colleges around the area, and the only one I could find was College of Marin, that offered Fire Sciences, and so I registered for College of Marin, got accepted while I

was still in Vietnam, and I got back on August 21st of 1968 and classes started on September 3rd. So I had just that short, brief period of time. I got discharged at Treasure Island, even though I was supposed to get discharged at Long Beach, and I was just like, “Well, I don’t have enough time.” So I just reported to Treasure Island and they said, “You idiot, you’re supposed to be at Long Beach.” I knew they wouldn’t turn around and send me back, so I got discharged. In three days I was out of the service, got on a Greyhound bus at the 7th Street Greyhound bus station in San Francisco, came up to Marin County, got off in Greenbrae, and there was a bowling alley in Greenbrae at the time —

0:36:00 Debra Schwartz: I remember.

0:36:01 Pat Williams: Greenbrae Lanes, yep. So, the bus would stop there. I got off, everything I owned was in a half a sea bag. I started walking towards College of Marin and decided, “You know what, this is kind of a nice place. Right along Corte Madera Creek right there. “So, I’m just going to camp here for a while until I get a place to live.” So, I stashed the stuff in the bushes. It’s all houses there now, but it was just all marshland at the time. And it was August, September, October. I was homeless. I was living there, going to College of Marin and just living by the creek and happy as could be that I was out of the military. I did little part-time jobs and stuff, but I didn’t have any money, and nobody wanted to rent to a Vietnam veteran.

0:36:45 Debra Schwartz: You were basically the enemy at that point because it was anti-Vietnam over here.

0:36:48 Pat Williams: It was very anti-Vietnam.

0:36:49 Debra Schwartz: So, if you’ve been in the military, you were the sell-out, I guess.

0:36:52 Pat Williams: And when I was going to the college, I was wearing this fatigue jacket that was my dad’s in the Korean war, and he gave it to me. He had actually had it in World War II and then wore it in the Korean War, and then I wore it when I was in Vietnam. It was an old field jacket. I still have that field jacket, and I wear it every Veteran’s Day.

0:37:12 Debra Schwartz: And your hair was probably short in a time where there was long hair.

0:37:15 Pat Williams: Oh yeah. Veterans stuck out like a sore thumb.

0:37:20 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

0:37:20 Pat Williams: So I’m going to college where I don’t know anybody. I’m getting treated pretty poorly because I’m wearing this fatigue jacket, and they knew I was a Veteran. People just kind of shunned you. You were a pariah. I remember one episode

where this gal came up to me with a big smile, and said, “Oh, are you a Veteran?” And I said, “Yeah.” She spit a big wad right in my face and started swearing at me and called me a baby killer and stuff, and I just went, “Wow.” [laughs]

0:37:51: It was tough enough not knowing anybody, but to have something like that happen — so, it kind of upset me. But then the second week of school, I ran into a guy named Greg Rossoff who was a Marine that I had met in Vietnam. He was on R&R, and I was working for the fire department at the time, and so I had every fourth day off, which was unheard of in a war zone. And I would go down to China Beach and surf, and they had a bar there. It was an R&R center for the Marines. Anyway, I ran into Greg there and he was arguing with me about how great the Marines were, and I was telling him, “Oh, the Navy’s better.” But I recognized him at College of Marin. We ran into each other, and we became best friends. Greg became a police officer for Corte Madera, and I became a firefighter, and he was best man at my wedding. He introduced to me to my wife, so it was —

0:38:48 Debra Schwartz: And this is what year that you met your wife?

0:38:51 Pat Williams: So, my wife I met in 1972. I actually had her in a class, a psychology class at College of Marin, and I thought, “Oh, she’s kind of cute. I’d kind of like to get to know her.” And we were breaking up into groups of four to work on a project in the psych class together, and I kind of made sure I was in her group.

0:39:19 Debra Schwartz: I guess she kind of —

0:39:20 Pat Williams: She dropped the class. But I was set up on a blind date and we got married a year from the day we met. That was 1973, and we have two beautiful girls. My wife’s name is Colleen. It was Colleen Coleman. And when I showed up on the blind date to meet Colleen, I first said, “Wow, I know you. You’re the gal from the psych — and George, what are you doing here?” It turns out George, her brother, was good friends with me. We shared supplies in a photography class at the college, and we used to pal around.

0:40:00 Debra Schwartz: Oh, so you had someone to vouch for you.

0:40:00 Pat Williams: Well, no. I went, “George, what are you doing here?” And he goes, “Well, these are my sisters.” He had three sisters. “You never told me you had three sisters.” And he says, “With good reason.” [laughs]

0:40:11 Debra Schwartz: So you have two children with Colleen. Your children’s names?

0:40:14 Pat Williams: They’re Jennifer and Tami. And Tami is named after Mt. Tamalpais. I wanted to call her Tamalpais Williams and my wife said, “Yeah, yeah — no!”

0:40:25 Debra Schwartz: So you really had an affinity for Mt. Tamalpais.

0:40:27 Pat Williams: I did. And so when I was going to College of Marin, that first year, it was hard, and I got taken in by Larkspur Fire Department, because one of the professors, Bill Ellis, was an assistant chief of Larkspur Fire. He was one of my professors, and somebody said, “You know, Pat’s homeless, he’s living down by the creek.” And Bill had been in the Marine Corps in the Korean War, and he pulled me aside after class one night and said, “What’s this I hear about you living by the creek?” And I said, “Yes, no big deal.” And he said, “Well, what are you doing for bathroom facilities needs?” and I said, “Nah! I manage. I’m doing fine, sir, and I use the shower and facilities at the college at the gym. It’s not a big deal.” And he goes, “Get your stuff and bring it into the fire station there in Greenbrae.” He said, “I’ve got a bed for you and a locker.” And he said, “You have to work every Sunday at the downtown fire station — it is opposite St. Patrick’s Church there — and pull a shift every Sunday for free in exchange for your room and board, your room and locker.” And I said, “Thank you. It sounds great to me.”

0:41:39: And it was great, because I’d been trying to find a place to live and had tried to get a job doing child care. I figured I’m the oldest Viet kid that can do child care and did a little part-time job, but nobody wanted to hire a veteran, nobody wanted to rent to a veteran, so it worked out. For me the stars were in alignment, and so after spending that winter at the fire station, and having a lot of fun — I think I was an asset to the fire department there; I helped them out a lot — Bill said, “Why don’t you apply for the fire lookout job? They’re looking for a fire lookout.”

0:42:18 Debra Schwartz: I have to ask.

0:42:20 Pat Williams: Yes?

0:42:20 Debra Schwartz: You told me earlier in the interview that you looked across the bay to the mountain and you thought to yourself, you’re going to hike to the top of that mountain some time.

0:42:27 Pat Williams: Yep.

0:42:28 Debra Schwartz: Did you do that before you became a fireman?

0:42:29 Pat Williams: I did that when I got into the Larkspur Fire Department. There was a guy there — I can’t think of his name now, but anyway, he later became a San Francisco firefighter — and I had told him, I said, “Well, let’s do it.” So we hiked straight out of Baltimore Canyon.

0:42:47 Debra Schwartz: And right on up.

0:42:48 Pat Williams: Straight up the mountain.

0:42:49 Debra Schwartz: Yep.

0:42:50 Pat Williams: I have some photographs that he took of me just peeking right at the fire lookout.

0:42:56 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:42:56 Pat Williams: And who knew that next summer I would be the fire lookout out there?

0:43:01 Debra Schwartz: So, you were the fire lookout! Oh, how those of us down below wonder what it must be like to be a fire lookout.

0:43:09 Pat Williams: It was amazing. I couldn't believe my luck, and it wasn't just luck. Chief Louis Bloom was the county fire chief at that time, and I would be in his office every morning when he showed up for work. I'd be sitting right outside of his office waiting for him to make a decision on who they were going to have for lookout. [chuckles] And after the third day, he comes in and he starts swearing, "Somebody, give this idiot the keys to the fire lookout and get him out of my office." And so I wound up going up there, and I lived there from May 15th to October 31st of 1969, and I was in heaven.

0:43:49 Debra Schwartz: Tell me though, this is '69. I remember those times, there was a lot of mischief going on outside.

0:44:00 Pat Williams: Well, it was the —

0:44:02 Debra Schwartz: There was drugs and rock 'n' roll.

0:44:04 Pat Williams: Yeah, yeah, there were a lot.

0:44:06 Debra Schwartz: Free love.

0:44:07 Pat Williams: They had the big concerts over here at the Mountain Theater where all the big bands were playing.

0:44:14 Debra Schwartz: I interviewed Marty Balin and he described it as one of the highlights of his life.

0:44:18 Pat Williams: Yeah, yeah. So, I could hear the music from Mt. Tam. I couldn't leave the lookout during the day, but I could hear the music from the fire lookout, and I got a lot of the fall out — people that were high on LSD.

0:44:31 Debra Schwartz: Tell me what you saw. Give me a bird's eye view.

0:44:35 Pat Williams: I'll give you one example. I left the door open and I was downstairs talking to this pretty young lady and —

0:44:43 Debra Schwartz: At the lookout.

0:44:44 Pat Williams: At the fire lookout, yeah. I was down out front because people would ask for directions. I would hear people pointing to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge and telling people that's the Golden Gate Bridge, and I would correct them. So I got to meet a lot of really interesting people in the fire lookout and I would talk to everybody.

0:45:03 Debra Schwartz: You're an affable fella.

0:45:04 Pat Williams: It was social, and I was looking to meet some people, too, because I didn't really know a lot of people around there.

0:45:13 Debra Schwartz: It's lonely up there at the top. [chuckles] Not really.

0:45:16 Pat Williams: Yeah, yeah. Well, I referred to myself as the fool on the hill, and my wife still does.

[laughter]

0:45:23 Pat Williams: So, here I am on top of Mt. Tamalpais in this incredibly beautiful environment. That was the year they stopped backyard burning in Marin County and in fact most of the Bay Area. They had formed the air pollution district and banned backyard burning. So, by 10 o'clock in the morning, you could hardly see anything because everybody was burning everything off before the ban took effect so that air pollution was just terrible. By noon, I mean, I could see off into the distance, but anything below Throckmorton Ridge, you couldn't see. It was just covered in brown smoke because everybody was doing their backyard burning to get rid of everything.

0:46:09 Debra Schwartz: I had no idea.

0:46:10 Pat Williams: And then July 1st, it took effect and the air magically cleared up, because they —

0:46:16 Debra Schwartz: I can't believe they allowed burning that late in the season.

0:46:20 Pat Williams: Yeah, July 1st was the final thing. It was a different world back then, too. We didn't have the vegetation we have now, and we did a good job of protecting the mountain and now the vegetation has changed. So this will be my 50th year on Mt. Tam because this is —

0:46:40 Debra Schwartz: Remember the time when we came up here? It's always nice as a hiker to come up to the West Point, and if it's slow at the end, you get an opportunity to sit and talk with the innkeepers and "talk story," as they say.

0:46:54 Pat Williams: Yeah.

0:46:55 Debra Schwartz: I remember you telling me this remarkable story about how you basically saved the West Point Inn, you and your brother, from burning down.

0:47:02 Pat Williams: Well, we were mountain biking up here. I did a lot of that, and I became friends with a lot of people, the original mountain biker Otis Guy and Joe Breeze were friends of mine, and Gary Fisher.

0:47:17 Debra Schwartz: Steve Potts? Did you know Steve? Charlie Cunningham?

0:47:20 Pat Williams: Oh, yeah, Charlie, and Jackie of course, I knew them. They're old friends, too. Anyway, Otis was a new fireman there, and I was his captain, and I really got into mountain biking at that point because Otis was kind of a legend, too.

0:47:45: So my brother and I were biking up here, and we came in, it was a hot September day, the wind was blowing, it was coming out of the west, but it was blowing pretty hard. I came in because they used to sell the lemonade in the kitchen here. And I didn't have good feelings about West Point, because when I was the fire lookout in '69, I came down here one foggy day, just on a hike because there was no need for me to be on the mountain, the top of the mountain was fogged in, and I wanted to come down, see what was down here, so I walked down here and I came up on the deck, and there was a woman, who introduced herself as Pat. She said, "Can I help you?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm the fire lookout up on the mountain," I had my Marin County fire lookout shirt on and my whole uniform on, and I come up the steps and she goes, "You know, somebody here?" and I said no. "Then get off our porch."

0:48:34 Debra Schwartz: Ouch!

0:48:34 Pat Williams: And I went, "But I just want to introduce myself." "Get off our porch!"

0:48:40 Debra Schwartz: And "ours" being?

0:48:43 Pat Williams: The West Point Inn was run like a private club back then. You had to know somebody, and you had to have connections, and they actually had a little a box with black balls in it, where if you got two black balls, then you couldn't be a member, and you had to be invited by a member to even be considered to be a member. There was a lawsuit that happened in the '80s that stopped all that from happening because Charlie Evans was involved in that. He was a past president of West Point Inn. They turned the West Point Inn around and it operates much more friendly —

0:49:15 Debra Schwartz: Charlie changed that rigid vetting?

0:49:18 Pat Williams: He changed that, he filed a lawsuit and got it changed, because he was part of the Tamalpais Runners, and he came up here and he obviously got the same kind of treatment, and he said, “Yeah, no, that’s not going to happen on my watch.” And so Charlie got things changed up here. The West Point Inn now, it’s on public land, it needs to be done then. So anyway, I went back up to the lookout and just went, “The hell with them,” and didn’t think anything of it. But I would stop in here and buy lemonade on my bike route. And we stopped in here and came in, and there was no innkeeper around, and there was smoke coming out of the kitchen, and that’s where they had the supplies. We didn’t have the Honor Store like we do now. It’s probably about 5 o’clock, the wind’s blowing, and out of the corner of my eye I see a flame, and as I came up to the door, well, they had a propane refrigerator there, and the propane refrigerator had a fluid that had carboned up, and the carbonate caught fire and flames were impinging on the gas line and starting to roll on the ceiling, the paint was starting to burn on the ceiling, so we shut the gas off and quickly put the fire out. It wasn’t a big fire, just basically burnt paint, but —

0:50:37 Debra Schwartz: 15 minutes later —

0:50:38 Pat Williams: Oh, five minutes later.

0:50:39 Debra Schwartz: Five minutes —

0:50:40 Pat Williams: Yeah, the building would have been beyond saving, I think. Yeah, it was just starting to roll, and it was just serendipity, that two firefighters show up. So I went down to Throckmorton, and I said, “Guys, you better get up there and check what’s going.” It was pre-cellphone days, so I rode my bike down there and talked to the guys there that I knew. Pete Martin was one of them, and they came up and took a look at it, and I got a call from the West Point Inn saying, “We’d love to have you as a member. Thank you for saving the place.” And so I became a member and raised funds.

0:51:13 Debra Schwartz: Was the woman who was so unpleasant —

0:51:16 Pat Williams: No, no.

0:51:17 Debra Schwartz: She was gone?

0:51:18 Pat Williams: She was gone. I don’t know what her last name was. I could find out.

0:51:23 Debra Schwartz: Pat, Pat —

0:51:23 Pat Williams: Pat something, yeah. And here I am another Pat innkeeper up there, but hopefully I never treat anybody that way.

0:51:29 Debra Schwartz: Not so far, so I've heard.

0:51:31 Pat Williams: Well, a couple of weeks ago, I did yell and scream at some people and set them down, they were guests because they were having a little hookah party in the honeymoon cabin, set the fire alarm off. And when the alarm goes off, of course, it automatically dispatches the Fire Department.

0:51:46 Debra Schwartz: Well, a lot of people don't understand this, I think, but there's no smoking allowed on Mt. Tam.

0:51:50 Pat Williams: There's no candles, no smoking anywhere on the mountain, especially here at the West Point Inn.

0:51:55 Debra Schwartz: Yes, so they were politely asked to leave. Did they know —

0:52:00 Pat Williams: It wasn't very polite. I screamed and yelled at them, and swore at them and said, "Get your ass out of here." It was 8 o'clock at night, which was not a good thing because they were stoned, and I wound up intercepting them on the fire road. I said, "Come on back. We'll talk about this in the morning. I don't want you to go down." But there was one of them that didn't participate and he said, "Don't worry, I've got Uber coming to pick these people up, and it's taken care of." But I told them, "Don't come back."

0:52:27 Debra Schwartz: So you were on the top as a lookout man.

0:52:31 Pat Williams: Yeah.

0:52:33 Debra Schwartz: Which is such a romantic kind of a job. My vision of that was further cemented by Gary Yost's wonderful film, *A Day in the Life of a Fire Lookout*.

0:52:45 Pat Williams: Yep. Well, I'm the one that introduced Gary to the lookout.

0:52:48 Debra Schwartz: Let's talk about that.

0:52:51 Pat Williams: I met Gary on the deck here, and just talking he seemed like a personable guy. We were chit-chatting, and I asked him what he did, and he says, "Well, I do a lot of work with the Waldorf School and I'm pretty much retired." And I said, "Wow, you're pretty young to be retired." And he goes, "Yeah. I did well in —" I think it was Atari.

0:53:10 Debra Schwartz: He created —

0:53:11 Pat Williams: Autodesk, whatever.

0:53:13 Debra Schwartz: Some computer —

0:53:15 Pat Williams: Yeah, a computer thing. Anyway, so he was creative in photography and filmmaking, and I said, “Well, I am too. I really enjoy doing that kind of thing,” and so we hit it off. And somehow the topic of the fire lookout came up, and I said, “Well, if you’re interested,” I said, “I’m one of the trainers up there and it’s all volunteer now.” Sandy Ross, who lives in Mill Valley and I started the volunteer lookout program.

0:53:41 Debra Schwartz: Yes, she’s my neighbor.

0:53:51 Pat Williams: We got the whole thing going, and so I was one of the original trainers. And I told Gary, I said, “Yeah, I think you’d enjoy it, Gary. It’s amazing, the experiences you’ll have up there, you’ll remember for the rest of your life.” I told him about a night in 1969 when I was in the fire lookout and the fog came in and stopped at the railing of the fire lookout. I was above it, and it was dead calm, there was a full moon, and it was like, I could step off the deck and walk off. I was the only person in the entire Bay Area that was above the fog, unless you’re in an airplane, and it just was dead calm, dead still, dead quiet, and you could hear nothing because the fog was really thick, and the stars were just — with a full moon, you could still see all these bright stars and the clouds were just lit up, almost like daylight. It was all silver. And it was like you could step off and walk over to Mt. Diablo, because Mt. Diablo was the next thing above the fog.

0:54:52 Debra Schwartz: That you could see peeking its head up, up above the clouds.

0:54:55 Pat Williams: Yep, you could see it peeking up. It’s quite a bit higher than Mt. Tam.

0:55:01 Debra Schwartz: Yeah.

0:55:01 Pat Williams: Anyway, Gary became a fire lookout up there, and he did that wonderful video *A Day in the Life of a Fire Lookout*. He did a really nice job with that.

0:55:11 Debra Schwartz: He really did.

0:55:12 Pat Williams: It kind of kicked off Gary’s career.

0:55:14 Debra Schwartz: Yes, it really did. It’s still one of my favorite films.

0:55:16 Pat Williams: He became famous with that. It’s still one of my favorites. Yeah, in fact, right after he did, he gave me one of the original Blue-ray copies of it, and it is one of my treasures. Gary is still a good friend.

0:55:26 Debra Schwartz: I cry every time I watch the film because he captures it, he’s good.

0:55:32 Pat Williams: It does. It does capture the way I felt up there, and it captured that experience I just told you about the magic of the clouds.

0:55:40 Debra Schwartz: What other things, before we move away from the lookout — because I'm absolutely fascinated by this — what other things would you have seen up there?

0:55:47 Pat Williams: So one interesting story is that I used to invite people — because I was off duty as soon as the sun went down, I was off duty and I could have a glass of wine. And so I would pop open a bottle of wine as the sun's going down, and I would kind of look around and there was a couple down there that could have been a little less, not quite as old as my parents, and they just seemed to be very much in love and stuff, and I said, "Hey, would you guys like to have a glass of wine up in the fire lookout?" Well, we weren't supposed to invite people in, but I did, and so they came up and had a glass of wine, and they were just thrilled that I did this, so we chatted and they said, "Do you have a girlfriend?" And I said, "No." I said, "I have not had good luck with meeting girls here as a Vietnam veteran and stuff," and they said, "Well, we'd love for our daughter to meet you." And I said —

0:56:40 Debra Schwartz: Awkward. [laughs]

0:56:41 Pat Williams: Yeah, it was a little awkward. So the next weekend, I see this beautiful woman. I had got my binoculars down, I'm looking and the parking lot is kind of full, and I see this woman getting out of a Volkswagen van, and I could tell she was a beautiful woman all the way from the fire lookout, and I see her walking up the trail, and she's carrying a box. And I'm going, "Wow, wouldn't that be great if that was the daughter that they were talking about." She comes up and knocks on the fire lookout door and she said, "Hi, you treated my parents really nice up here last week, and I baked you this cake."

0:57:15 Debra Schwartz: You're like, "Thank you, God." [laughs]

0:57:16 Pat Williams: So I invited her in and we wound up dating — in fact, we almost got married — for a couple of years, but I mean, we just hit it off right away.

0:57:27 Debra Schwartz: Oh seriously, Pat, a really cute guy in the fire lookout on the top of the world, that has a certain allure.

0:57:36 Pat Williams: Yeah, well, she was amazing. She loved to rock climb and dance and things like that, so I wound up getting people to cover at the fire lookout for me on — I would usually only come down once every two weeks and get supplies at Mill Valley Market, and then go back up to the fire lookout, so I just said, "You know, I need to have some time off." She was in the College of Arts in Oakland, and she was into being an artist. Her name was Leanna Pinkston. I always wondered what happened to her, but anyway —

0:58:14 Debra Schwartz: Well, that was impressive.

0:58:15 Pat Williams: Yeah, we dated, we climbed a number of peaks in this year. She taught me rock climbing, and her parents were really into it too, and we had quite the romance. It broke off, she was a little too wild for me, but anyway that was one person that I met up there. There was another time I had somebody — I was downstairs talking to somebody — and a guy came up and he snuck in behind me, got up in the lookout, and I went upstairs, and here is a body in my bed with the covers pulled over the head.

0:58:51 Debra Schwartz: Whoa.

0:58:51 Pat Williams: And I thought, “What the heck!” I pulled back the covers, and here’s this guy, and he’s just stoned out of his mind, laying in my bed, and I said, “Come on. Get up, get up.” And it was hard to rock and get him, and I had to help him down the stairs, he was so intoxicated. So I went down and locked the door and he went, “Oh, man.” That happened a number of times, where people they’d be doing drugs, and I say, “You can’t smoke up here.” I was always telling people that. I still do to this day.

0:59:20 Debra Schwartz: Oh, I think last time, the time before last, when I was up here, we were up at the deck, and we could see a guy smoking over by the picnic tables.

0:59:27 Pat Williams: Oh, yeah, it was almost —

0:59:28 Debra Schwartz: And he argued it, remember?

0:59:30 Pat Williams: Oh, yeah, I do remember it. So, I’m always Mr. Fire Marshall Pat up here.

0:59:35 Debra Schwartz: Hold your ground.

0:59:36 Pat Williams: Yeah. [chuckles]

0:59:37 Debra Schwartz: How about any physical phenomena besides the amazing pausing fog — which I don’t think I’ll ever forget that image.

0:59:46 Pat Williams: There were some interesting things that happened. There was something that flew across the sky, I don’t know what it was, but it was below the lookout, and it was moving at supersonic speed, but there was no sound to it, it was very, very odd. I don’t know whether it was a meteorite or what, but it went shooting by. I happened to catch it out of the corner of my eye coming from north to south on the bay, and I just happened to be looking up towards Hamilton Field, and I saw this thing just going faster than any aircraft.

1:00:18 Debra Schwartz: Big? Little?

1:00:20 Pat Williams: It was just a streak, but it was moving at a horizontal probably, Mount Tam is at 2,571 feet, and this was probably maybe 2500 feet. It was right over the bay, and it kind of just disappeared over the Bay Bridge. But as it came — we're talking about a split-second here from the time I saw it until it was over the Bay Bridge, it was maybe a second — but as it passed the lookout, I had a Pyrex dish sitting there and the dish just exploded all over the lookout at the moment that it came by. I don't know, but there was no sound. That's the weird thing, there was absolutely no sound. I actually had a friend of mine, it was Greg Rossoff, who I had talked about earlier, it was his brother, Michael, who lives down on Mill Valley, and he was up in the fire lookout with me, and he just freaked when that happened. And none of us, we didn't know what it was. Still to this day, I don't know what it was. It was a really strange phenomenon.

1:01:22: So that was pretty memorable. And then there was a time, it was September 17th — because somebody actually did a fact check on my story and pulled up the Marin County Sheriff's records — there was a guy that was covering the fire lookout for me when I was down getting supplies. His father worked for the water district. His name was Dale Walsh, and he would come up and cover the lookout. I was coming back up, and it had rained that night, and I got up there and there was an MG with a top-down in the parking lot and, "Oh, some poor guy/girl's car broke down, and they couldn't get the top up or something." I thought it a little odd. Strangely, I remember it had a grill, that it was either gold plated or bronze plated, which is not a characteristic of an MG.

1:02:25: But it was a beautiful car, and I kind of looked at it and went, "Well, that's a shame. It's all wet." And I'm walking up and Dale is walking back down, he sees me pulling in the parking lot, and I'm hiking up with all my groceries and stuff, and I said, "So how did it go?" And he goes, "Well, there's a guy up there and he wants to come in the lookout. And he was all wet and he just seemed really strange." I went, "Oh, great," I said, "You locked the lookout?" And he goes, "No." And I went, "Oh!" So of course I get up to the lookout and this guy's inside the lookout, and he's wet, he's wearing, like a tweed jacket, almost like a Scottish smoking jacket, he had horn rimmed glasses, and he was about a foot shorter than me. I remember that he was fairly short. And I said, "You were told you weren't supposed to go in the lookout and you came in." He said, "I'm cold and —" He was babbling on, and I said, "Is that your car down there?" And he goes, "Yeah. You know —" But he was kind of talking nonsense, is the best way to describe it. I said, "Look, I'll make you a cup of tea, and then you have to leave. I've got work to do." And so I put the tea pot on, and this guy is talking about his car and his dipstick in his car.

1:03:37: And I'm just thinking, "Yeah, this guy's a dipstick. I need to get him out of here." I'm looking out the window, his back is to me, and I can see his reflection in the window as I'm over the stove, trying to get the water to heat up. You know what they say about, "A watched pot never boils." This time I was trying to get it to boil by pressing it down on the stove, and there's a little pause in his conversation, and I can see his reflection, and he's got something in his hand, and he's got it up like he's going to plunge it into my back. Well, I just grabbed the tea pot, swung around and whacked him with the tea pot, and the hot water spilled down on him. I don't think he got burned because he

was already wet and cold, but we tussled a little bit, and I could see he had a long sharp thing, and I just assumed that it was the dipstick out of his MG that he had, but I thought, “This is just bizarre. This guy just, he’s trying to stab me.” And we wrestled a little bit. And he ran down the stairs, and I followed him down, and he ran out, and I locked the door, and then I could see him start his MG and drive away.

1:04:44: And, of course, this happened after a number of other things, like the guy sleeping in the bed. I just went, threw my hands up, and I went, “Wow. The door is locked,” didn’t think anything of it. But I was listening to KGO radio, the news, and right at noon there came on a newflash. They found a woman stabbed to death in Lake Berryessa, and she had been stabbed with an ice pick-like instrument multiple times. It was the Zodiac [killer], and he had left his calling card. Because he would leave a calling card, and listening to this news story, and the hair on the back of my neck and arm just stood straight up, and I went, “That guy just tried to stab me with an ice pick-like instrument.” So I called the sheriff and made a report on it, and of course they said, “Well, what do you want us to do? That was three or four hours ago.” And I said, “Well, I just wanted to report it.”

1:05:32 Debra Schwartz: That very same day.

1:05:33 Pat Williams: That very same day. And the woman that was murdered, they said it probably happened within the last 48 hours. And I was thinking, “I wonder if this could be the same guy.” So anyway, I gave a description to them, and I never heard back from anybody on it. It still kind of — I’ve never read any of the Zodiac books or went to any of the movies. It still kind of creeps me out.

1:06:00 Debra Schwartz: Well, I’ve been hiking this mountain for a very long time, since the ’70s, and I remember the time of the hillside killer.

1:06:11 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:06:12 Debra Schwartz: The Trailside Killer.

1:06:13 Pat Williams: Yeah, David Carpenter.

1:06:14 Debra Schwartz: David Carpenter. And at that time — hiking is such a draw and you think, “What are the chances?” But people who thought that very thing were killed on the trails.

1:06:28 Pat Williams: Yeah. I was innkeeping up here at the time. We operated a little differently back then, but I was innkeeping at West Point Inn and when all that was going on, and boy there was nobody. You didn’t see anybody on the mountain when that happened. Julie Alderson, who I knew, was one of those that was murdered. I think it was, if I remember correctly, I think it was on the Matt Davis Trail, down below the inn here.

1:06:54 Debra Schwartz: Oh dear.

1:06:55 Pat Williams: Yeah, he ambushed her and killed her. And she had a real promising career. Her father was a physician who lived down in Sleepy Hollow. I had started a Jaycee chapter in Corte Madera and both her and her brother were members of that Jaycee chapter, the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

1:07:19 Debra Schwartz: How about animals? Have you seen any bizarre animal behavior in your time here on the mountain?

1:07:26 Pat Williams: I have never seen a mountain lion.

1:07:28 Debra Schwartz: Oh, really?

1:07:29 Pat Williams: I know they're around here. I've seen the footprints. I had an encounter one time where, when I first started as a paid innkeeper up here 12 years ago, I was going up to check the water tank, just around sunset. Usually I do it in the morning, I just got busy that day and I thought, "I got to get up and add chlorine to the tank." So I got my stuff together and as I was locking the back door to the inn, I heard this awful sound, like a scream, but it wasn't a scream, and went, "What the heck was that? Okay." I walk around like, just go around the bend here, on the Fire Road, right opposite cabin four, and here is a huge buck going through its death throes.

1:08:17 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:08:18 Pat Williams: And just starting to bleed out. It had a big bite mark on it's neck, and it had been eviscerated. And I went, "Wow, that's classic mountain lion."

1:08:25 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:08:25 Pat Williams: And so now, once again, I'm getting that hair on the back of my neck standing up, and I know that mountain lion is looking at me. I don't see it, I just kind of did a little glance around. I didn't see it, but they don't leave their prey. They guard it religiously. And this had just happened. So I got to the edge of the Fire Road as far off as I could and I just kept walking to the water tank, like nothing had happened, because if I had stopped, that mountain lion probably would have defended its prey. So I just kept going, and I got up there and I did the water tank, and I'm thinking, "I got to go back down. It's too dark to go back the Miller Trail, and I don't have a light on me." So I came back down the Fire Road, and then just —

1:09:11 Debra Schwartz: Thunk, thunk, thunk in your heart.

1:09:11 Pat Williams: Looking everywhere, yeah. So I get to where the deer was, and it's gone.

1:09:16 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:09:18 Pat Williams: There's a big pool of blood there, and there's a trail of blood going right up that bank, which is almost about 80 percent grade, going straight up that bank, and it had to drag that deer, that I'd estimated about 150 pounds minimum, drag that deer straight up that bank. That's a powerful animal that can do that. I found the carcass up where we have our solar panels now — there was nothing back there then — I found the carcass about a month later, and it was picked dry.

1:09:46 Debra Schwartz: Yep, I've had about half a dozen sightings.

1:09:49 Pat Williams: Of mountain lions?

1:09:50 Debra Schwartz: Yes. Some right in front of me.

1:09:52 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:09:52 Debra Schwartz: And I've seen carcasses freshly killed, completely cleaned to the bone. Nothing left. Overnight.

1:10:01 Pat Williams: They don't waste anything.

1:10:02 Debra Schwartz: No, they do not.

1:10:03 Pat Williams: And anything they leave, the coyotes —

1:10:05 Debra Schwartz: Somebody else —

1:10:05 Pat Williams: The coyotes and the raccoons. So, we have raccoons up here which, we haven't had for a long time. We've got one last night that knocked over the garbage can before I could get them in. I bring them in at night, and 9:30 last night I heard crash, boom, bang, and I came out there and I didn't see them, but their little wet footprints were there and the garbage all over the deck.

1:10:27 Debra Schwartz: You found their little finger work. When did you start your job as an innkeeper?

1:10:32 Pat Williams: I became a member of the West Point Inn in 1989, and the way they operated in those days was you became a weekend host. You got trained, after you were a member for a year and you desired to. They trained you to be a host, and you could come up and stay at the inn for free and run it from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning. So Friday and Saturday nights and you kind of ran the Inn. Then they had a paid innkeeper that was up here from Tuesday morning until Friday afternoon. And so you would relieve him. He was basically your supervisor. He'd tell you what needed to be done. And so you ran the inn. It was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed doing it. I was working as a firefighter and stuff, so I did it whenever I could, and then I became friends

with the innkeepers. At that time it was Daniel Morrowitz, and when he needed relief, I'd fill in for him.

1:11:35 Debra Schwartz: Were you paid at your fill-in position or you volunteered?

1:11:36 Pat Williams: No, I would volunteer to do that. Most people wanted to be paid, but I had a good job at the fire department and I loved being up here, so I'd come up and work for a week and I went, "Oh, this is a lot of fun."

1:11:47 Debra Schwartz: What are the duties of an innkeeper?

1:11:49 Pat Williams: It's a lot. I mean keeping the place safe is number one. Protecting it from fires is what we consider number one. 12 years ago they asked me — they had a young couple up here, and they weren't working out — and they asked me to come up and run the Inn while they had to go through an eviction process to get them out. And so I stayed up in the main part of the inn in one of the rooms and ran the inn for pretty much the whole month of December in 2007. They wanted me to be the permanent innkeeper, and I said, "No, I've got a life down the mountain. But, hey, I got an idea. What if I got a couple of my retired fire buddies to help me out? You know we do a job share thing?" And they said, "Well, give us something in writing." So I went to the board and made the presentation. They decided to try it out for six months. Two of the board members wanted to do it also. So we started out with four of us: two retired firefighters, myself, Jim McElrath, and Carole Therm and Ed Poser. We started this thing. And I don't think the board will ever go back. It worked out really well, and so they try and hire retired firefighters. I'm the last retired firefighter, and we have three San Francisco firefighters who are currently working.

1:13:10 Debra Schwartz: And their names?

1:13:12 Pat Williams: Jennifer Green, Karl Jorgensen, and Craig Gordon. And they're all relatively new. Karl's been here for a couple of years, but he's only worked a few shifts. They're still working full times as firefighters and paramedics in the city, so it's hard for them to do it. But they're turning out well. And there's another firefighter who lives in Mill Valley, who I think was a chief officer in Daly City, who is retiring now, and I've got his name, and I'm going to interview him to see if he's interested in being an innkeeper.

1:13:44 Debra Schwartz: So, you keep your perimeter clear from fire.

1:13:47 Pat Williams: We try to maintain a minimum of a 200-foot perimeter around the inn. I raised funds, \$100,000, when I first became a member to put a sprinkler system in here, and to show I was earnest, I dug a trench two feet deep all through this parking lot.

1:14:04 Debra Schwartz: This is not such easy stuff to dig a trench into.

1:14:07 Pat Williams: Yeah, it's not. [chuckles] But it was good labor, and I ran a line out to the fire line. We have a separate fire line from our water line that supplies water to the inn, so we've got a pretty good water system. We have 98 sprinkler heads in the inn now. They put a commercial system in which cost \$100,000, and most of it was from one of our old members who was a wealthy man. I pulled his arm way up behind his back until he went up all in and coughed up the money. [laughs]

1:14:38 Debra Schwartz: Thank you. So, there's fire prevention. Certainly your training as a fireman has got to help with injuries and health issues that may come up as, you know, I'm sure more than one person has ridden their bike right up to here to the West Point Inn to have their heart attack or —

1:15:01 Pat Williams: Oh yeah. When I came up here, I had two demands: one was that we have an AED and a good first aid kit up here, which the board agreed to, and the second was that they not replace the cat that had passed away. Because I'm highly allergic to cats as a lot of people are —

1:15:21 Debra Schwartz: I can't imagine a cat would even last that long up here at the inn.

1:15:24 Pat Williams: Well, we've had a number of cats and I love them. I really like cats. I'm just allergic to them. But the cats also are hard on the environment up here. They kill lizards and birds and what have you. But the cats we had, I mean, they died of old age and illnesses.

1:15:39 Debra Schwartz: Really? No coyotes took them for a snack?

1:15:41 Pat Williams: They were smarter than that. We used to leave one of the windows up by the fire escape in Room 7 open. You had asked me earlier about if I'd ever seen a ghost up here? Well, I've heard a ghost. So, the year I started up here, my wife, Colleen and I were sleeping in Room 7 while I was running the inn. And we were in bed one night and Tink, who had been the previous cat, had passed away about a month before, and was just buried just down by the head of the Nora Trail. So, I heard a meow and I went, "We've got another cat up here?" And I woke up, I looked at Colleen and said, "Did you hear that?" And she goes, "Yeah."

1:16:33: And I didn't hear anything more, so I rolled over and went back — then I heard it again. "What the heck?" So I got up, went out on the fire escape and looked on the roof to see if I could see a cat around, and I saw nothing, it was just quiet. Nothing. So I went back to bed. Another five minutes goes by, and I hear a meow again. So I went, "Okay, this has got to be Tink's ghost, so I open up the window — because Tink would throw a fit if that window was ever closed — I opened the window, and I never heard another meow. But about two weeks later, Jennifer Barkley, who is one of our people up here —

1:17:10 Debra Schwartz: One of the innkeepers, yes.

1:17:12 Pat Williams: She's been a member for a long time. You know Jennifer?

1:17:13 Debra Schwartz: Yes, she does a lot.

1:17:14 Pat Williams: So, Jennifer was up here and she was sleeping on the couch. I think the inn was full, and anyway she was sleeping on the couch, and she woke up and saw Tink walking into the — this is another month later, so it was two months after Tink had passed away — and saw Tink walking from the parlor into the member's lounge and then disappear just like it just was an apparition, just disappeared. I said, "Well, you're probably dreaming," but I thought, "Ooh, interesting coincidence here."

1:17:45 Debra Schwartz: Wow. How about any other ghosts, ghosts of previous innkeepers or —

1:17:52 Pat Williams: So, there's been the piano being played, and I hear this incredible piano music. And a number of past board members have said, "Oh, yeah, that is —" I forgot her name, but it was one of the previous board presidents. She had passed away, and she liked to play the piano and was a good piano player. Other people had heard that too.

1:18:16 Debra Schwartz: So just randomly, they'd be up in their rooms, and they could hear the piano?

1:18:17 Pat Williams: Yeah. You'd hear the piano going, somebody playing the piano, you'd come down, but before you get into the room it stops and there's nobody here, nobody there.

1:18:27 Debra Schwartz: Oh.

1:18:28 Pat Williams: There have been a number of times where people have come in and played the piano, and I hear it, and I always go to see who's playing it. And there's a doctor, a plastic surgeon, pretty famous plastic surgeon from Larkspur, who comes up and he's an incredible piano player. So, I told him, "Any time you're up here, you come in and play it." But he was playing it one time, and it stopped, and I thought, "Oh no, it's the piano ghost again." [laughs] It turned out it was him, so it could have been him in the past too.

1:19:01 Debra Schwartz: Let's talk some more so that people can understand further about the responsibilities of the innkeeper.

1:19:07 Pat Williams: Okay.

1:19:08 Debra Schwartz: You've got fire to prevent, what else?

1:19:12 Pat Williams: Well, you've got to make —

1:19:13 Debra Schwartz: Do you clean up?

1:19:14 Pat Williams: Yeah, one of the biggest jobs is keeping this place clean. It's an old building, built in 1904, and it's a lot of work to maintain it. For instance, after I'm finished talking with you today, I've got to go pull the toilet up in one of the bathrooms out there because it's leaking badly, and put a new wax seal in and put it back down again. Every day there is something broken or something needs to be fixed. And we're completely off-grid up here, so we've got a solar system, a septic system, a water system that we maintain. It's a lot of work. You work from 7:00 in the morning until 11:00 at night.

1:19:49 Debra Schwartz: Every day that you're here.

1:19:51 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:19:51 Debra Schwartz: And yet, you look at this and think, "This is the greatest."

1:19:55 Pat Williams: It is the greatest, you know?

1:19:56 Debra Schwartz: I mean, but you can relax.

1:19:56 Pat Williams: You have to like to work.

1:19:58 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:19:58 Pat Williams: If you want to be an innkeeper, you have to like to work.

1:20:00 Debra Schwartz: And I should think you have to like people.

1:20:01 Pat Williams: Because if you don't like to work, you're not going to last very long, and you have to like people, because this is a people job. Your job is greeting people, recruiting members, telling people about the history of the mountain and telling stories. Of course, I like to elaborate and make up some of the ghost stories that I do tell, but I usually base them on fact. We have a cabin built by a man in Washington that —

1:20:26 Debra Schwartz: Oh, wait. I want to close your interview with that story.

1:20:32 Pat Williams: Okay.

1:20:32 Debra Schwartz: I've been witness to you telling the story, and it's so funny, and it seems like it's totally true, but I think it's tall tales.

1:20:40 Pat Williams: It's partially true.

1:20:42 Debra Schwartz: How about the bedding situation here? Do people need to bring their bedding?

1:20:48 Pat Williams: So, when you stay at the West Point Inn, we ask people to bring sheets and pillow cases to fit a double bed, because our beds are almost all doubles, with a few singles and one queen. We do rent sheets out for 20 dollars, but it's a hassle for us to pack that all down the mountain. But we keep those for people that are traveling.

1:21:07 Debra Schwartz: I see there's sheets on some of the beds and —

1:21:10 Pat Williams: Well, there's not supposed to be, but we have mattress pads and pillow covers and stuff. But we want people to bring their own. Part of it is to prevent bed bugs from spreading which, knock on wood, we haven't had happen up here yet, but most hotels and inns have had bed bug problems in the past. We've never had that up here.

1:21:29 Debra Schwartz: And other duties, let's just get them out on the table.

1:21:32 Pat Williams: We turn the lights out at night. Our lighting system is propane, which is a dangerous gas and nobody can touch that except for the innkeepers. Just making sure people are staying safe. Lot of parties up here. People get drunk.

1:21:49 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, I was going to ask, how about your drunken stories?

1:21:53 Pat Williams: Oh, there are plenty of those. Yeah, people come up, it's usually their 40th and 50th birthday parties where [chuckles] — I always kind of go, "This is going to be a long night," and it usually is. [chuckles] But yeah, I've had to call Search and Rescue. There was one night, it was a 50th birthday party for this woman from Sacramento. She was a school teacher, and her husband was a pilot for one of the local airlines, and anyway, he had way too much to drink and passed out. They were staying in Room 1, and he is a very large guy, and she went up to wake him up, she couldn't wake him up, so she decided she's going to go home and drive back to Sacramento. I'd given them a little extra time. Usually, I turn the lights out, but they had the entire inn rented out with their friends and there was probably —

1:22:46 Debra Schwartz: She was going to leave the inn with all of her friends and everything because there was no room for her on the bed?

1:22:50 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:22:51 Debra Schwartz: Okay.

1:22:51 Pat Williams: Well, she'd been drinking. Everybody had been drinking a lot. And I had gone up and taken a little bit of a nap because I was tired, and I woke up, and it was 11 o'clock and I went, "Ahh, I got to go down and get these people in bed." So I came back down and they said, "Well, we got a problem." This woman had wandered away, and so I went down looking for her. I hiked down by our septic leach field down

here, and I had a flashlight in my hand, but I didn't have it on. I was just calling out her name, and I came down and all of a sudden, something hit my leg really hard, and I'm going, "What the heck?" So I turn on the flashlight, and I see this coyote running away from me. I had a pretty good clip. I take the light, and I got all these eyes looking at me.

1:23:35 Debra Schwartz: Oh.

1:23:36 Pat Williams: And so, I went, "Oh, this is not good." So I went back up to the inn and I yelled, and of course they scattered, but it was a moonless night, and I didn't see them, and they had surrounded me. And one of the rangers said, "You are lucky," he said, "because that's how they take down a deer. They'll knock the front legs off the deer and when the deer hits the ground, they'll pounce." And so, I dodged a bullet there. [laughs] So anyway, I went back up, called Search and Rescue and said, "We've got a problem. We've got a woman missing up here." And they found her at three o'clock in the morning on Indian Fire Trail over above Kent Woodlands.

1:24:13 Debra Schwartz: Oh wow.

1:24:13 Pat Williams: She thought she was walking back to Bootjack or Pantoll.

1:24:20 Debra Schwartz: Oh.

1:24:20 Pat Williams: And she'd gone the wrong way.

1:24:21 Debra Schwartz: She thinks she was going down Old Stagecoach?

1:24:23 Pat Williams: Yeah, she thought she was on Old Stage, and she was going down the railroad and got on Hoo-Koo-E-Koo and all the way around the mountain.

[laughter]

1:24:29 Debra Schwartz: Oh my God.

1:24:29 Pat Williams: And then, somebody woke up her husband, and he comes down, and he's got nothing but flip flops and a pair of boxer shorts on, and he's, well, pretty drunk. I could hear him crashing down the staircase. [laughs] And he comes out and I said, "No, you can't." So now, this guy wants to fight me, and he's about my size and about 100 pounds more. And I said, "I'm not going to fight you."

1:24:51 Debra Schwartz: He's belligerent.

1:24:52 Pat Williams: He's belligerent, and I said, "You're not in a state to go looking for your wife. We've got people looking for her." And he just pushes me aside, and he heads down there. I said, "Fine," I just got on the phone, called the sheriff and said, "Hey, we got another one." [laughs] And they picked him up down at the gate, down on the Old Stage Road.

1:25:09 Debra Schwartz: Have you ever had to deliver a baby up here?

1:25:12 Pat Williams: No. We've come close. I had a guest just last year who was up here and she was more than nine months pregnant. I went and made sure the OB kit that we've got up here was ready to go, and two days later, she delivered. And the baby's been back up here to the Inn. [chuckles]

1:25:29 Debra Schwartz: How about heart attacks?

1:25:31 Pat Williams: We've had a number of people have heart attacks. And that AED that I had — this was a situation where this guy should not have made it. Somebody came up, I was talking to one of our board member's husband, who I didn't know was her husband, he was using his computer on the deck and nobody was around, but people were starting to come up, and our board was having a board retreat inside the inn. And I went up and I said, "Sir, you can't use your laptop on the deck here." And he goes, "Oh, well, I'm a doctor and I'm trying to get some research." And I said, "Well, that's fine, but you just can't do it on the deck here." I said, "You can go down below here if you want." "Well, my wife's one of the new board members." And I went, "Oh, okay."

1:26:21: So I started talking to him, somebody came up the stairs and said, "Hey" — the mountain play had been going on that day — and he goes, "Hey, there's some guy down here that collapsed when I came up on my mountain bike, and I sat down and ate one of those foot-long Subway sandwiches. And he's just been laying there the whole time. I thought he was drunk, but I'm not so sure now." I said, "Oh, okay." So I went down and took a look at him, and he was blue as could be. I looked at him and went, "Oh no, this is not good." And I asked the guy, "How long do you think you were sitting there?" And he said, "About 10 minutes." So I hollered up — the board had taken a break, and I could see them out on the deck — I hollered to one of them to bring the AED down and somebody else to bring the medical kit down.

1:26:56 Debra Schwartz: So for those that don't know what that is, that's a defibrillator.

1:27:00 Pat Williams: Automatic defibrillator, yeah. And so, they brought the defibrillator down, and I hooked him up, and I actually physically picked him up and threw him on top of the picnic table down there.

1:27:09 Debra Schwartz: Wow.

1:27:10 Pat Williams: Because it made it a lot easier to do CPR. I'd already started CPR and had CPR going for at least a minute before they brought the AED down. I shocked him a number of times and I talked to him. And I was violating some of the protocol. I was a national instructor trainer in CPR, so I've got a lot of experience in teaching and performing in all of my years in the fire department. Well, he came back. And when he came back, it was like I saw a ghost. And I had an audience, because the

mountain play had broken up. There had to be 200 people standing around watching this whole thing. I was oblivious to it at the time, because my focus was on this man. And it turns out, he's one of my neighbors. He lives in Larkspur, and he was 60 years old and that happened seven years ago, I guess. And he's doing fine. I thought he had passed away, I figured he was not going to make it, that he's got too much brain damage because of this guy witnessing him fall. He was what we call a witnessed arrest. And the estimate was it was over 10 minutes before he came up and got me and I started CPR. Usually, after 10 minutes your chances of surviving is zero. The only thing I can think of, he was probably on ventricular fibrillation and his head was downhill.

1:28:36 Debra Schwartz: His head is down flow.

1:28:37 Pat Williams: And he had enough blood flowing to his brain.

1:28:38 Debra Schwartz: To his brain, right.

1:28:39 Pat Williams: So, anyway, long story. I came up and the medics down at Throckmorton Ridge were busy on another call at Pantoll, and so, I had to wait for an ambulance all the way from Mill Valley to get up here. And the state park rangers showed up and luckily Roberto had oxygen, so I put oxygen on him, and Roberto helped me. Anyway, he came back and was very combative, and I figured, he's probably got serious brain damage.

1:29:14 Debra Schwartz: But not unusual for someone being revived?

1:29:15 Pat Williams: Oh, no, I mean the chance of survival is —

1:29:18 Debra Schwartz: I mean, the combative behavior.

1:29:19 Pat Williams: Combative behavior is usually a sign of severe brain damage. So they helped move him into the ambulance and they took our AED with them and I went back down to the hospital to pick up the AED and figured, "I've got some contacts down there from the fire department." He said, "You know, he'd probably like to see you." And I go, "He's alive?" And he goes, "Yeah, he's upstairs, we're going to discharge him tomorrow." I went, "What? [laughs] Wait a minute, are we talking about the same patient here?" And I went up to visit him and his brothers were in the room and that was kind of awkward: "Who are you?" He had lost his memory for about three months prior to that, but he survived. The Marin Medical Society made a big deal about it, so the surgeon general came out and gave me a National Life Saving medal at a big event in San Rafael, so it was kind of cool.

1:30:10 Debra Schwartz: Yes, very cool.

1:30:10 Pat Williams: So, I thought maybe I should wear my Life Saving badge around the inn, but it could be a little too presumptuous.

[laughter]

1:30:18 Debra Schwartz: Oh, hikers take care of their own badge maybe.

1:30:20 Pat Williams: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

1:30:21 Debra Schwartz: You've seen a lot of behavior, what would you say to the people that come up to the West Point Inn? What's your friendly advice to the people that come up here in regard to how to behave on this mountain?

1:30:42 Pat Williams: Well, first of all, don't smoke and don't throw trash down. That drives me crazy. I'm constantly picking up trash. It's not as bad here as it is in a lot of places, but still —

1:30:53 Debra Schwartz: I've seen some things, I'll tell you.

1:30:55 Pat Williams: Yeah, I have too. I have seen all kinds of things.

1:30:58 Debra Schwartz: Some of them, rather unpleasant.

1:31:01 Pat Williams: Yeah, so it's not okay. We've got bathroom facilities up here, there's no need to go to the bathroom outside at the West Point Inn. And we're two miles from pretty much everything. I find most people are delightful. There's very few people that are obnoxious that come up here. I think it's the nature of the mountain that tends to pacify us. The higher up we get on the mountain and the more we climb, the better we feel about ourselves and our fellowman and nature. This mountain has a magic to it that transforms people.

1:31:46 Debra Schwartz: Did you find after Vietnam that your time on the mountain was soothing?

1:31:50 Pat Williams: Oh, it probably saved my life. I had a really hard time in Vietnam. I had a young Vietnamese boy who gave up his life to save mine. I couldn't talk about it for years. I went through years of therapy at the VA Hospital and medication, everything else to get through it. I was suicidal, even though my life is incredibly good. I've got a beautiful wife and children, and I own a home in Marin, which is a huge blessing for somebody that came here with absolutely nothing.

1:32:23 Debra Schwartz: And not too far from where you were sleeping.

1:32:25 Pat Williams: No, no, no, it's less than a mile away. And so, Mt. Tam is a spiritual place.

1:32:41 Debra Schwartz: Are there any people in particular that you remember that — there's what I call mountain rats.

1:32:46 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:32:46 Debra Schwartz: There's people on the mountain that just really — it's their lifestyle.

1:32:52 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:32:53 Debra Schwartz: I've seen those folks hiking, and I guess I'm one of those folks.

1:32:57 Pat Williams: I was just going to say, well, there's Debra Schwartz. [laughs] There was a guy that worked for the water district when I was in the fire lookout. Oh, I cannot think of his name at the moment, it'll come to me.¹

1:33:09 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:33:12 Pat Williams: But just a wonderful man, and he would hike to the fire lookout every Sunday and bring me a piece of that German chocolate cake from the old Mountain Home Inn, the old German place. He would bring that up, and I would see him coming up and I would salivate [laughs] because the cake was just so wonderful. I really looked forward to him doing that. He's passed away a number of years ago, but he was one of the land managers up here in the watershed. And the rangers up here.

1:33:43 Debra Schwartz: What rangers?

1:33:44 Pat Williams: Well, a number of them. There was Moose, who's retired, and Larry Norel, who saved me more than once. Before he was a ranger on Mt. Tam, he was a lifeguard at Stinson Beach. I've been surfing since 1965, and I got knocked out on my surfboard, and it was a foggy day, and I was out there with one other friend of mine, who was down the beach a ways, and Larry just happened to see me and pulled me out of the water. I would have drowned. I had a knot the size of a softball on my head. But then he saved me another time on Hoo-Koo-E-Koo when I crashed my bicycle and got busted up pretty bad, and Larry just happened to be driving down the mountain. I had coffee with him, I was on my way home from the fire house and I used to stop by here and have coffee in the morning with the innkeepers and Larry was here. And luckily, he went the same way I did, and so, he brought me down to Marin General, and they patched me up. Larry sticks out in my mind, and Moose was a character.

1:34:51: Gordon Hassler, I don't know if you know that name, but Gordon and I actually — I was going to be on Mt. Tam. I wanted to be a ranger and took the test, and I'd probably gotten hired at the same time Gordon did, but I decided to go to with San Anselmo Fire Department. So I worked in San Anselmo, which later became Ross Valley. And just even fighting fires on the mountain here — do you remember Dowd's Furniture burned down?

¹ His name was Jim Virek.—Pat Williams.

1:35:23 Debra Schwartz: Sure. Mm-hmm.

1:35:24 Pat Williams: So, the night that burned, I was the captain at Throckmorton, I was covering the station, because there was a 40 acre wildfire going on just on the other side of Pantoll, just burning the grass area over there, by Rock Springs. The guys needed a cover, and so my engine company came up and were covering the Throckmorton Station. And it's about two or three o'clock in the morning, and looking over Mill Valley, it's just kind of a red glow, and I'm going, "There's something going on that's not normal." The rest of my crew was asleep, and I was going in to get them up and all of the alarms went off.

1:36:07 Debra Schwartz: This was the early '80s, correct?

1:36:08 Pat Williams: Yeah, I think it was early '80s.

1:36:10 Debra Schwartz: When the restaurant burned down and the Curtis Art Gallery as well, right?

1:36:15 Pat Williams: Yup. Yup.

1:36:15 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:36:16 Pat Williams: And so, I got down to the fire in Mill Valley, and Darrell Aldersen was the chief on duty at the time, and we knew each other pretty well because we'd gone through fire sciences at College of Marin together, and I walked up to Darrell, and I said, "Anybody covering the Sweetwater?" And he goes, "No. Would you go check on it?" So I went over there and pushed open the door, and got in there and the whole wall, because it was right next to the fire —

1:36:42 Debra Schwartz: Yeah, right. Back then, the Sweetwater was right on Throckmorton.

1:36:45 Pat Williams: Yeah. So I got in the front door, and there were posters and stuff on the wall that was starting to curl and smoke, and it is a brick wall.

1:36:55 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:36:56 Pat Williams: It's considered what they call a four-hour firewall, but that's how hot that fire was. So, I brought some hose lines in through there and up onto the roof of the Sweetwater. And so, the people at Sweetwater made a T-shirt for me that said, "I saved the Sweetwater." [chuckles]

1:37:13 Debra Schwartz: You really ought to start wearing your garb once in a while.

1:37:16 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:37:16 Debra Schwartz: And just with all the awards.

1:37:18 Pat Williams: Yeah, yeah. The fire marshall in Mill Valley at that time was a guy named Scott Myers, and he and I and the girl from Tiburon and the fire marshall from Corte Madera started the fire investigation team. Anyway, we were investigating that fire.

1:37:35 Debra Schwartz: That was a suspicious circumstance as I recall.

1:37:37 Pat Williams: It was very suspicious. I found seven places where I detected the smell of kerosene and stuff. And then, at that time, the chief of Mill Valley said, “That’s it.” He called an ATF [Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms] agent and kicked us out and they did their own investigation. They brought in this dog sniffer and they found one more set. I found seven, the dog found eight. So we did a pretty good job. But after fighting the fire and then staying up all night and digging, I was exhausted because it was a long day. But, yeah, that was a suspicious fire.

1:38:11 Debra Schwartz: Yes. I actually know a little bit about that, but we shan’t go into that in our interview. And how about — the one thing that so many people love about the West Point Inn are the wonderful pancake breakfasts.

1:38:26 Pat Williams: Yeah. That was started by a fellow firefighter, a friend of mine, Pete Martin. He used to be in charge of the Throckmorton Fire Station, and he’s been a member longer than I have with the West Point Inn. Pete came up with the idea because the fire departments all did it.

1:38:41 Debra Schwartz: Always the pancake breakfasts.

1:38:42 Pat Williams: They do pancake breakfasts. He said, “We should do one at West Point as a fundraiser.” And so Pete started all that. We’ve been doing that for a long time.

1:38:52 Debra Schwartz: Describe that for those that are listening to this interview.

1:38:55 Pat Williams: Well, our pancake breakfast, they start on Mother’s Day. And we start at 9:30 in the morning — 9, 9:30 in the morning — and we usually go till one o’clock. And it’s a good fundraiser. The people of Mill Valley and Marin County really support the inn because they come up in droves. Mother’s Day and Father’s Day pancake breakfasts, we generally have over a thousand people. So all the labor up here takes a crew of 25 to do it. Everybody volunteers up here, and it’s a lot of fun. They come up the night before, and we have a big party and assign jobs for everybody, and it all works like clockwork.

1:39:35 Debra Schwartz: Yes.

1:39:36 Pat Williams: It just comes together.

1:39:37 Debra Schwartz: And for those that haven't been to the West Point Inn, for most people, except for the people that are bringing cooking materials or supplies or maybe handicap parking, the people that come to breakfast, they have to hike or bike up here.

1:39:51 Pat Williams: Yes they do, sometimes even in the rain.

1:39:53 Debra Schwartz: And sometimes in the rain.

1:39:54 Pat Williams: Yeah. It has been plenty of Mother's Days. And we started doing it on Easter Sunday, because the one in October seems to get closed out more often than not because of the fire danger.

1:40:03 Debra Schwartz: Because of red flag warnings.

1:40:06 Pat Williams: But we did that for two Easters, and it didn't work because it was either too foggy or too wet up here at the time and just a little too early in the season.

1:40:15 Debra Schwartz: It's such a time with those pancake breakfasts when there are really a lot of children up here.

1:40:23 Pat Williams: My grandsons, and my daughters, when they were younger, were up here helping with the pancake breakfast.

1:40:35 Debra Schwartz: It's really sweet when the kids come deliver your food.

1:40:37 Pat Williams: Yeah, and my grandsons are doing that now. My grandson that is 16 got his time on the grill making pancakes. He's been kind of moving up the scale, and he loves it. And so afterwards when I'm in charge of a pancake breakfast or up here, we always have leftover pancakes, and so we have a little contest with the kids and see who can throw a pancake down the trail the farthest.

1:41:02 Debra Schwartz: [laughs] I did not know.

1:41:03 Pat Williams: And my grandson holds the record by a lot. He was able to get this one pancake, and it just sailed off over the trees like a flying saucer and disappeared down nowhere some place. And, of course, the raccoons and the coyotes love it. [chuckles]

1:41:16 Debra Schwartz: Thank you. And how about the Heritage Nights?

1:41:20 Pat Williams: The whole reason we exist is to preserve the history of this old beautiful building. Heritage Night is one of the highlights of the year, and it's usually sold out. We do it two nights. Our historian —

1:41:37 Debra Schwartz: Once a year is it? Just once a year? No. It's more than that, I think.

1:41:40 Pat Williams: No, no, we usually just do it once a year. There may have been once or twice we did it twice. They do it multiple nights, but it's the same lecture. And there's been some wonderful times: the 100th anniversary of the Titanic.

1:41:55 Debra Schwartz: Beautiful. I was here.

1:41:57 Pat Williams: You were here for that.

1:41:58 Debra Schwartz: Sure, I always have some food.

1:42:00 Pat Williams: So that was a three-day celebration. And, as you know, the member's lounge and parlor were all decorated in Titanic. I dressed up as a chief engineer and had an old Australian firefighter's wool uniform with the brass buttons, and my wife dressed up as Letricia who was one of our ghosts that lives here at the West Point Inn.

1:42:20 Debra Schwartz: Hmm, another ghost.

1:42:22 Pat Williams: I haven't told you that story. So Washington Dodge was a very famous San Franciscan who went on the Titanic, and what I've heard is he was a doctor, and they had asked him to help out and be a doctor on the Titanic. So he was kind of considered a crew member. And when the Titanic went down, he wound up surviving in lifeboat number 13, which is a bit notorious because lifeboat number 13 just had crew members. And because he was a doctor and helping out — I think his passage was probably paid for because he was a doctor — he wound up in that lifeboat, and because there was crew members, there were no women on it, and it was only half full. And the story was that they didn't pick up any survivors in the water. However, I got that there were survivors. So any time there's a disaster there are all kinds of stories that fly around that aren't necessarily true. But it really affected Washington. And he came back to San Francisco and his friends — the Sutros, the Floods, the Speckles, the people that he hung out with, that's the crowd, because he was a very wealthy man, had a telegraph company and owned a lot of buildings in San Francisco.

1:43:49: He tried to clear his name on this by speaking at the Commonwealth Club. And all this is available online. You can Google Washington Dodge, quite a history. So he came up and bought a little piece of property right here at West Point Inn and built a cabin. He finished it in 1918, started it in 1917 and finished it in 1918, so the cabin is 100 years old now. That's our West Point Inn's Titanic tie. Well, he built the cabin and then the next year —

1:44:28 Debra Schwartz: I read the article. He killed himself.

1:44:30 Pat Williams: He killed himself, he shot himself, not here at the inn, but at his house in San Francisco.

1:44:35 Debra Schwartz: And then rode an elevator down to the basement.

1:44:38 Pat Williams: Well, he shot himself in the basement. I think he pulled the elevator up or something, but, yeah, he had a beautiful place right up in the Saint Francis Hotel, beautiful, Victorian, and pretty characteristic of a wealthy San Franciscan and well-known San Franciscan.

1:45:00 Debra Schwartz: But how could he purchase — this is municipal water district land.

1:45:03 Pat Williams: It wasn't at the time. The railroad owned it.

1:45:10 Debra Schwartz: Oh, so when Sydney Cushing and then —

1:45:11 Pat Williams: The railroad owned it, and a lot of this land was owned by Senator Kent too.

1:45:15 Debra Schwartz: Yes, right, Kent. Because municipal water district — 1912, '13, around there.

1:45:22 Pat Williams: Yeah, but I think they kind of inherited this property after the railroad went out of business.

1:45:27 Debra Schwartz: Oh, that's 1929.

1:45:27 Pat Williams: But then the water district didn't own this section yet. The water district continues to expand its boundaries.

1:45:32 Debra Schwartz: Oh, I see.

1:45:33 Pat Williams: I don't think they are expanding anymore, but this was not part of the water district.

1:45:37 Debra Schwartz: Okay, I always wondered about that.

1:45:39 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:45:40 Debra Schwartz: So the doctor died.

1:45:42 Pat Williams: He died two weeks later in a hospital in San Francisco. But there's a story that I'd like to tell about when he was living up here and his wife had divorced him, and he had this beautiful young lady that would take the train up to visit him on the weekends. Her name was Letricia, and she was very eccentric, very beautiful,

had ivory white skin, long black hair, always showed up wearing a long red evening dress and upper length red evening gloves. And she would never talk to anybody on the train, everybody would kind of look at her because she just stood out.

1:46:19 Debra Schwartz: She was a woman of mystery, yes?

1:46:21 Pat Williams: Definitely a woman of mystery. And she came up, got off the train, walked over to Dodge's cabin, knocked on the door, disappeared and then would take the Sunday morning train back down.

1:46:36 Debra Schwartz: So this was part of his therapy?

1:46:38 Pat Williams: Never talked to anybody. He, of course, was quite the talk of the town. And so she came up one time and knocked on the door and there was no answer, and so she just kind of stood there for a while, and then she walked up and talked to Martin Kwik who was the innkeeper. And said, "Have you seen Washington?" And Martin said, "Well, I guess you didn't hear. Washington shot himself, and he is in the hospital and is not expected to survive." So Letricia burst into tears, didn't get back on the train and just wandered up the mountain somewhere off in the direction here of the Rock Springs trail over towards the Inn. But she just left, nobody ever saw her again. So, after a period of time, the inn took over Washington's cabin and started renting it out. And whenever a woman would stay in that cabin, they would come back the next morning, and they would walk up to Martin and say it, "We found this in there, somebody must have lost it. It was on the pillow." And it was a red opera mid-length evening glove. And it started happening more and more. And it was happening up until about two years ago.

1:48:00 Debra Schwartz: Is that when Amazon stopped selling red evening gloves?

1:48:03 Pat Williams: No, it was when the gross of 144 evening gloves — I ordered 144 pairs of them —

[laughter]

1:48:11 Pat Williams: The Letricia story is a figment of my imagination. The Washington Dodge story is true.

1:48:16 Debra Schwartz: You had me though. I believed you and I want to believe you.

1:48:18 Pat Williams: And most of my guests did. So I would plant the red gloves, usually with friends, and then after a while I'd plant them ahead of time, and I'd tell the story up here at the end.

1:48:30 Debra Schwartz: That is so awesome.

1:48:30 Pat Williams: And they would go back there. We had work gloves, and we started out with a prank of the girl who was maid of honor at our wedding, who lives in the middle of Ohio. Brilliant lady, she is Director of Nurses at a big hospital in Columbus, and I pulled the prank. She came out to visit, and she and her husband stayed in the honeymoon cabin, I rented the Honeymoon Cabin for them, and so of course I had planted one of these red gloves, and that was the beginning of the red glove story, was when she was here. She was terrified. Her husband was so mad at me the next night. They were having some marital issues, and they were just starting to really get things back together, and he was looking forward to a nice romantic night on the mountain, and his wife was up crying, wanted to leave. Of course, I didn't know about this 'til the next morning, and so I was in the dog house.

1:49:23 Debra Schwartz: Just a little.

1:49:25 Pat Williams: Anyway, she took the red glove, it was one of our work gloves, it was like a red mitten, and she took it with her. And years later we went to Portugal and asked Faith if she wanted to go with us because she speaks fluent Portuguese after her time in South America in the Peace Corps. And so she went to Portugal with us and we were in southern Portugal at this little inn that we were staying at, and I was sitting out on the deck having a beer and fell asleep, and I woke up, and here is my beer bottle with the red glove with the middle finger up of the red glove. So, she got me back. [chuckles] But anyway, I manufactured the story and I fine-tuned it over the years, and I've been through all 144 pairs of gloves. I've thought about ordering it again, but the board had asked me a couple of times —because I actually got complaints to the board from these really scared people.

1:50:21 Debra Schwartz: Yes, but when I bring my hiking groups up, they like the story.

1:50:25 Pat Williams: Yeah. Most people like the story.

1:50:27 Debra Schwartz: But it can creep people out. I'm surprised there aren't more ghosts. Because as nice as this place is, you think a couple of innkeepers would've liked to just set themselves back down for eternity.

1:50:41 Pat Williams: We did have a ghost called the "punctual ghost," and this ghost would appear every night at 9:50, like clockwork. And people go, "Oh, come on." I said, "Every night, seven days a week, this ghost goes right through the parlor, it will come in this north window right here and fly out the south window." And I said, "If you don't believe me, you sit here and you watch. You got to be quiet, you got to be completely quiet." And so I would dim the gas lights down a little bit, and they're sitting in front of the fireplace, and everybody's just sitting there and I said, "You can't talk, you just need to sit here." And, "Why? Why do we have to be quiet?" I said, "Because the ghost makes a noise, and you will hear it." And so we're all sitting there, and all of a sudden there's this real high pitch, almost inaudible sound, and it's stereophonic and you can hear it, it goes from the north window and goes out the south window.

1:51:38 Debra Schwartz: Does the window have to be open?

1:51:40 Pat Williams: No, goes right through the window. And people would see it all the time. Now, I never saw it, but I heard it, and I felt it, but I never saw it.

1:51:49 Debra Schwartz: Well, what did they say?

1:51:51 Pat Williams: They saw like a spirit go through the room. Some people can see spirits, I guess, I couldn't. I could see it go through this, so I don't quite buy into a lot of that stuff. I mean, there's strange things that happen that I can't explain like Tink at the window, but it was just bizarre, and I would hear it every night at the same time. One night I was telling this story, and there was a man — we were talking earlier and he worked for AT&T, the phone company — and so he's sitting there listening to me. And we're quiet and the ghost goes through the room. He goes, "Oh, what a bunch of BS." He said, "That's the tone that we send through the pay phone." There was a pay phone in that room at the time. And, "We send that tone through to see how much money went through. Most people don't know about this, we don't want them to know about it." But they scan this high-pitched tone and they can tell how much money was deposited in the phone that night, so it's the way they keep track. But it does make a high-pitched sound, and it's usually inaudible, but in a quiet room, you can hear it. So that was the punctual ghost. They pulled the phone out, and the punctual ghost has not appeared since.

1:53:17 Debra Schwartz: Oh, interesting. Ghost master.

1:53:21 Pat Williams: I had no idea that that's what it was.

1:53:23 Debra Schwartz: There are strange things done in the midnight sun.

1:53:27 Pat Williams: Yeah. [laughs] So at least I had a scientific explanation for that ghost. But people see it. Washington Dodge's spirit, you can feel it. There's a presence up here. And there's been a lot of people that have stayed at the honeymoon cabin where I haven't told them any stories or anything, and they have come up the next day — in January of 2010 I had a couple that were staying in there and I had talked to them. I just casually asked them. "How did you sleep?" which I usually do. And they said, "Well, we didn't sleep very well. We had a ghost in the cabin." And I went, "Really?" I'd heard this before from people, and I said, "So, really, what did you see?" And they said, "Well, it was like a green cloud in the middle of the room, and there was like spirits in this cloud and then there was a man's face." And I'm listening to them, I go, "Huh." "We know you don't believe me," they said, "and we can't believe it either, but we took pictures." I said, "Really?" They had one of these digital cameras, back then they were just one or two megapixels. So they were trying to show me, and the screens were those little two-and-half inch screens, you could barely see anything. I said, "Do you mind if I download it in the computer?" "No, please do. We want to see it."

1:54:41 Pat Williams: And so we did, and I looked at it, and I went, “Wow, there was a green cloud.” And if you looked at it, it was almost like there was these green figures with two eyes like how you’d picture a ghost and stuff. And at one time I counted 20 in this image. Then one of the photos had a man with a bit of a beard, and it looks a lot like the portrait that Fred Runner found here recently and that’s found down in the honeymoon, or in the cabin that he built.

1:55:14 Debra Schwartz: Well, before I leave today, let’s take a look. I would ask you more about this and the history, but since you brought up Fred Runner, I’ll say that I’m going to save some of those questions for Fred himself, since I’ll be interviewing him.

1:55:31 Pat Williams: Oh yeah, absolutely.

1:55:32 Debra Schwartz: And the history of the railroad.

1:55:35 Pat Williams: Yeah, he is the man to talk to.

1:55:36 Debra Schwartz: Coming up. Yes. He really is the man to talk to, but he can’t tell me about ghosts in the honeymoon cabin. Well, I suppose he could. He knows an awful lot.

1:55:43 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:55:45 Debra Schwartz: Tell me, as we’re getting close to closing up, I’m going to ask you a couple of more questions, okay?

1:55:51 Pat Williams: Sure.

1:55:51 Debra Schwartz: I’m wondering if you could just give me a description of a day here as an innkeeper.

1:56:01 Pat Williams: Okay.

1:56:01 Debra Schwartz: Just a quick description of a day, the day that for whatever reason stands out in your mind.

1:56:09 Pat Williams: Oh, there’s been so many that it’s hard to pick.

1:56:12 Debra Schwartz: Okay, so then —

1:56:13 Pat Williams: One particular day that stands out —

1:56:15 Debra Schwartz: What it is about the days that stand out?

1:56:17 Pat Williams: Well, the mornings. When the sun comes up in the morning. The innkeepers have their own room over here with a balcony. And the sun shines right

in on you in the morning when it comes up. We're usually up before sunrise to get the day going and just watching the sun come up and then watching it go down in the evening from here, it's just magic. This is one of the best views in the world. I'm sure you've traveled. I hear that a lot. People go, "Wow, this is the best view I've ever seen." And it is, it's an incredible view, and it's just an incredible spot. The weather just seems to be magical up here. Every day is different. Some days it's just wet and wild and crazy, and I love those days, and there's days where it's just warm and dead still. There are days where the wind drives me nuts. I don't enjoy those days as much, but it's still — every day is different up here. It's one of the reasons I enjoy working up here. It's one of the reasons I enjoyed being a firefighter. Because every day is something different. There's no routine. You can expect something new to happen every day.

1:57:32 Debra Schwartz: Is there anything we haven't talked about that you'd like to say in conclusion to this interview?

1:57:40 Pat Williams: Just that I feel extremely blessed to have wound up in Marin County. My mom, two days before she passed away, told me — and mind you my mom was a pretty strict conservative Catholic and never would talk about sex or anything like that — and she says, "I know why you have such an affinity for Mt. Tam." She said, "Because your father and I" — my dad would drive a limo as a side job when I was going to school, and they would let him use the limo on the weekends, and my mom and dad would come up here. And she said, "You were conceived on Mt. Tam."

1:58:27 Debra Schwartz: Wow. That sort of gets you right here, doesn't it?

1:58:35 Pat Williams: Yeah. It kind of kind of explains why I wound up here. And I meet people up here from time to time that — Chris Chater is one of them — that I've felt that I've known in the past. So I kind of think that we come back, and we come back to the same place as we were before.

1:59:01 Debra Schwartz: Beautiful. And I agree.

1:59:04 Pat Williams: Right. Well, thank you, Debra. This has been a nice — I need to get back to work as an innkeeper.

1:59:08 Debra Schwartz: Yes, it's probably three o'clock, and it's time for you to get back. I appreciate so much you taking a slice out of your day to share your tales, true and not so true.

1:59:18 Pat Williams: Yeah. [chuckles]

1:59:19 Debra Schwartz: And your life experiences, I had no idea.

1:59:22 Pat Williams: Yeah.

1:59:23 Debra Schwartz: I just want to thank you for being up here all the time. If I ever have a heart attack coming up Mt. Tam, I hope I land right here. [chuckles] But until then I will say happy trails to you, and I will certainly be seeing you again.

1:59:39 Pat Williams: Yes, you will. Yes, you will.

1:59:41 Debra Schwartz: Thank you for your service, and thank you for making this place home to so many people from all over the world, because that's what you feel when you get here, like you've arrived home.

1:59:52 Pat Williams: That's the way I want it to feel. I want people to feel like this is their place. And it is. It is. We all own this building.

2:00:02 Debra Schwartz: And the work parties are wonderful and productive. It's a community builder. This place is a place of gathering, it's a place of worship, it's a place of appreciation, and it's a place of solace and healing.

2:00:21 Pat Williams: Yeah, it is. All the above. It's just a small part of Mt. Tamalpais, but at the same time it is a landmark, and it's a focus point of not just beauty, but of spirituality.

2:00:42 Debra Schwartz: I completely agree. So with that final thought, we shall conclude this interview, and on behalf of the Mill Valley Public Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society, I say thank you. And that's it.

2:00:56 Pat Williams: It's been an honor. Thank you.