

**Mill Valley Oral History Program**  
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**Otis Guy**

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

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**TITLE:** Oral History of Otis Guy  
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In this oral history, bicycle enthusiast, retired fireman, and father Otis Guy recounts his life on and off two wheels. Born in Alabama in 1953, Otis's family moved soon after to San Rafael, where he grew up. After high school, Otis joined the fire department, beginning a long career as a fireman and EMT. Throughout this oral history, Otis conveys his passion for bicycles. He discusses his life as a road racer and his founding of the Velo Club Tamalpais with his good friend Joe Breeze. Otis was among the Marin County pioneers of mountain biking, and he discusses a number of well-known names associated with the development of that sport, people such as Marc Vendetti, Gary Fisher, and of course Joe Breeze. Otis describes the creation of the Marin Museum of Bicycling with Marc and Joe, as well as the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame that is housed there. The oral history concludes with Otis sharing some reflections on the advent of new technologies and what they mean for the future of cycling and mountain biking.

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## Oral History of Otis Guy

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**Oral History of Otis Guy**  
**January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

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

**0:00:00 Debra Schwartz:** Today is January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019. My name is Debra Schwartz and I'm sitting here in the Mill Valley Library, on behalf of the Mill Valley Public Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society. I'm in the sound booth with famed — oh my goodness — Otis Guy. I'm just going to start listing off the things you do in your intro. You're a long-time Marin County firefighter, a paramedic, you're a teacher, you helped with the start of mountain biking, and you ran a mountain bike camp for kids.

**0:00:39 Otis Guy:** I have, for the last 10 years, run a mountain bike camp for kids.

**0:00:40 Debra Schwartz:** For the last 10 years. You are one of the early founders of mountain biking.

**0:00:44 Otis Guy:** Correct. Joe [Breeze] and I started riding mountain bikes in October of 1973 with Marc Vendetti.

**0:00:50 Debra Schwartz:** So you're what I call a "biker bird," a natural mountain phenomenon. Because anybody that lives here in Mill Valley and Marin County, on Mt. Tam or almost anywhere really, we're going to see mountain bikers.

**0:01:05 Otis Guy:** Right, but we were all roadies before.

**0:01:06 Debra Schwartz:** You were road biking?

**0:01:08 Otis Guy:** Roadies, yes.

**0:01:08 Debra Schwartz:** Well, I'm really excited to have you here.

**0:01:11 Otis Guy:** Well, thank you. Thank you for having me here.

**0:01:12 Debra Schwartz:** I've interviewed several other mountain bikers.

**0:01:18 Otis Guy:** Though I don't consider myself a mountain biker. I'm more of a roadie. Our roots are from the road, and I'm also a mountain biker on top of that. But my roots are on the road bike.

**0:01:26 Debra Schwartz:** Ah. Joe is the same, right?

**0:01:28 Otis Guy:** Joe, the same. Same with Marc Vendetti.

**0:01:30 Debra Schwartz:** And Gary Fisher?

**0:01:30 Otis Guy:** Same with Gary.

**0:01:31 Debra Schwartz:** Okay, well, I'm so pleased to have you here. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to share your story, your personal story, about your time here in Marin County and in the world that you've inhabited for all these many years. Thank you for that. So let's just jump on in, shall we? Why don't we begin with just a little information about your family and how you came to live here in Marin County?

**0:01:58 Otis Guy:** Well, my father was born in Boise, Idaho, but they had connections out here. My uncle had a supermarket called the Food Mart in San Rafael, and my other uncle had a bottle shop in Sausalito.

**0:02:11 Debra Schwartz:** Let's say names when we talk about —

**0:02:13 Otis Guy:** Names? So, Uncle Kurt had the bottle shop, and Uncle Maury had the Food Mart. And so, my father was the youngest of four brothers. Unfortunately, all my grandparents died before I was born, so I actually don't even know their names 'cause I never met them. My mom, Marie Louise or Marlene, met my father at the end of World War II. He brought her over from Germany to America. I'm from the union those two. My grandfather, her father, was a wealthy coal industrialist in Germany. He was actually the youngest man to win the Iron Cross in the World War I. He blew up a bridge in France. Unfortunately, they were killed during the war.

**0:03:03:** My mom never talks about pre-World War II times. The only time she ever spoke about it was like I got 20 minutes when we were coming back from my father's funeral. My daughter probably has a little bit more knowledge on my history than I do. My daughter Alexis is 35, and I have two grandchildren: Ellis, the youngest one, is almost two, and then Corretta, who's four and a half. They're now up in Reno. But she [Alexis] has spent more time talking to my mom, or as she would say *omi*, about the past.<sup>1</sup> But both [my mother's] parents had died before her sister was killed. She was on the phone with her sister, and they were in a small suburb of Berlin — like I said, her father was very wealthy. They had a pool, they had servants, [my mother] was chauffeured to school. She was on the phone with her sister when the Americans came over, and because he was a wealthy person, they dropped a bomb, and that's —

**0:04:02 Debra Schwartz:** Disconnected on the phone —

**0:04:04 Otis Guy:** Disconnected on the phone. It killed all the maids, and everybody else.

**0:04:07 Debra Schwartz:** Oh my, that is dramatic.

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<sup>1</sup> *Omi* is the German word for “granny.”—Editor.

**0:04:07 Otis Guy:** I spoke with one of my mother's relatives, Aunt Marget. They had two sisters and two brothers, that each married the other ones, so she's not really an aunt, but somehow — multiple tendrils in there — make her a relative. And she would just talk about how my mom was very lost. She was born in 1922, so she was 22-year-old, 20-year-old person, when that happened.

**0:04:36 Debra Schwartz:** Utterly orphaned at that time.

**0:04:38 Otis Guy:** Utterly orphaned. She ended up actually working for Werner Von Braun<sup>2</sup> as a secretary later in the war. My father met her and brought her over to America. My father's joke was always that she, my mom, never knew how to boil water. (My father's name was Robert.) She never knew how to boil water. She learned how to boil water in Kansas, and if you knew my mother, even when she was in hospice on her death bed — my daughter and I went and visited her when she was up at Oregon in an assisted living facility, and Alexis goes, "Omi, your nails and your makeup look better than mine do." [chuckles]

**0:05:14:** She never wore pants in her life. And so, here is this person who grew up very wealthy, who is now married to an Air Force — what was my dad? Probably at that time Captain or something. And here, now in Kansas, and speaking — she spoke English, of course, but my mom never lost her accent, ever. My friends would call up, and they could almost never understand my mom. And my actual name is not Otis. My name is Robert Marcus Guy, Jr. My father's name was Robert Marcus Guy. I picked up the nickname Otis when I was in high school. I played in the San Rafael High School band. We did some concerts in the city and I won an award. I played the baritone horn.

**0:06:00:** And for, I guess, for doing a decent job in that — who knows what — there was a music camp called the University of Pacific Music Camp, and they needed a baritone. They have a two-week camp and I got to play under Arthur Fiedler from the Boston Pops. I was recruited and got a scholarship to go up there, because they needed somebody to play baritone horn. So I show up and at the end of my freshman year, not knowing anybody, somebody asked my name and I just blurted out Otis Plum. So I was that Otis Plum for two weeks there. And then I told my friends when I came back, we started school again in September, and they were like, "You're Otis from now on." So that's where the nickname Otis came from.

**0:06:38 Debra Schwartz:** Where did the name come from? Otis Plum?

**0:06:39 Otis Guy:** I don't know.

**0:06:40 Debra Schwartz:** I mean the Plum part too.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a correction to the name heard in the oral history recording, Werner Erhard. Guy's mother worked for Werner Von Braun, a pioneering German-American aerospace engineer and rocket technology developer.

**0:06:40 Otis Guy:** Who knows. It just popped into my head. You're asking somebody who's like 14 years old to actually have decent reasons for things? That's never gonna happen. I don't know.

**0:06:50 Debra Schwartz:** Well, you might have liked Otis Redding or somebody —

**0:06:53 Otis Guy:** Who knows. I think it had more to do with like I didn't know anybody and I could take on whatever identity I wanted to. [chuckles]

**0:06:57 Debra Schwartz:** That's so interesting. Well, I'm gonna continue to call you Otis if that's okay.

**0:07:02 Otis Guy:** Well, of course, that's the only name I've been known by forever. [chuckles]

**0:07:05 Debra Schwartz:** And so you were born in Boise?

**0:07:09 Otis Guy:** Uh-uh. My parents already had a house in San Rafael and my dad had one last transfer. They said, "If you do one more transfer, you can stay at Hamilton Air Force Base." So [my parents] were there for six months in Montgomery, Alabama at Maxwell Air Force Base, and I was born there. We were there for six weeks, and then boom, I was in San Rafael. The bad part about that is that it kept me from ever being a native son, because even though I lived my whole life in California, I was born someplace else. I tried to become a native son, and one guy would not let that happen. That was the head of Native Sons Golden West, and he finally died. You had other people, like Bobby from S&N Auto, he was born in Nevada. The hospital where they lived was in Nevada, not in California, so he couldn't be a native son, either. So this man died, and because I was here my whole life, I've now became a native son. I'm the first native son of Golden West who was not born in California.

**0:08:14 Debra Schwartz:** I don't know about the Native Sons organization.

**0:08:16 Otis Guy:** The Native Sons, you should know them, they're very good on history. There's a chapter in Fairfax.

**0:08:21 Debra Schwartz:** Uh-huh. So now you're a native son?

**0:08:25 Otis Guy:** Now I'm a native son.

**0:08:25 Debra Schwartz:** You're a California boy.

**0:08:27 Otis Guy:** I'm very much of a California boy. I mean, I don't remember Alabama; I was only there for six weeks. So I don't remember much about it at all.

**0:08:34 Debra Schwartz:** Really? I can kind of hear a little accent. [chuckles]

**0:08:37 Otis Guy:** Yeah, right.

**0:08:38 Debra Schwartz:** So your mother embodied that old-world ambiance.

**0:08:41 Otis Guy:** Oh yeah. She always looked perfect. I remember they had her going for a stress-test near the end of her life, and they wanted her to wear pants, and she was just completely flummoxed and said, "What do I do?" And my second wife then, Laurel, I think set her up with some longer loose skirt or something like that, so she could do the stress test. She never wore pants in her life. And her hair was always perfect, and her make-up — like my daughter Alexis said, "Your nails look better than mine do, Omi, and you're gonna die in a couple of days." She was pretty amazing.

**0:09:13 Debra Schwartz:** It's kind of charming.

**0:09:15 Otis Guy:** Oh yeah, it's very charming.

**0:09:16 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, well, you're — in a zombie apocalypse, I'm going to want to stay near someone like you. You're a real tall, strong guy. What did you say you were, 6'7"?

**0:09:30 Otis Guy:** I was 6'6". I think I've shrunk to 6'5".

**0:09:32 Debra Schwartz:** 6'5". That's right. Perfect posture, well-built. That's what your mother contributed to the environment, all these sons like you?

**0:09:43 Otis Guy:** Well, my father was 6'4" and a half, and I look exactly like my father. My third wife, Leslie, it's very funny, she got to meet my mom before she died, and she saw pictures of my father and was like, "God, you look exactly like him." It was very interesting.

**0:10:00 Debra Schwartz:** I've already counted three wives, now.

**0:10:02 Otis Guy:** Three wives, yes.

**0:10:03 Debra Schwartz:** Are we going to continue with that?

**0:10:04 Otis Guy:** No, I'm done.

**0:10:05 Debra Schwartz:** Okay.

**0:10:05 Otis Guy:** Stick a fork in me, I'm done. [laughs]

**0:10:08 Debra Schwartz:** Okay. So tell me about growing up in San Rafael. You were born in what year?

**0:10:16 Otis Guy:** 1953, October 14<sup>th</sup>, me and Dwight Eisenhower.

**0:10:20 Debra Schwartz:** Tell me about San Rafael in the '50s.

**0:10:25 Otis Guy:** It was great. So, for me, this is kind of where cycling comes in. I got my first bicycle for my fifth birthday. It came from Herb's Bike Shop in San Rafael, on Fourth Street. I remember they had a house in San Rafael between San Rafael High School and Dominican [College], on 15 Broadview Dr. And I remember them setting me up in the back yard on the bike with the training wheels, and I'm like, "I don't want the training wheels. Take the training wheels off!" [chuckles]

**0:10:55 Debra Schwartz:** Right away?

**0:10:55 Otis Guy:** Right away. No training wheels.

**0:10:56 Debra Schwartz:** You are so self-possessed. [laughs]

**0:10:58 Otis Guy:** I'm always like this. I don't know maybe I am, I guess. So they put me on a bike. And my father, he had retired from the military and then was teaching management at Hamilton Air Force Base. He must have started early, might have started 7:30, and then he'd get off like at 3:30, and he'd come home. And so every day, when I was like a kindergartener, he would drive his little '58 Volkswagen Bug, which was new then, and would follow me to Coleman School, up over a little hill and down to Coleman School, and then he followed me back. And I think as an adult now, "How did your clutch stay together?" [laughs] must have been going deathly slow, on a little 20-inch bike and everything else. Once he felt I did okay, I was able to ride any place I wanted. I would go see my Uncle Maury at the Food Mart, and visit the butcher there.

**0:12:13 Debra Schwartz:** What was the address? Where was it?

**0:12:15 Otis Guy:** Was it not Chalet Basque? It was a little French restaurant. It's just off of Fourth Street, between Fourth and Fifth, not too far from where the smart train is. It's now like an office building or something else, it's no longer the Food Mart.

**0:12:27 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah.

**0:12:29 Otis Guy:** I got to ride down to downtown San Rafael when I was five and a half years old by myself.

**0:12:33 Debra Schwartz:** You didn't want training wheels at all?

**0:12:35 Otis Guy:** No, that's right. Take 'em off!

**0:12:39 Debra Schwartz:** Did you have a natural ability when you just got on, or you had to learn?

**0:12:39 Otis Guy:** No, I just took 'em off. I'm not gonna learn with them. We're gonna go without training wheels. I just figured it out.

**0:12:42 Debra Schwartz:** Okay. So you just said, "I'll get on that thing and I'll ride it when I can ride it."

**0:12:48 Otis Guy:** Cycling became very important, because for me cycling was a symbol of freedom. So that was something. I got to be a little kid and go where I wanted to because I had a bicycle that allowed me to do that.

**0:13:04 Debra Schwartz:** And your brothers, too?

**0:13:05 Otis Guy:** I had no brothers. I had one sister who is almost five years younger than me, Karen.

**0:13:10 Debra Schwartz:** There was a lot of freedom growing up in the '50s. I also grew up in the '50s, and you could disappear and be gone all day long.

**0:13:21 Otis Guy:** Right. That was fine. And I think, unfortunately, I'm not sure if my mom was the best parent, as far as —

**0:13:31 Debra Schwartz:** Keeping track?

**0:13:32 Otis Guy:** She grew up with maids. It was a far different life for her, and I don't really think she saw her life as being at home with kids necessarily. One time I think I got away, and a neighbor found me way far away from the house, two hours after I was gone, and so they called the police, and it was a whole to-do. I think, somewhat, I was raised a little bit by the neighborhood. It was just different.

**0:14:03 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, being raised in Europe with great wealth, many people didn't even spend that much time with their children. They enjoyed dinner with them, formally, and then off they went with the nannies. It wasn't helicopter parenting back then for you, huh?

**0:14:22 Otis Guy:** Right. It came up more with my middle son, Sterling. My mom had something wrong with the house, and I had to come over there to fix some plumbing issue. Sterling kinda was ready to go to bed and he was kinda crying and I said, "I've gotta go get some plumbing pieces. Mom, can you watch him? Put him on the bed and just stay with him until he sleeps." Well, my mom doesn't put pillows around him. I come home, and I hear a bang, and he rolls off and hits his head.

**0:14:54 Debra Schwartz:** Oh.

**0:14:55 Otis Guy:** Nothing against my mom, but I think I somehow just figured things out.

**0:15:03 Debra Schwartz:** You were a little feral then, huh?

**0:15:04 Otis Guy:** Hard to know. I think that as a kid your memories and actually what is real are not — I'm not sure they all line up. 'Cause I've heard different things from my kids: "Oh, you didn't do this," or, "You were terrible at that." I'm always like, "You know, let's walk a mile in your shoes when you have kids. Let's hear about how that all works out."

**0:15:27 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:15:28 Otis Guy:** So, anyway, it's a back-and-forth. What I think happened, who knows if that actually did happen.

**0:15:36 Debra Schwartz:** The house itself that you grew up in —

**0:15:38 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**0:15:40 Debra Schwartz:** I thought you were giving me the address.

**0:15:41 Otis Guy:** 1515 Broadview Drive.

**0:15:43 Debra Schwartz:** 1515 Broadview Drive.

**0:15:43 Otis Guy:** My dad put a big room addition for me when I got bigger and my sister was born. He was a woodworker. I have some of the furniture at my house now that he made. He would use the wood shop at Hamilton Air Force Base in the evenings and make wood stuff. And then he started doing some remodels on the side to make some money, and I actually helped him do a couple remodels.

**0:16:30:** Unfortunately for my father, he was in the military when it was the end of World War II, and he was accidentally poisoned — just by, I'm not sure, by food — and it destroyed his spleen. His spleen was removed. And both my father and I probably have the same thing, like we're gonna kinda do everything ourselves. I might be a little bit stubborn, and so was he. So, he peaked towards his life to try and give my mother everything she could have. He was retired from the military, retired from the civil service, and they bought a bigger Mercedes, and they were gonna go traveling. He found a house in Fairhills in San Rafael, which is a more exclusive neighborhood, a bigger house with a pool. My mom always wanted to go swimming, but that house we had in Broadview Drive had none of that.

**0:17:03:** And so he decided to do the termite work on the Broadview Drive house to save money. He sprayed these horrible chemicals, it went into his liver, it went systemic, and he died like three months later. They had a thing where you have a little CA+ or CA- for cardiac arrest, like, if you're gonna bring somebody back or not. How the military and the civil service worked was, if my father didn't live to 60, the retirement my mom would get, the benefits from my father passing away, would probably be half as much. So he

went into a coma about a week before he turned 60, and he just hung in. It's like he knew. He made it to 60, and died like three hours later. They had set their whole life up for retirement, for the bigger house, and all this stuff — done. So my mom, if you knew my mom, my mom never remarried, she was just like, "That's it." It was a for-all-your-life thing. It's like, live life each day; you don't know when it's gonna go away.

**0:18:14 Debra Schwartz:** And you were how old?

**0:18:16 Otis Guy:** Let's see, that was 1978, so I was 24 years old.

**0:18:23 Debra Schwartz:** I'm sorry for your loss. That's a hard one.

**0:18:25 Otis Guy:** Yeah, it was a big deal. You could ask my sons, for when I turned 60 I was like, "I gotta get by 60." And Sterling was like, "You're gonna live a lot longer than 60." And it was like, "Listen, 60's a big deal for me. I gotta get by 60. My dad didn't make it past 60, so I gotta get past 60."

**0:18:42 Debra Schwartz:** There is something about that.

**0:18:43 Otis Guy:** Right. Sterling was like, "What are you talking about dude? You're fine."

**0:18:47 Debra Schwartz:** So did you stay in the big house?

**0:18:49 Otis Guy:** I've never spent a night there, actually. I left home when I was 17 years old, and I lived in my truck. As I said before, my father he was a light colonel in the Air Force, and this was during the Vietnam War and everything else. And I had already decided when I was like 13 years old and I went to San Rafael High School, I loaded up on all of the classes I could, 'cause in those days your draft board got your name from your high school when you graduated. I actually graduated early. I did not go to my high school graduation. Mine was the first year they had the lottery, and you could not have college deferments: there was no college deferment. I just had a bad feeling. I think I pulled number 13 or number 14, and that year they went to, I think, 140. A lot of people went to Vietnam. I grew my hair longer in high school and everything else, so you can imagine my father and I did not get along so well, as far as that. As soon as I could get out of the house, I got out of the house. And this is what brings Joe Breeze and the mountain bike thing into the story.

**0:20:05:** So now, basically, I didn't register for the draft, which is a five-year prison sentence and, at the time, a \$5,000 fine, who the hell knows. There was a very nice attorney, Mr. Shapiro, a long-time attorney who just passed away — I think he was 100 years old or something — and so I went and visited him to see my options. He said, "Well, you can be a conscious objector." And I'm like, "Well, if somebody invades San Anselmo, I'm fighting, so I can't be a CO, 'cause I would fight." And he says, "Well, you can go to Canada." [I said] "Well, I don't wanna move to Canada. I wanna stay here." He says, "Just stay low. Just don't make a big deal of things, and everything else. Don't tell

anybody and we'll just see what happens." Nothing happened. I got hired by the fire department —

**0:20:45 Debra Schwartz:** But you're 13.

**0:20:46 Otis Guy:** By the time I interviewed with him I was 17 years old.

**0:20:50 Debra Schwartz:** Oh.

**0:20:50 Otis Guy:** Once I saw my number was 14 — I was hoping I get 320. Then I would've registered. I'd be good. But 14, I'm going.

**0:21:00 Debra Schwartz:** No, right.

**0:21:00 Otis Guy:** And so that's when I met with Mr. Shapiro. And so I just kinda stayed low. When I got hired at the fire department, they had this big huge like monogram, with cool colors, loyalty oath to the United States that you had to sign to become a firefighter. And I'm like, "Oh crap, this is where rubber re-meets the road." So if I'm gonna get found out, I'm getting found out right now. I signed, and nothing happened. And then Carter pardoned all the draft [dodgers] — what year was Carter president? '78?

**0:21:30 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, after that you were right on the edge.

**0:21:32 Otis Guy:** So I was pardoned, and all was all good.

**0:21:34 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:21:35 Otis Guy:** But now as an adult, there are certainly people that died that were my age that went over. Though I completely disagreed with a war and everything else, I was looking back as an adult and thinking was that the right decision? I don't know. It's the decision I made.

**0:21:51 Debra Schwartz:** So now 17 years old and you're joining the fire department.

**0:21:56 Otis Guy:** No, I started when I was 21 years old.

**0:21:58 Debra Schwartz:** 21.

**0:22:00 Otis Guy:** Yeah.

**0:22:00 Debra Schwartz:** Tell me about that. Tell me about your career, how you came upon that, first of all the high school that you went to.

**0:22:09 Otis Guy:** San Rafael High School. I went to Coleman School for elementary, then Davidson for junior high, and then San Rafael High School.

**0:22:16 Debra Schwartz:** Okay.

**0:22:16 Otis Guy:** I think I was probably one of the edge of the baby boomers, so we had 2000 kids. I think my high school graduating class was 450 kids.

**0:22:26 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah.

**0:22:26 Otis Guy:** I was the class of '71. I had taken enough classes that I didn't even have to go to my senior year. I could have graduated as a junior, but I kinda wanted to be a senior, for at least that first semester. So I just had a couple classes, band and a couple of the classes. And I didn't show up to graduation, so my name never got sent to the selective service. [Joe] Breeze was the same age as I am. I was born in October, so I was the youngest in my class; he was born in December, so he was the oldest in his class. He was class of '72 here at Tam High School. Have you interviewed Joe Breeze yet?

**0:23:07 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, I have.

**0:23:08 Otis Guy:** Yes, okay. So here I'm plotting all these things out, worried about signing a loyalty oath, worrying about all this stuff, and Carter pardons everybody. I bring it up to Joe and tell him the story, and Joe goes, "You were supposed to register?" [laughs] Joe never registered, never knew he had to register, never thought one thing about it, nothing — just like a babe in the woods all was good. He had no idea. I was like, "I wanna wring his neck!" I'm worried and all these other things, and Joe's like, "Register? You're supposed to register?" So that's a very Joe story.

**0:23:48:** But how I got in the fire department was — I started going to the Cub Scouts at Tamarancho when I was a little kid. I can remember riding the trail that goes to where my house is. I built a house 39 years ago up in Fairfax at the top of Ridge Road and there's a trail that goes directly to Tamarancho. I remember riding that little trail when I was like nine years old in the Cub Scouts. So I was a Cub Scout and then a Boy Scout and became an Eagle Scout. I had a very big connection with Tamarancho. So I had some form of public service. We already established I was very into bicycles, graduated early, worked at the Hickory Pit as a dishwasher, started working in bike shops, riding bikes and everything else, and started working at a bike shop called Mom's Apple Bikes in Sausalito, which later on became Tony Tom's Bicycle Odyssey. The name became Bicycle Odyssey because Mom's Apple Bikes was on 2001 Bridgeway. So after the movie came out, Tony then named —

**0:24:51 Debra Schwartz:** Right, *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

**0:24:53 Otis Guy:** Mom's Apple Bikes was owned by this man, and he made me like a five percent partner, I think, just to keep me working there. And then when he decided to sell, he wanted to sell the business to me. In fact, I think that might have been the only paid job that Joe may have ever worked. So he worked for me for a while at Mom's Apple Bikes.

**0:25:18 Debra Schwartz:** With your five percent.

**0:25:21 Otis Guy:** I hired Joe to work and we became friends. I think that was one of the very few hourly-paid jobs he ever did in his life, 'cause he built frames, that's how he made his living. Nobody was giving him money. He'd sell a frame to get paid, so there's no hourly wages. And so I thought, should I buy the shop? I went and saw an attorney and saw an accountant. I met with them and they were like, "Well, you could make a living. You wouldn't get to race your bike as much. That's gonna be kind of it." And I was thinking, you know what? I think I wanna become a firefighter.

**0:25:56:** And so that's how I ended up trying to become a firefighter. I became a volunteer in San Anselmo. I had to actually cut my hair. I went and tied my hair back to put the application in, and a guy I surfed with that day, Tim — who I went to high school with and was two years older than me — said, "You're probably gonna have to cut your hair." So I did cut my hair, became a volunteer in San Anselmo, and then later on got hired. So that's how I became a firefighter. They gave you a great schedule. I liked helping people from my experience with the fire department. I used to work for landscaping contractors. I liked driving trucks, so it fit very well. For me, the best part was, when I did retire back in 2007, I invited Joe to my retirement dinner, and Joe goes, "You're retiring? You're retired?" He goes, "You know that fire department thing was a pretty good idea." I'm like, "Yeah, I know. I got that part."

**0:26:48 Debra Schwartz:** You do a good impersonation of Joe talking.

**0:26:52 Otis Guy:** If you see pictures, I won't be in some pictures from these old mountain bike events because I was at work. I was at the firehouse, and I did not have seniority, so it was not like I was getting summertime vacation to go to Crested Butte.

**0:27:05 Debra Schwartz:** So you missed that?

**0:27:06 Otis Guy:** I was there, but I went back early, because it's like I'm not getting a week of vacation when I'm a 22-year-old at the firehouse. It's not working that way. So my bike that I've won Repack on one time — and which Joe has won like six times using my bicycle, the one that's at the museum, a 41 Schwinn — that was the best handling of all the bikes. Joe would come by and grab my bike at the firehouse, and race on my bike, and win the race on my bike. And when he wasn't on my bike, when I was racing the same race, he'd be on his 37 before he started building the bikes.

**0:27:41 Debra Schwartz:** Where did you two meet?

**0:27:43 Otis Guy:** We just met through cycling probably. I wish I could remember exactly how we met. I don't know if I was already working at Mom's Apple Bikes, or we just met riding around. I was already out of high school when I met Joe, fresh out of high school. I think when I was working at the Hickory Pit in Mill Valley, I remember saving up for some cycling shoes. The first real cycling thing I bought was cycling shoes from

Wheels Unlimited, a shop in San Rafael, owned by a guy named Bob Houey, who ran that for many years, and had also a shop in San Francisco. Later on, I worked and ran his shop for him for a long time.

**0:28:30 Debra Schwartz:** You mentioned that you were a road biker.

**0:28:33 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**0:28:33 Debra Schwartz:** First?

**0:28:34 Otis Guy:** First.

**0:28:35 Debra Schwartz:** So you were road biking with Joe?

**0:28:37 Otis Guy:** Yes. Our connection was why we rode. We rode and raced together, raced the Mt. Tam hill climb. We started a racing team called Velo Club Tamalpais. There was a guy named Laurie Schmidtke that had reserved that name in case he ever wanted to start a team called Velo Club Tamalpais. He was a very, very top racer, little guy, super nice guy. It was very funny, he seemed a lot older. He was probably like two or three years older than we were. But when you're 19, somebody being 22 is a lot older, which seems meaningless now. So I got the name from him, and we started Velo Club Tamalpais, 'cause we weren't gonna be Marin Cyclists. Marin Cyclists was more of a touring group. We wanted to start our own club.

**0:29:23 Debra Schwartz:** How did you see yourself in your club? You weren't a touring club? What were you?

**0:29:27 Otis Guy:** No, we were just racers.

**0:29:28 Debra Schwartz:** You're just going fast?

**0:29:29 Otis Guy:** Going fast, going fast. And at that time, NorCal/Nevada was the top region in the country for road cycling, so you had some of the best cyclist ever come from here. Bob Tetzlaff, Owen Mulholland, who raced — but many others, more modern people like Greg LeMond came. He was a NorCal/Nevada rider. George Mount, Mark Pringle, Tom Hardy — all these different names, all people that we raced with, you know, Gary Fisher. This was the fertile area of cycling. This was the place. It was not just mountain biking; it was road biking also. We had phenomenal road races. Criteriums were just an hour. Criteriums were 100k or 50 miles. It was just the best.

**0:30:19 Debra Schwartz:** And, you organized these races?

**0:30:21 Otis Guy:** At Velo Club Tamalpais we put on the Tour of Marin. We helped put a stage race — we had a stage, a road stage — that actually went around Paradise Drive, like five laps. Then we had a time trial that went from near the cheese factory to near San Marin High School. And then we had a road race that did all of Tomales, and all

the way back. So we did all those things when we were very young, like 1976, 1977, '75. In those years, we were putting on the Tour of Marin, 'cause at that time it was probably an American Bicycle League of America requirement that to have a team you had to put on one race on a year.

**0:31:03 Debra Schwartz:** I see.

**0:31:05 Otis Guy:** Which allows people to have races.

**0:31:07 Debra Schwartz:** And you publicized them?

**0:31:08 Otis Guy:** We'd publicize. It was a big deal.

**0:31:11 Debra Schwartz:** What kind of equipment did you wear? I mean, did people wear helmets back then?

**0:31:16 Otis Guy:** No, never wore one. The only time we wore helmets was in races and those were like the strapped helmets, so basically all they would probably do was like it put all the forces in one part, and crack your skull right there.

**0:31:27 Debra Schwartz:** And you were fireman, and your career has progressed —

**0:31:32 Otis Guy:** Right.

**0:31:33 Debra Schwartz:** Well, your passion has progressed as you're in rescue —

**0:31:37 Otis Guy:** Right.

**0:31:38 Debra Schwartz:** You've trained as a paramedic, right?

**0:31:39 Otis Guy:** Right, later on, yes.

**0:31:40 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, so —

**0:31:40 Otis Guy:** I was the first EMT [emergency medical technician].

**0:31:41 Debra Schwartz:** You were well aware —

**0:31:42 Otis Guy:** Yeah, but I'm not ever gonna hit my head. I've never hit my head yet, so I'm not so concerned.

**0:31:50 Debra Schwartz:** I'm knocking on wood in here.

**0:31:51 Otis Guy:** Yes, right there. [chuckles]

**0:31:52 Otis Guy:** I didn't start wearing helmets till my second wife Laurel, when she was doing her internship at Kentfield Rehab to become a physical therapist, in 1991 or in that zone, '92.

**0:32:06 Debra Schwartz:** That'll leave an impression.

**0:32:09 Otis Guy:** She was like, "I don't wanna take care of a vegetable. You have to start wearing a helmet on your regular rides." And by those years you actually had functioning helmets that were decent Bell helmets that were not the big monstrous things that had been available before, but were actually light and would somewhat breath. But yeah, we never wore helmets.

**0:32:29 Debra Schwartz:** When you think about some of the people that still live in this community — I've interviewed Gary Fisher, who was quite a good racer and Joe — do you have any particular memories of experience with them or their abilities as riders?

**0:32:44 Otis Guy:** Oh yes. When we met Gary, he really helped us a lot — Breeze, myself, Marc Vendetti. Gary is probably three years old that I am. Gary might be 68 now, in that zone; I think about three years older. He started racing when he was like 12 years old or something. He was a big time junior. In those days, when somebody would ride through in cycling shorts, you knew who they were. It wasn't like there were thousands of cyclists. Anybody that was riding and had real cycling clothing on, you either knew them or you were about to know them, 'cause they're weren't that many of us. It was a small sport.

**0:33:29 Debra Schwartz:** Did you find that you were kind of hidden in plain sight, that there were a lot of people living here that weren't aware of how organized the racing was, or was it quite apparent?

**0:33:37 Otis Guy:** No, it was not apparent.

**0:33:39 Debra Schwartz:** No?

**0:33:39 Otis Guy:** But it's like anything else. There could be paddle board races that are happening all the time that I don't know about.

**0:33:46 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:33:47 Otis Guy:** So that's not necessarily unique. But yeah, as for the fire department, I never said a word about the cycling thing.

**0:33:53 Debra Schwartz:** So you lived two lives?

**0:33:54 Otis Guy:** Remember that in those days at the fire department, you're working with people that are a lot older than you. They're older than your dad, and they can barely move. I started before 911. There was no 911. I started before electricity; there were no

AEDs [automated external defibrillators]. We didn't use gloves; gloves didn't happen till the AIDS crisis. So you were working with these old guys. We staffed the radios at night. We had a secretary that staffed the radio during the daytime, but at night, you'd have to be houseman. Somebody would have to take the turn not to get to go to the fire and have to stay back and staff the radios. Well, the old guys really didn't wanna fight the fire so they'd stay back, which is nice. So you gotta do all this stuff. It's just all different now.

**0:34:39 Debra Schwartz:** Let's divert just a little bit away from the biking — we'll go back to that — and get back to the fire fighting.

**0:34:45 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**0:34:46 Debra Schwartz:** You said you were the first EMT.

**0:34:48 Otis Guy:** I took the first EMT class in Marin.

**0:34:51 Debra Schwartz:** At College of Marin?

**0:34:53 Otis Guy:** At College of Marin, with Pat Williams who you interviewed. Tim Ecke, Brian McCarthy — who else from our department did it at the same time? It might have just been us, so three or four. That was the first time they offered EMT, emergency medical technician classes.

**0:35:07 Debra Schwartz:** I took an EMT class at College of Marin. It was excellent. And so you took the EMT class —

**0:35:13 Otis Guy:** The first one.

**0:35:13 Debra Schwartz:** And then you went on to become a paramedic?

**0:35:15 Otis Guy:** When we got paramedics in the '80s, they actually brought us to the Civic Center to interview us. They said that your only chance to become a paramedic was to come to this interview. And they still hadn't figured out what they were gonna do. Later on, they just hired county firefighters to staff the ambulances. So it was more like I'm going for this interview and basically I'm kind of interviewing you. It was like, "What's the plan? I'm not sure what I'm interviewing for, 'cause I don't even really have a job yet, and how are you setting it up?" So I probably didn't do a very good job at the interview. And they chose to go with the county. Later on, there weren't enough calls to staff three ambulances in Ross Valley, 'cause Corte Madera had their own ambulance as part of the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority. So they realized that for the Sleepy Hollow station, Station 20, and then Station 21, the Fairfax station, that they needed to have paramedics on engines.

**0:36:15:** When that happened, you had to take a test at City College, part of the paramedic program. Three of us took that test, but only two of us passed, a guy named Craig Dow and I. Craig Dow was not really a cyclist, but the City College campus, the

Haight Street campus, is basically just across the bridge, right next to Haight Ashbury, so I'm like, "Dow, guess what you're doing?" "What?" "We're gonna be riding on a tandem. You're getting more time taking in the sunshine. You get some cycling clothes, some cycling shoes. You're going to Sunshine Bikes in Fairfax and get geared up for cycling." [chuckles] "You're hopping on the tandem."

**0:36:47:** We'd go two days a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, for like eight or nine hours. So, we rode in for a year on this tandem into the city. It was great. We had a great time. But it was more like, "This is the deal man. I'm getting a bike ride in. If I'm going to paramedic school all day, I'm getting a bike ride in on the way there and the way back." I'm all good.

**0:37:07 Debra Schwartz:** So, Pat Williams, when I interviewed him the other day — I just wanna note this in this interview that he was the innkeeper at the West Point Inn.

**0:37:16 Otis Guy:** Yes, for quite a long time.

**0:37:17 Debra Schwartz:** For quite a long time, and he spent a lot of time in the lookout station at the top of Mt. Tamalpais.

**0:37:21 Otis Guy:** Way back when before he became a firefighter.

**0:37:23 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, right. In our pre-interview chat, it became apparent that we have known each other in the past when I was a volunteer fire person at your station in Ross.

**0:37:37 Otis Guy:** Yes, in San Anselmo.

**0:37:40 Debra Schwartz:** San Anselmo, right. Actually, I've visited various stations and I remember quite well the camaraderie that was there. Being a woman, and I'm a small woman, it was pretty intimidating.

**0:37:56 Otis Guy:** I think we're all very nice though.

**0:37:56 Debra Schwartz:** You were very nice.

**0:37:58 Otis Guy:** Our department always sets a really good culture. And the culture is you get on each other with love, not with trying to get over. You give each other a hard time to bring out your best and bring you in, not to give somebody a hard time to push you away. So it would be always funny now to go to different retirement dinners with somebody who was a volunteer for us that later on got to Mill Valley, and you go to the dinner and they do nothing but talk about, "When I worked with Tim," or "When I worked with Otis," or these different people, they have this whole memory that it was very interesting. It was a very special department. It was really set up well.

**0:38:40 Debra Schwartz:** You were all gentlemen. I was 23 years old, with long blonde hair, and I was only ever treated in the most gentlemanly fashion with you guys — no funny business, which I very much appreciated. For someone like me at that time, I realized I would never be able to pull my weight, pull someone like you out of a danger zone. I'm simply too small at 100 pounds. And that isn't fair to be that person taking up space and not be able to carry my own weight, so to speak, or yours.

**0:39:17 Otis Guy:** Fine. I'm not that heavy. [laughs]

**0:39:21 Debra Schwartz:** To me you are.

**0:39:21 Otis Guy:** I'm only like 185 pounds. I'm not big and fat. I'm hanging in.

**0:39:26 Debra Schwartz:** I do recall one time trying to take the helmet off after we'd taken a ride around in the truck and my hair was caught in it. There were three firemen there trying to untangle my hair from the helmet.

**0:39:36 Otis Guy:** Right. One of the goofy straps, I know.

**0:39:37 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, right. That was pretty sweet. But I remember the culture of the firehouses, the quality of food being an important component.

**0:39:52 Otis Guy:** If you're at the firehouse, you're hungry at noon and you're hungry at 6:00 PM. And in regular life I'm not like, "Oh my God, I have to eat dinner at 6 o'clock." It's more like Pavlov's dogs. That's why I say you'd be hungry at noon and hungry at 6:00 PM. But at home I might not have lunch till 2 o'clock or not have dinner till 8 o'clock. Yeah, it's very different.

**0:40:14 Debra Schwartz:** There was a regiment. Things were quite organized. The hierarchy of decision-making and execution of decisions was quite clear. And I remember the fire chief saying, "Your life depends on these exercises and acting without thinking." It can be that way. And I also remember the captain at the time was kind of an obsessive-compulsive guy.

**0:40:41 Otis Guy:** Yeah, Rick Mollenkopf.

**0:40:43 Debra Schwartz:** And to the extreme, I would say.

**0:40:50 Otis Guy:** Oh yes. Well, he would run around the track at Drake High School. We later on found that he counted every stride for 10 miles.

**0:41:00 Debra Schwartz:** That takes a lot of mental discipline to do that.

**0:41:04 Otis Guy:** That's one way of saying it. I'm not sure if I would term it "mental discipline," but I'm glad you're a glass-half-full person. That's a good sign. I would term it something else personally.

**0:41:18 Debra Schwartz:** There sometimes can be a line that's crossed, and then it goes into something else, but it was very fastidious. The house itself was quite fastidious, and it was interesting to be kind of an observer from the outside that never really got in. Tell me more about your life there and your experiences and your relationship with Pat Williams who brought you up in his interview, 'cause he also likes to ride bikes too.

**0:41:46 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**0:41:47 Debra Schwartz:** Tell me a little bit about that time at the firehouse and what it was like for you.

**0:41:52 Otis Guy:** It was very good. The fire department — it's not a real job. You know, if I'm a bicycle frame builder, and I don't build a frame and sell it, then I'm not getting paid, I always call the fire department an un-reality job because we don't have to produce anything, right? We could have 1,000 fires or we could have no fires and they're still gonna pay you if you're on duty.

**0:42:13 Debra Schwartz:** And feed you too, very well.

**0:42:15 Otis Guy:** We feed ourselves. We have to pay for that.

**0:42:17 Debra Schwartz:** Oh?

**0:42:18 Otis Guy:** The department doesn't pay for your food.

**0:42:20 Debra Schwartz:** Okay.

**0:42:20 Otis Guy:** And I can tell you some good Pat Williams stories on dinners, but anyways that's beside the point. So whatever we're doing, if we're doing inspections and we got a fire, if we have a medical aid call — well, how important can inspection be if we can leave it? I mean, most people don't just all of the sudden get to walk out of the job for just whatever reason. So really, everything you're doing there is about training. The inspection is not about the inspection. The inspection is about checking the building out, talking to the business owner, you'll establish a relationship. You're doing hydrants — in some sense, yes, it's maintaining the hydrants, but it's also knowing what house is this one there? What driveway? How are you gonna go up that way? What if the fire is there? How are you gonna fight it? All these things.

**0:43:07:** Everything you do is training there, but at the same time it's the greatest job of all time. You know, it's absolutely wonderful. I couldn't imagine anything better. But yeah, Pat, as you know, Pat is very infamous. I don't know if you know that. We have lots of Pat Williams stories. I think one of my first dinners at the firehouses was at the old station downtown San Anselmo. You're new, so you're like, "I'm not saying a freaking word," I'm just gonna go off what other people are doing — you're seen, not heard. And

so we're all sitting down for dinner, and it was an old station, and the door was very low, just above my head. And Pat runs in.

**0:43:48 Debra Schwartz:** Pat's a tall guy.

**0:43:49 Otis Guy:** Pat's tall. Pat runs in, boom, hits the door sill, gets knocked out cold. Nobody moves a muscle, everybody just keeps continuing eating dinner. I'm like, "Well, if they're not moving a muscle, I'm not moving a muscle." So, after like about five minutes, he eventually wakes up, doesn't say anything, sits down, and starts eating his dinner. There's like a thousand Pat Williams stories of different things that he's done.

**0:44:17 Debra Schwartz:** Give me one more.

**0:44:17 Otis Guy:** Okay, let's see. I have another one here.

**0:44:20 Debra Schwartz:** These are funny. [chuckles]

**0:44:21 Otis Guy:** We would go on these things called strike teams when there's a big fire, and you're with engines from all over the Bay Area that you wouldn't see other than when you go on the strike team. You'd work a 24-hour shift or a 12-hour shift, and then you have the time when you're having dinner, or just chilling out, a lot of times you're camping, you're staying out in the field, and people start telling stories. We'd start telling Pat Williams stories, one after the other, after the other. One engine was from Pacifica, the office of Emergency Services Engine from Pacifica, and they're like, "That can't be true!" And I'm like, "No, all these stories are true." Well, a few months later, Pat's driving down the coast in his car, and he rolls into the Pacifica station there and asks for directions, or something like that. And on his way out, he runs into one of their cars and hits the hydrant — you know, on the way leaving — and they're like, "Guys, that was the guy from the strike team. That was him! That was Pat Williams! That was the guy!" [laughs] And they're like, "All the stories were true!" It was pretty good.

**0:45:35 Debra Schwartz:** How about some harrowing tales? This is a very woody area around here and windy, scary roads, steep pitches, people on bikes without helmets. I mean, your job was fun, but it's also incredibly important. You save lives.

**0:45:54 Otis Guy:** Right. Well, whatever.

**0:45:55 Debra Schwartz:** Did you deliver any babies?

**0:45:57 Otis Guy:** Yes, I have delivered a baby.

**0:45:58 Debra Schwartz:** Oooh.

**0:46:00 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**0:46:00 Debra Schwartz:** Do you have any memories in particular of something that happened in Marin that might be of interest?

**0:46:07 Otis Guy:** Well, I remember there was a place called the Lincoln Hotel on Fourth Street, and it was like kind of a single room occupancy place, so more, not homeless people, but more —

**0:46:18 Debra Schwartz:** Isn't it still there?

**0:46:20 Otis Guy:** I don't think the Lincoln Hotel is still there. They kept burning it down. [chuckles]

**0:46:24 Debra Schwartz:** There are hotels like that.

**0:46:26 Otis Guy:** So, right on Fourth Street, and it's the third story, we're up there fighting the fire, and I'm with a guy, Bill Rawlins, who's passed away, who was my captain, and Kenny Marshall. Kenny Marshall was not a big fire guy.

**0:47:02 Debra Schwartz:** This was back then? I had no idea.

**0:47:13 Otis Guy:** This was like the second or third time we're in this fire at the Lincoln Hotel. We're up on the third story, there's like 15 of us, all on one line, and we're in this hallway, trying to fight fire. I look below me and I can see flames underneath, through the floorboards. Kenny and Bill were not the most aggressive firefighters, but I was thinking, you know, we're wearing air packs. This was early in my career and I was thinking, "Well, this fire department thing was a very good idea, until now. Because I think I'm gonna die." I'm figuring that in any moment we're going through the floor. And that's it. You're done.

**0:47:54 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:47:54 Otis Guy:** So I'm breathing as fast as I can to get that darn air pack to have the bell come off. And I'm also thinking, "I can't believe —

**0:48:02 Debra Schwartz:** 'Cause, once the bell comes off, you have to go get out.

**0:48:03 Otis Guy:** When the bells come off, you're supposed to get out. So I'm just like, "I'm breathing." 'Cause you can't tap out. "I'm out." That's not gonna really go.

**0:48:13 Debra Schwartz:** "I'm scared. See you guys." Good luck with that. No.

**0:48:14 Otis Guy:** "See you later." And I'm also thinking, "I can't believe Bill and Kenny aren't flipping out." And somebody's bell goes off, and we're all out of there. Everybody must have had the same thought, but my main thing was like, "This was a really good idea, till right now. But I made my choice, and it's the choice I have to live with. And if I end up going through the floor and dying, that's just the way it goes." You

make your choices, and you gotta live with your choices. I can't remember whose bell went off, but it was just like, everybody — woop — down the stairs. We never went back in there. We weren't doing anything. The fire was done. We're not saving anything. It's like, why are we there? There's no point.

**0:49:05 Otis Guy:** For firefighters now, everything is just unsustainable — how this new model is. When Pat and I first started — Pat started in like 1968 or '69, I believe — our grass fires, or wildland fires, were more like, late May and June, and probably by July they were done.

**0:49:18 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:49:18 Otis Guy:** When I retired in 2007, I'm down in Southern California, sleeping in a field in early December, and I can see Christmas tree lights on a house. Our fires now have become year-round. And this is not gonna work. I surfed with a kid the other day at Cronkhite, and he worked for a Southern Marin Fire Department, and he remembers me from a call — I think one of my last calls in Ross Valley, near the end, I think — and it was a poor woman that was on her Harley that was going down Oak Manor where your trailer was, that very steep hill —

**0:49:54 Debra Schwartz:** I cannot believe you remember all this stuff about me from 1979 and '80.

**0:49:58 Otis Guy:** Well, I just remember different things.

**0:50:00 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:50:00 Otis Guy:** But anyways, she ran into a parked car. All I really remember from the call was — I use it when I teach the fire departments on EMS — I never splinted her. We put her on the gurney. She had a bone sticking out. Her foot completely almost came off her leg. I basically spent the whole time cutting her boot off — and she had beautiful leather boots and leather pants on — so they could have access to it when they got to the hospital. I guess that kid was on that call. I think he must have been a volunteer with the county. He remembers me; I don't remember him at all. I just more remember focusing on her, getting her some pain medication, and just like, "Let's go, we're not spending time for me to cut her boot off. Let's get her to the hospital." 'Cause that's what you needed for trauma, to get somebody into surgery. I don't do surgery in the field, right?

**0:50:55 Debra Schwartz:** Stabilize and transport.

**0:50:56 Otis Guy:** Stabilize and transport. But he brought this up. This was in June. He had worked 27 out of 29 days. He had gone to the Carr fire, where they lost a firefighter. He went to the next fire — I'm bad on fire names — the next fire, up there in Redding, and they had lost firefighters at both those fires. 27 out of 29 days. And he looked like an empty corn husk.

**0:51:23 Debra Schwartz:** So, when you say this is not sustainable, you mean to say that the —

**0:51:27 Otis Guy:** The personnel.

**0:51:27 Debra Schwartz:** They simply don't have the manpower?

**0:51:28 Otis Guy:** Yeah, well, the staffing.

**0:51:28 Debra Schwartz:** Or human power, the staffing.

**0:51:32 Otis Guy:** To do any of this. This is not sustainable.

**0:51:34 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:51:34 Otis Guy:** And now the fire behaviors are just — I remember one of my first strike teams, up at the fires in Cazadero. We were supporting a hand tool crew down in this canyon, and they'd done a six-dozer wide fire break, six dozer-blades wide, and we're down there, we don't really see flames or anything else. We're like mopping up and doing this hand-tool crew, helping them out with water, and all that. And [the fire] jumped six dozer-wide things, and this guy, Tiki, who was a firefighter from Kentfield who was on the Kentfield OES [Office of Emergency Services] starts screaming, "Get us the fuck out of here!" And I'm like, "Well, it doesn't seem that bad to me." And I got my hand-tool crew to bring our hose back. They cut their hose, and just left their hose, and then they just jumped in the truck and started heading back up out of the canyon. And I can remember us driving out of this canyon and you saw trees explode in front of us without any flame impingement. And the sound of the wind — this is like for your poor sister, passing away in the Santa Rosa fires. It flipped cars. In other words, all the fire load, everything that it did, just added on, and added on, and added on, and added on, and just swept through. Berkeley Fire did a little YouTube video of them going up to fight the fire —

**0:52:56 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:52:57 Otis Guy:** And their staging place was a Kmart. Well, they get to Kmart and Kmart's on fire, and they're like, "Well, this doesn't make sense." And I'm like, "Dude, this is independent action." It's like, "Go find something and fight it." You know, there's nobody to tell you anything, 'cause they're all busy. They didn't mean you to stage at Kmart and have it be burning down. That wasn't their intention.

**0:53:16 Debra Schwartz:** And for firehouses that have such protocol and practice, and there's all the — not the ritual, but the very delineated course of action. That doesn't apply now.

**0:53:31 Otis Guy:** Right. Whatever the fire was, down south, when poor Rucker was killed, from Novato. I was in Simi Valley. I'm terrible at what the fire names were. We

went down there, and we went on independent action for 72 hours, so we didn't sleep for 72 hours. Nobody gave us assignments.

**0:53:50 Debra Schwartz:** That means you're basically on your own.

**0:53:52 Otis Guy:** You're on your own.

**0:53:52 Debra Schwartz:** No plans.

**0:53:53 Otis Guy:** You're fighting fire from —

**0:53:53 Debra Schwartz:** Nobody communicating.

**0:53:54 Otis Guy:** We got food from homes. Nobody fed us, nobody gave us anything to drink. A neighbor would give us some food. These strike teams, we just went from fire, to fire, to fire, to fire. I got pneumonia from that fire. 'Cause we just didn't sleep. We were just going, and that's kinda what's going on now. This is, like I say, climate change. This is unsustainable. And for the Santa Rosa fire, one of the firefighters I worked with, Jack Barry, his father fought that fire in 1966.

**0:54:24 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:54:25 Otis Guy:** He came up from San Francisco. So you're rebuilding in a place that's already proved twice to burn through. Is that a smart things to do? I'm not sure it is. We have friends that lost their home. You could see St. Helena from their house, up in one of those developments.

**0:54:43 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:54:43 Otis Guy:** Up there off — I can't think of the little goofy road.

**0:54:45 Debra Schwartz:** Highway 12.

**0:54:46 Otis Guy:** Yeah. And they're gonna rebuild, Kelly and Lorraine. I'm not saying this to them, but it's like, I'm not rebuilding. I wouldn't rebuild.

**0:54:55 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:54:56 Otis Guy:** It's already been proven to go. She barely got out of there.

**0:55:00 Debra Schwartz:** It's alarming to hear the reality of this change. So will the science of firefighting have to make some adaptions?

**0:55:10 Otis Guy:** I don't know. It comes down to money. It comes down to doing the right clearance, but it's also people who are building in places they probably shouldn't build. I've probably gone on strike teams down to Malibu 10 times in my career. And by

the time we get there, it'd already burned through to the ocean. We'd be there for a day. We'd drive back and go home. They're rebuilding the same homes. A very top mountain biker by the name of — have you've heard of Tom Ritchey?

**0:55:39 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:55:39 Otis Guy:** So Tom Ritchey —

**0:55:41 Debra Schwartz:** I hope to interview him soon, actually.

**0:55:43 Otis Guy:** Tom's very good. What's the exclusive neighborhood in Santa Barbara?

**0:55:49 Debra Schwartz:** Montecito.

**0:55:49 Otis Guy:** Montecito. So Tom was trying to build — if you talk to Steve Potts, he and Steve were gonna build some places in Point Reyes. I don't know the whole story, and the intimacy details on what happened with them, but I know that eventually Tom got frustrated dealing with the county and did not build those homes — or left. And then he got this place in Montecito. It was a house that had burned down in one of the fires, so they waived all building fees. Then, when PG&E — the last time — said they were gonna start shutting off power when there are high winds, Tom gives me a call, 'cause "now my sprinklers won't work." If you talk to Tom, he's very, very analytical — like Breeze, but in a different way. And he's kinda going, "Well, how does the mist —" And I'm kinda wanting to say, "You rebuilt a frickin' house that already had burned down before." You.

**0:56:43:** Basically, this is an intelligence test. I didn't say that, 'cause it'd be pretty offensive to have somebody tell you that. I'm helping him, giving him solutions, but in the end it's like if something sounds too good to be true, you know what? It is too good to be true. Why are you rebuilding there? But they're doing that 'cause they want a tax base for the communities. But is this the sacrifice we're doing?

**0:57:11 Debra Schwartz:** We're backing ourselves into the corners. It's daunting, Beautiful places. It can be okay, cannot. California has a very long history of fires.

**0:57:20 Otis Guy:** Right, but nothing like this.

**0:57:23 Debra Schwartz:** But over a long time. It's a part of the California landscape. But now things are different because the temperature is different.

**0:57:29 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**0:57:31 Debra Schwartz:** Let's segue away now from firefighting back to the biking.

**0:57:36 Otis Guy:** We'll go back to Gary Fisher, the one you were talking about earlier.

**0:57:39 Debra Schwartz:** Gary Fisher. And we didn't talk about Steve Potts, another wonderful man. But as you're getting older and you're becoming more skilled as a firefighter, now you're —

**0:57:48 Otis Guy:** Well, I've been retired for almost 12 years.

**0:57:50 Debra Schwartz:** But I mean your skills are your skills. You still can do emergency medicine, if you have to on a trail, if a biker's down, you're gonna be able to do something versus nothing.

**0:58:02 Otis Guy:** Right. Since August, I've taught 180 high school coaches first aid. I designed a NICA — National Interscholastic Cycling Association, the high school national organization — eight-hour first aid course. So I established that curriculum. I spent a ton of hours last year — not last year, 2017.

**0:58:23 Debra Schwartz:** Teaching the new CPR now?

**0:58:25 Otis Guy:** Well, because before to be a high school coach you had lot of requirements. One of them was to take the Wilderness First Aid class, which is a two-day class.

**0:58:32 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:58:33 Otis Guy:** So, I was a high school coach for seven years. I just retired. I was with a team called Sir Francis Drake High School Team.

**0:58:40 Debra Schwartz:** And what was the sport?

**0:58:41 Otis Guy:** Mountain biking.

**0:58:43 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, okay.

**0:58:43 Otis Guy:** It's the premiere team in the nation. The team has won the last four state championships.

**0:58:48 Debra Schwartz:** Congratulations.

**0:58:49 Otis Guy:** I didn't do any riding. They rode, not me. While I was coaching, we won five out of seven state championships, so the top team. So, you have all these things you have to do to become a high school coach, and to do a two-day class you're taking a weekend away from the family. Everything else is a little daunting. I had never taught Wilderness First Aid before until I became a high school coach and I saw I'm qualified to do it. I'm an ASHI certified instructor, which is American Safety and Health Institute.

I'm also an American Heart Association certified instructor, and I'm a Title 22 California State EMS [Emergency Medical Services] instructor. It took me only 38 years to graduate from San Francisco City College with an associate degree in paramedicine.

**0:59:34 Debra Schwartz:** Congratulations! [chuckles]

**0:59:38 Otis Guy:** Just 38 years.

**0:59:38 Debra Schwartz:** That's your time release education.

**0:59:40 Otis Guy:** Yes, that's what it was. So I designed this course for the high school coaches to do. It's just common sense, the skills that you learn. Pat Williams would be a great EMS instructor.

**0:59:57 Debra Schwartz:** But I have to imagine that this is helpful to have somebody like you on the rides because people get hurt all the time.

**1:00:04 Otis Guy:** Well now, because I go on big group road rides and big group adventures rides, not gravel rides, we won't have any gravel around here. And on mountain bike rides, now in the last two years I carry a small little first aid kit with me on all the rides. I always carry gloves in my under-seat bag.

**1:00:20 Debra Schwartz:** Good for everybody on the mountain, always carry gloves with you.

**1:00:23 Otis Guy:** I'm kind of a dirt-devil, which means incidents do find me. I seem to be one of those people that will attract medical emergencies at different times.

**1:00:34 Debra Schwartz:** Right. When you were riding, and you've got Gary Fisher — just give me an idea. Let's say, I'm gonna choose a year, okay? 1985. Who were you riding with?

**1:00:55 Otis Guy:** I've gone through about four or five generations of riders. I was doing probably generation two or three in '85. At that time, so Alexis was two-years-old. I probably started doing my race team in about '85. I think I started my own race team about that year '85, '86. Still racing, still at the fire department, so it was just more for fun, and realizing, "Okay, well I've only got so much time I can be away from Alexis, my daughter, and taking care of ourselves. Am I gonna drive two hours to race three hours? Or am I just gonna go for a four-hour ride here and just use the best hours?" And then probably in the '80s, there was probably more mountain bike racing, some road [racing]. For us, remember, mountain biking was an off-season sport.

**1:01:48 Debra Schwartz:** So let's talk about mountain biking. Let's actually go to mountain biking.

**1:01:51 Otis Guy:** Okay.

**1:01:51 Debra Schwartz:** Because you were there, you were a frame maker.

**1:01:56 Otis Guy:** Well, not till later on. So how this all works was, both Joe and I were into old bikes. I'm talking old bikes. I have a high wheeler, an ordinary, from 1882 that I worked on at Wheels Unlimited during a whole summer for free in 1972 to get that bicycle. It was a bicycle that came from England, around Cape Horn, you know up to San Rafael. San Rafael was a very big bike town.

**1:02:21:** So, Joe Breeze and I were both into old bikes — you know, not necessarily the old cruiser bikes. And there was a guy named Marc Vendetti, was a little bit younger than us but had a connection with the Larkspur Canyonites — those were guys that were riding these old Schwinn's on the S trail on Mt. Tam, and they were kind of like the first early people on the mountain bikes. What made the difference to make this sport happen was that Gary, Joe, Marc, and myself were all cyclists. In other words, we weren't gonna start riding these bikes and then get a motorcycle. We were gonna keep doing this. This is a lifelong sport.

**1:03:03:** So when Mark Vendetti introduced us — "Hey, I rode these old bikes on the lower slopes of Mt. Tam when I was in high school." We were racing together, we were involved all in the same race team, Velo Club Tamalpais with Gary Fisher. And Mark told us about these bikes and what the right bike to get was, pre-WWII, that had a higher bottom bracket and setting pins in the back. "Don't use a new departure hub, use a Morrow Hub," which is this beautiful, brass shoe, rear foot-brake hub. This was the bike to get. So in October of '73 we started riding those bicycles. And for us, it was an off-season diversion. In a sense, these bicycles, took us away from collecting really old bicycles. We were more interested in bikes from the 1880s through 1920s, rather than the paperboy bikes, which were not that interesting, relatively speaking.

**1:03:52 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:03:54 Otis Guy:** But when we started riding these bikes, they were fun. What you would do on a five-hour hike on Mt. Tam, you could ride around on the cruiser bike with the one speed and do it in a couple hours. If you're thinking about those days when we were racing on the road, we were racing with dropped bars, with non-index shifting, with silk tires — you know they get flats. And so here you have something that was a single-speed mountain bike. You were never gonna have a mechanical, you were never gonna get a flat. The bikes had a patina, had history to them. They were kind of cool with the beautiful spears and stuff in the paint, and just the Morrow Hubs with the beautiful brass shoes, and all these different things. It was fun. We'd have metal pedals, Lyotard pedals, that we'd braise, 'cause when you'd hit rocks — those are also the drought years in Marin County.

**1:04:58 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:05:00 Otis Guy:** So it was good weather, and it was a great off-season diversion.

**1:05:04 Debra Schwartz:** What is the road season?

**1:05:06 Otis Guy:** The races really get going in late March and go to the first week in October.

**1:05:13 Debra Schwartz:** So then in October it becomes mountain biking?

**1:05:16 Otis Guy:** That's what we did.

**1:05:17 Debra Schwartz:** This is the clunkers? We're talking early clunkers?

**1:05:19 Otis Guy:** This is the clunkers: the one-speed bikes that weigh 45-pounds, '37 to '41 Schwinnns. That's the bikes we started riding.

**1:05:27 Debra Schwartz:** At this time are you hanging out now with Charlie Kelly?

**1:05:33 Otis Guy:** We met Charlie later on. He came in around the mountain bike time. He was not a roadie. Fred Wolf wasn't a roadie, Charlie wasn't a roadie. He did, later on, do some racing on the road.

**1:05:45 Debra Schwartz:** And Steve Potts was not a roadie?

**1:05:48 Otis Guy:** Steve Potts was not at that time.

**1:05:49 Debra Schwartz:** He did motorcycles.

**1:05:49 Otis Guy:** He did motorcycles, and he wasn't a roadie. The road people were — Tom Ritchey was roadie. Ritchey didn't come until later though.

**1:06:00 Debra Schwartz:** Later being?

**1:06:01 Otis Guy:** Ritchey's two years younger than us. The first mountain bikes he built were for Gary back in — I can tell that story — '78.

**1:06:09 Debra Schwartz:** Okay.

**1:06:10 Otis Guy:** When Joe made the first modern mountain bike, we brought one of those bikes down, and Tom built Joe and I a tandem frame for us to try and break the transcontinental record in 1979. And that was the first time he saw a mountain bike.

**1:06:23 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:06:24 Otis Guy:** But anyway, we were riding them, enjoying them, and we'd bring them to the races. We were probably riding two or three months before Gary started

riding the mountains bikes. We showed Gary the bikes, and then Charlie, and they were already living together in San Anselmo. So that's kind of more where it came from.

**1:06:44 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:06:45 Otis Guy:** You know, Joe, Marc, and I were best friends. And Gary, we were teammates with him, we were very good friends with him. We'd be doing big rides with Gary and different people from the East Bay. But Gary wasn't one that was going on all the rides with us.

**1:07:07 Debra Schwartz:** So, these are your cadre? These are your brothers in arms?

**1:07:10 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**1:07:11 Debra Schwartz:** These are your people, on the mountain.

**1:07:13 Otis Guy:** Yes. Yes.

**1:07:14 Debra Schwartz:** At what point did you start getting involved, yourself, as far as the development and the building of —

**1:07:25 Otis Guy:** The firehouse kinda helped with this, too. So here I am coming down with this bicycle, and the old fireman, the firefighters, they remember these bicycles as kids. They're kind of like fun bikes. And all of a sudden, the fire guys are like, "Oh, this is kind of a cool bike. These are fun." 'Cause, do most people wanna ride on a skinny-tired, drop-bar bike? Joe and I saw these bikes, not as just mountain bikes, but as transportation. Remember, we were in for the duration.

**1:07:58 Debra Schwartz:** This is a lifestyle choice for you.

**1:08:00 Otis Guy:** This is a lifestyle choice, but it's also a choice as far as efficiency and transportation. It wasn't just going on Mt. Tam. It was also just, "Why can't you use these bikes to go get a quart of milk?"

**1:08:12 Debra Schwartz:** Yes. I don't think Joe had a car, actually.

**1:08:15 Otis Guy:** I taught Joe how to drive my MGA, and Joe still drives like he's about 22 years-old.

**1:08:22 Debra Schwartz:** Ironic, since his father made and drove race cars.

**1:08:24 Otis Guy:** His father was a race car driver. Yes, his father was a phenomenal driver and a very good cyclist, too.

**1:08:28 Debra Schwartz:** But he did not want his children to own cars.

**1:08:32 Otis Guy:** I think that was gonna be a Joe and Richard thing though. Joe was not a big car guy anyway. I mean, he liked cars, but he wasn't ever gonna be a driver. Like I said, I think I taught him to drive when he was 25. [chuckles]

**1:08:45 Debra Schwartz:** Okay, so it's more than a sport; it's a lifestyle. It's how you get from point A to point B. And, of course, at this time we're talking about the birth of environmentalism, you know, the gas prices were up. So there was practical reasons to think of this as a healthier alternative.

**1:09:03 Otis Guy:** Right. So, we just started riding these things. We'd take them to races with us. And the difference was that Gary, myself, Joe, Marc, we were all working in bike shops, or in some part of the industry. So instead of it just being some dope-smoking kids from Marin, we were actually people that were part of the industry. When we said to somebody, "Hey, we need aluminum rims," it meant something.

**1:09:36 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:09:36 Otis Guy:** We'd take these bikes to the races with us when we raced on the road. I had a 1950 GMC milk truck. It was an old Foremost milk truck with the little dots on them, orange and white. That was our race vehicle. We'd drive to Oregon, to Southern California. It's always very funny with Gary on the bikes, because Marc, Joe, and I if we were coming back from a race and there was a town — a train town, 'cause train towns were usually more wealthier towns — we'd be driving through them looking on porches to find the bikes.

**1:10:08 Debra Schwartz:** To go scavenge?

**1:10:10 Otis Guy:** To scavenge. Or we'd go by old dumps, and Gary would always be like, "I don't wanna stop any more places to look for old bikes." [laughs]

**1:10:15 Debra Schwartz:** You were looking for parts.

**1:10:16 Otis Guy:** We were looking for parts, and frames, and everything else.

**1:10:18 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, how fun.

**1:10:19 Otis Guy:** Oh yeah. That's how we got all that stuff.

**1:10:20 Debra Schwartz:** This is truly the culture that you've immersed yourself in.

**1:10:22 Otis Guy:** In a different way.

**1:10:23 Debra Schwartz:** When you think about it, it's a hobby and you really don't have a lot of support in the outside world. That's what's interesting to me. You guys were kind of on an individual journey here.

**1:10:39 Otis Guy:** Yes. It was all good.

**1:10:41 Debra Schwartz:** You were the vanguard in every way. Something inside you compelled you to go in this direction.

**1:10:47 Otis Guy:** Right, yeah. And then Joe started building frames in 1975, I think, or '74. He took Albert Eisentraut's class. He was the premier frame builder in America — really starting the frame-building revolution, I'd say, in America. And so, Joe built himself a bike in the class. The second bike he ever built was for me. And, the third bike he built was for Marc.

**1:11:12 Debra Schwartz:** I have a really important question to ask you: Do you still have that bike?

**1:11:16 Otis Guy:** No, I don't. I sold it to get another bike, when Joe built me another bike.

**1:11:19 Debra Schwartz:** Where is it?

**1:11:19 Otis Guy:** I have no idea.

**1:11:20 Debra Schwartz:** Oh.

**1:11:21 Otis Guy:** I'm hoping us someday shows up.

**1:11:22 Debra Schwartz:** Aww.

**1:11:22 Otis Guy:** I started building frames in 1982, 'cause I was tired of working in bike shops, and I had my own ideas of how I wanted frames to be. I worked with Joe for a while, helping him build frames, cutting up tubing and doing all that type of stuff. I got tired of dealing with retail and bike shops, so I started building my own frames then.

**1:11:44 Debra Schwartz:** Where? At home?

**1:11:46 Otis Guy:** At home. So when I built my home, I dug out underneath the house and made a shop. And actually, my truck, the truck I drove here today after surfing, it was an old '55 Dodge pickup truck. It went through the flood in 1981 — January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1981 — in San Anselmo. It went over the carburetor, and so they totaled it, but then gave it to me. And they gave me \$1500, and that's how I bought my first lathe and my first mill, with the proceeds from that. So, Joe took the two-year machine shop class at College of Marin, and had this phenomenal teacher, Ray Matoza, who was the program director. I talked to Mr. Matoza a couple of times and asked him, "Hey, can I jump in the two-year program and make all my fixtures for building frames?" And he was like, "Yes, you can." I learned some good lessons from Mr. Matoza.

**1:12:36 Otis Guy:** At that time a lot of Vietnamese were fleeing Vietnam and coming over. And so, this guy Mr. Matoza found a teacher at college of Marin, or knew somebody at College of Marin that also knew Vietnamese and English, and he'd get these Vietnamese refugees and have them take his class, 'cause he could guarantee them a job in a machine shop afterwards. They'd be in his class, and then he'd arrange for somebody to teach them English after class. You know, Ray Matoza was one of the early machinists that did machining for George Lucas, like for the cameras to spin, and everything else. He would work for George in the summertime when school wasn't going on. What I learned from him also was that if you're in, he'd spend tons of time with you. But if he had some kid take a machine shop class who could give a crap about it, he was basically like, "FU."

**1:13:35 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:13:36 Otis Guy:** Not like being angry at them, but basically —

**1:13:38 Debra Schwartz:** Don't waste my time.

**1:13:39 Otis Guy:** Don't waste my time.

**1:13:40 Debra Schwartz:** But if you want my time, I'm yours.

**1:13:42 Otis Guy:** I'm yours.

**1:13:42 Debra Schwartz:** Right.

**1:13:43 Otis Guy:** He was really, really good. That exemplified it, what he did for the Vietnamese refugees coming in.

**1:13:49 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm. At what point did it occur to you that what you all were involved in, was starting to really catch fire and starting to change the world?

**1:14:00 Otis Guy:** Well, it wasn't just us that helped to get that going, also the Mike Sinyard's of the world, from Specialized. He used to deliver parts to us in his van, before he started Specialized, the large company. It just got going. In the end, Joe and I tried to break the transcontinental record in 1976 and 1979, tried to ride across the country in 10 days on a tandem. And the reason we did that was, if we can get across the country in 10 days in a tandem, you can go to the grocery store and get a quarter milk and some eggs, right?

**1:14:32 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**1:14:32 Otis Guy:** That was more of the point. It wasn't just for our individual glory; it was also to prove a point, what you could do with a bicycle. So just to see all that stuff grow — I'm the only person to race in Repack and win Repack, who also did the first Mountain Bike National Championships, and the first World Championships. I'm the

only person to do that. I never stopped. I had already started building bikes and had one of my own mountain bikes. I rode my Breezer in the first Mountain Bike National Championships because I wanted a bike that was the first modern bike to be in the first U.S. Mountain Bike National Championships. I remember doing the first World Championships. It was in Durango.

**1:15:20:** I remember coming and racing in the Master's at that point, and coming across the line in tears. To see how it'd gone from being a sport that we were just — in October of '73 — these hippy kids riding on Mt. Tam, to how we were now and how it became a worldwide sport. And because that happened it made bikes better in the entire world. Because you now brought America into the bike industry, and were not just getting a Schwinn Varsity, but real bikes. That made the improvements. At the time you had kid bikes that, basically, if they had gears, they worked like crap, and if they had breaks, they barely worked. But now you had brought Japan in, you brought Europe in. There were enough people here to buy bikes that they made more improvements. It wasn't just mountain bikes, it was also road bikes, and all bikes got improved by bringing America in. And so it was very good to feel like you had some small contribution to help make that happen.

**1:16:20 Debra Schwartz:** It does seem, when you think about the old bikes and how specialized they were, it was constrained how you used bikes, but now —

**1:16:31 Otis Guy:** It's game on, baby.

**1:16:32 Debra Schwartz:** It can change — well, Tom Ritchey in Rwanda.<sup>3</sup>

**1:16:35 Otis Guy:** Yeah, of course.

**1:16:39 Debra Schwartz:** It changed lives utterly. And it's not using any fossil fuels.

**1:16:45 Otis Guy:** The Rwanda project's absolutely incredible. He made this really cool wood rack for the bikes to transport the coffee beans. I remember him telling me that was like one of the worst things he did because they looked at wood as being shittier. He was like, "Hey this is wood from your area in Rwanda." It was beautiful. They're beautiful racks. It was actually more of a negative, 'cause they would have been happier if they were metal, 'cause they thought that would actually be an improvement. They looked at the wood as it being not as good. [chuckles] I love that.

**1:17:22 Debra Schwartz:** Well, the people listening to this interview won't understand what we're talking about, but in fact Tom Ritchey went to Rwanda and helped the — well, you can tell the story better. It really is a life-changer what happened there.

**1:17:35 Otis Guy:** He went there to — well, bicycles as transportation, just like I brought up earlier. This is how you can move the coffee beans from place to place with

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<sup>3</sup> In 2005, Tom Ritchey launched Project Rwanda to support cycling in the country and make affordable bicycles available to Rwandans.—Editor.

these bicycles as transport. He put these bikes together that are basically bomb proof bikes that you can throw off a cliff and they'll keep moving. And instead of you having no way to be able to move your beans to market, to be able to sell them to keep your family alive — Tom would be far better to talk to, 'cause —

**1:18:02 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, I will reach out to him. But it describes perfectly the unintended consequences, how when you have innovation of some form, it then radiates in all kinds of ways.

**1:18:15 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**1:18:15 Debra Schwartz:** Beyond perhaps even your own imagining. And it can be so profound. But what's also so interesting to me — 'cause I'm friends with Joe and Connie and Charley and Steve — is that there's a lot of love in your group.

**1:18:41 Otis Guy:** Oh yeah.

**1:18:41 Debra Schwartz:** There's camaraderie, there's friendship. It's not just fueled by innovation and interested minds trying to change things so they can ride fun things, but there is also friendship. This is love; this is togetherness; this is community.

**1:18:58 Otis Guy:** Well, like I said, I would know everybody that rode through Marin with cycling shorts on. What was that great quote? It was just somebody in the news. Oh, I know, it was a coach, that's right, it was a coach for a football team that I came across. "Hey, you treat everybody the same, you treat them well," and this guy is like, "You're kind of giving me credit for something I'm not thinking about." You know what I mean? 'Cause isn't that kinda how you should be? It's the same type of thing. Isn't that what you learnt in kindergarten, how you're supposed to treat people? It's not, "I'm a better frame builder than Steve." Who gives a crap? It's like life is too freaking short. So yes, we're all kinda in it together in different ways.

**1:19:52 Debra Schwartz:** And that brings us to another subject I want to talk about, and that is the biking museum.

**1:19:58 Otis Guy:** Yes, the Marin Museum of Bicycling, which houses the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. So, there are these bikes that Joe and I saw, the Igler collection. We were racing down at a race in Redwood City or Palo Alto. There's great Crits down there, Criterium races, on the road bike, and we had heard about this man, a Mr. Igler, Ralph Igler, who had this collection of old bikes. Remember I told you earlier on that we we're into old bikes —

**1:20:25 Debra Schwartz:** That you'd worked at this place all summer long just so you — yes.

**1:20:28 Otis Guy:** Yeah, I'd work all summer and I'd have a bike from the 1880s and zeros and '10s and '20s. [Igler] had this incredible collection of bikes that we saw,

probably in — Joe's better with dates than I am — it could have been 1974 or something like that. And we always said that if we ever open a museum, a bicycle museum, we gotta get these bikes. So we ended up doing this museum and it was very good. Marc Vendetti, you've heard me say the name a few times, worked on crab boats up in Alaska and then later on settled in Seattle. I was his best man at his wedding a few years later. He was no longer around, but he ended up coming back here to Marin, and when he came back here we got all these old friends from 1972, and with Connie and with his wife Lena, and we decided to start the museum.

**1:21:30:** And then it was like, "We gotta find these bikes." And Joe did find the bikes. Poor Mr. Igler had passed away and his son had them down in the South. And so one of the first things, when we met to have the museum, was like I said, "If we're gonna have the museum" — the U.S. Bicycle Hall of Fame had moved to Davis a few years ago — "we have to have the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame." So that was my first thing: we've gotta get the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. Well, we talked to Don and Kay Cook, and I think they were kinda done trying to run the Hall of Fame, so we brought the Hall of Fame out here. We flew out to Colorado, rented a U-Haul and went to Crested Butte, and loaded up all the stuff that was out there and drove all night with all of the stuff from the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. It took a few years, but then we found the space. My TIG [tungsten inert gas] welder lived in the museum for six months. I went through, I think, 48 sticks of TIG welding rod making all the fixtures and everything else.

**1:22:25 Debra Schwartz:** To hang the bikes?

**1:22:25 Otis Guy:** To hold the bikes up and the whole thing. It was very fun 'cause back in the old days when Joe was building frames. It just brings it all back full circle. And Joe is still very amazing. Joe would stay up three days doing something, three days in a row, he'll stay up all night. It's like, "Dude, I'm done with that." We were working till, whatever it is, 9 o'clock now. I'm not staying up till 3:00 a.m. to do something. I'm done with that — not doing it. But Joe, Joe's determined.

**1:23:05 Debra Schwartz:** He goes down the rabbit hole.

**1:23:07 Otis Guy:** Oh, he hits the rabbit hole hard.

**1:23:09 Debra Schwartz:** I've been into his study when we were looking at some photographs that he had. Someone had brought him a book of old riding clubs.

**1:23:16 Otis Guy:** Right. Oh yeah, that's an incredible book.

**1:23:17 Debra Schwartz:** We were looking at the photographs, and then it was hours later.

**1:23:23 Otis Guy:** Oh no.

**1:23:23 Debra Schwartz:** His time goes away, and his capacity to stay focused is remarkable.

**1:23:29 Otis Guy:** Oh yeah. He's a true believer. Joe, bless his heart. Luckily — it's almost kind of a curse — like his father, everything's gotta be absolutely perfect. For Joe, everything's gotta be actually perfect.

**1:23:48 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:23:49 Otis Guy:** I don't know if you know about his brother, Richard. So, unfortunately for Richard, his older brother — not older brother that's his, both from his father and his mother, because, see, Joe's got half-brothers, and Richard is one of his half-brothers who are like another generation ahead of them — and sister. Poor Richard took that exactness to the level of where — I'm assuming right now, Debra, that I'm talking to you, and that I'm in this room, with all this stuff here. And I'm kinda going with that as a baseline, and I'm okay with that. If I'm wrong, and this is all a big dream, it's not right, well, I'm okay with that, too. That reality sounds okay. For Richard, Richard questioned absolutely everything in life to the point of is this chair here? And, if you can imagine — talk about going down a rabbit hole — where that would take you when you question the air I'm breathing and everything else. And Richard — what was that, the Kuwait War? — immolated himself in San Francisco, set himself on fire and died.

**1:24:53 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**1:24:58 Otis Guy:** One of the firefighters, Marty Marcuccio always said, "Be careful. You get into something too much, you get weird." You know? So you're always gotta be careful with that. Joe's dad Bill Breeze was pretty intense. I wasn't scared of him, but he was game on.

**1:25:16 Debra Schwartz:** Not messing around.

**1:25:18 Otis Guy:** You had to be objective. You're not messing around. I remember Joe lived at home his whole life. That's why his only paying job was for me at Mom's Apple Bikes, way back when, for \$6 an hour, God knows what it was.

**1:25:37 Debra Schwartz:** On Country Club Drive.

**1:25:38 Otis Guy:** On Country Club Drive, yes, right across from Steve Miller, a rock 'n' roll star from Chicago. Joe would sometimes get Steve Miller's leftover rock 'n' roll clothes, 'cause they were both the same size, like boots with bigger heels and stuff. It's just a total crack-up.

**1:26:02 Debra Schwartz:** Lifts, yeah.

**1:26:06 Otis Guy:** Any time it rained, Joe had these logs of, you know, rainfall, temperature, and everything else. So Joe goes to move out of the house, and Joe calls me up and he's like, "I've got all these logs." If it rained hard, he'd wake up in 1:00 a.m. and write, "It rained 0.3 inches from 1:12 a.m. to 1:47 a.m." Joe's like, "I've got these things, I'm not sure what to do with them." I'm like, "Well, maybe you should have thought of that before you started them?" [laughs]

**1:26:37 Debra Schwartz:** What fuels greatness!

**1:26:40 Otis Guy:** I said it very kindly. And then I said, "Well, donate it to the library, or something like that. I'm sure they'd like to have the different records." But that's a very good Joe story.

**1:26:52 Debra Schwartz:** It's a very good start, if you're going to have a museum of history.

**1:26:56 Otis Guy:** Oh, no. He's the man.

**1:26:57 Debra Schwartz:** He is truly super, of course.

**1:26:58 Otis Guy:** Joe is absolutely incredible, so it's very wonderful. The reason to have the museum, was just to be able to — first, I don't know why there's so much acrimony with mountain bikes. Cycling here in Marin County, especially if we're the birthplace, why can't we ride on all the single trails? I have friends that I ride with up in Tahoe, and we're riding on single-track trails that have horses, motorcyclists, hikers, and cyclists, and it all works.

**1:27:25 Debra Schwartz:** A touchy subject around here with the hiker groups.

**1:27:28 Otis Guy:** We're saying, "Why is that happening?" I think, little by little, the bricks are coming out of that wall. And for us the museum is another way to take on another brick, to make it so that everything's more accepted, and also to celebrate cycling, and to celebrate its history.

**1:27:47 Debra Schwartz:** It legitimizes.

**1:27:47 Otis Guy:** Legitimizes.

**1:27:48 Debra Schwartz:** Sometimes education is the best defense.

**1:27:52 Otis Guy:** Mm-hmm. So the museum is very wonderful. And I've been the director now for a while of the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. My dog Barton, who's a very good dog, who has done Tamarancho, Barton could have been on the ballot of the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. If you, Debra, wanted to be on the ballot of the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame, you could just put a submission in and you'd be on the ballot. So when they have the voting, I'd be reading — I'm probably one of the few people that

would read everybody's name — and I'm like, "Oh good. You rode a bike in Kansas. Who gives a crap?" [laughs]

**1:28:30 Debra Schwartz:** Hey, if a dog's doing something like that, I'd be interested.

**1:28:32 Otis Guy:** No, but —

**1:28:34 Debra Schwartz:** You really ought to have dogs in the Hall of Fame.

**1:28:35 Otis Guy:** There we go.

**1:28:36 Debra Schwartz:** There's a lot of dogs that —

**1:28:37 Otis Guy:** Junior, Fred Wolfe's dog, came on tons of bike rides with us.

**1:28:42 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**1:28:42 Otis Guy:** And then also my dog Brandie. Brandie did 50-mile mountain bike rides. Actually, in my preparation for the first National Championships she did a 50-mile mountain bike ride with me from Fairfax all the way out to the coast and back.

**1:28:55 Debra Schwartz:** We're gonna talk later, 'cause I'm working on a history talk about famous dogs in Marin County.

**1:28:58 Otis Guy:** Okay, then we will.

**1:29:00 Debra Schwartz:** We'll include the biker dogs.

**1:29:01 Otis Guy:** Include Junior. Junior's probably the genesis.

**1:29:04 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**1:29:04 Otis Guy:** But where was I now? I lost my —

**1:29:09 Debra Schwartz:** You were talking about the legitimate —

**1:29:10 Otis Guy:** Oh, the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. Once I took over, it was like, "Okay, you've gotta have, actually, people that matter." I put together the thing where you had to put in a submission, and I put together a nominating committee of mountain bikers around the world, so it's not just from here, 'cause people would have the perception that it's the Marin County Mountain Bike Hall of Fame.

**1:29:31 Debra Schwartz:** Just a bunch of back padding.

**1:29:33 Otis Guy:** It's been in Crested Butte, so it never was the Marin County Hall of Fame.

**1:29:37 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**1:29:38 Otis Guy:** So now I've set it up so you have to go before the nominating committee to make it onto the ballot. I must be doing a better job, because the last two years I've not been F-bombed. [chuckles] Because, you know, people don't make it. It's like, "How the fuck can you not know that I should be the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame?" I was like, "It's not my job to know. It's your job to tell me. And, your job to convince me."

**1:30:01 Debra Schwartz:** How many do you select each year?

**1:30:05 Otis Guy:** We only induct four every year. If I got 50 people that were worthy of being in the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame, they'd be on the ballot.

**1:30:12 Debra Schwartz:** How many you do induct into the Hall of Fame?

**1:30:14 Otis Guy:** Just four a year.

**1:30:15 Debra Schwartz:** Just four a year?

**1:30:16 Otis Guy:** Four a year, right now.

**1:30:17 Debra Schwartz:** And how many do you have in the Hall of Fame?

**1:30:19 Otis Guy:** Oh God, what is it? 182, or something like that. Joe's better on numbers.

**1:30:23 Debra Schwartz:** So, you've been retired now for almost over 10 years?

**1:30:26 Otis Guy:** Yes. It'll be 12 years in June.

**1:30:28 Debra Schwartz:** But you sound really busy.

**1:30:29 Otis Guy:** I know, that's the problem. See, I went to the firehouse to rest. [laughs] And now I have no place to rest. It really sucks. This is my recovery, right now.

**1:30:42 Debra Schwartz:** Sitting here in this quiet room is a moment's pause. [chuckles]

**1:30:46 Otis Guy:** I like to be busy, so I'd rather —

**1:30:48 Debra Schwartz:** God, you've got a tremendous amount of energy, just watching you.

**1:30:52 Otis Guy:** Well, I feel like I'm a shell of my former — I feel like I've got no energy.

**1:30:57 Debra Schwartz:** Oh my gosh.

**1:30:57 Otis Guy:** It's very nice of you to say that. I went for a two-hour surf today. That's why I said I've gone through a few different generations of cyclists. I still ride with fast groups. But now, I'm dropping heartbeats like every freaking day. My max heart rate keeps dropping. And remember, Breeze, Vendetti, Fisher — these people drip with talent. I was good enough to be shitty, you know what I mean?

**1:31:30 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**1:31:30 Otis Guy:** I was good enough to be there. I was Cat. 1 when there was only a 60 Cat. 1s. If the sun, moon, and stars lined up, I could do something. But I'm not like Breeze, where it just, pfft, it just comes out.

**1:31:46 Debra Schwartz:** He's very elegant on a bike. I once saw him get on a kid's bike in front of his house, and somehow he made that bike, that was completely too small for him — he was elegant even on that.

**1:31:58 Otis Guy:** Yeah.

**1:32:00 Debra Schwartz:** Okay, so as we're getting close to the end of this interview, you bring to mind something that I'd like to ask. You know that song, Jimmy Buffett song, "A Pirate Looks at 40"?

**1:32:10 Otis Guy:** Mm-hmm.

**1:32:11 Debra Schwartz:** Well, how about a cyclist looks at 70? I mean, now we've got electric bikes, the Segway — I'm an athlete; I'm out a lot. I mean, you get older, you just can't perform like you did before, although your spirit may compel you to do so. And for many people that ride bikes or are outside hiking or whatever, they do it because they truly love it and want to be out there, but yet age changes things. So how do you see yourself riding into the future?

**1:32:46 Otis Guy:** Well, I am in the future. I'm 65. I'm on Medicare. I'm all good. I'm very conflicted on the electric mountain bike, the road bike. There are people riding electric road bikes in group rides. It's starting to happen. If you follow the trade magazines, the e-mountain bike thing has been happening in Europe for very many years. We had an individual whom we inducted into the Hall of Fame a couple years ago who's a phenomenally strong guy. He's four or five years older than I am — raced with Thomas Frischknecht's father. He's a fast, fast boy, plenty strong, does big rides, and he rides electric mountain bikes in Europe. But you can do the same where I can go farther. This will be the unpopular opinion, and it won't hold, but why can't you just be different? In other words, am I doing the Davis 200? I guess I could still can do the Davis 200, but I'm

not gonna be doing the Davis 200 in eight hours and 59 minutes anymore. Isn't that okay? So the ride that I would do for three hours up on Mt. Tam, why can't I ride for three hours and then do like two-thirds of the amount I did before?

**1:34:01 Debra Schwartz:** How about when you're in your 90s. How many riders do you have in their 80s and 90s?

**1:34:06 Otis Guy:** Oh, I actually can name some, not necessarily in their 90s but in their 80s, that are phenomenal. I've got a cycling hero, Ron Sweet. I think Ron is like 83 years old. And I have Chuck who's a knee boarder that still likes surfing. So I've got Chuck and Ron. Chuck's starting to slow down. Tim Ecke and I are like, "Chuck, you can't slow down. We got you here, so you gotta keep going."

**1:34:30 Debra Schwartz:** "You're our horizon."

**1:34:31 Otis Guy:** "'Cause we wanna be where you are." Part of the problem with e-mountain bikes, or electric road bikes — whenever you see you see a bike rolling through Mill Valley that's going an unnatural speed, what kind of bike is it? It's an electric bike. I'm flying up the Eldridge Grade. Why should you be on something that's faster than I am when I'm going good? Why should you be faster than you were? I'm okay with getting people out there, but they shouldn't be going unnatural speeds. The wave happened in Europe. If it has happened in there, then it's gonna happen here. I think this goes to a societal thing. What are the terms? 60 is the new 40, or 70 is the new 50. Can't you just be you? Can't you just adjust and age gracefully and adjust as you get older? It's like, "Hey, I'm 88. I can't get up the stairs, but I'd like to go up the top Mt. Tam." But I don't think that's who you're bringing up. I think you're bringing up younger people, 'cause I'm seeing people in their forties on electric mountain bikes.

**1:35:57 Debra Schwartz:** No, I'm actually speaking to the spirit of the experience to you. I mean, as tired as you say you are, you have a tremendous amount of vitality. You may be that one that somebody else is using as their horizon in the future. You may be 90 years old and out there on the bike. There are actual changes that take place in the body, but some things you don't want to let go of because it just means that much to you.

**1:36:26 Otis Guy:** Right.

**1:36:27 Debra Schwartz:** It's hard to get off the saddle.

**1:36:31 Otis Guy:** Right. I'm not getting off the saddle.

**1:36:33 Debra Schwartz:** You're not getting off the saddle?

**1:36:35 Otis Guy:** Not getting off the surf board, not getting off the saddle.

**1:36:36 Debra Schwartz:** Not going to happen.

**1:36:37 Otis Guy:** Not gonna happen [chuckles] So that's okay, you know. I can adjust. I'm pretty tough. I've got some stamina.

**1:36:48 Debra Schwartz:** Okay. I just wanted to be clear about that.

**1:36:52 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**1:36:52 Debra Schwartz:** I think we've covered a lot of terrain.

**1:36:53 Otis Guy:** Okay, perfect.

**1:36:55 Debra Schwartz:** What haven't we talked about that you would like to say?

**1:36:58 Otis Guy:** Let's see. I think we're pretty good. I guess, you know, with Fisher, I don't know how your interview went with him. I would say it's always good to have different people's perceptions. I think it's also good to be listening to the cacophony of different people and their viewpoints. I don't think that an interview with Joe, Mark, myself, or Steve is necessarily gonna be self-aggrandizing and trying to tell something that wasn't. So that would be my statement.

**1:37:41 Debra Schwartz:** Well, it takes many eyes to see the world, which is why I'm so glad you sat down with me today, to describe what you see in your world and your experiences. And when you collectively put these stories together, in my experience, it's amazing how aligned they are.

**1:37:58 Otis Guy:** Yeah, I think they are in many different ways.

**1:38:00 Debra Schwartz:** It's amazing, but we do like to see different perspectives because that's the truth of life.

**1:38:04 Otis Guy:** Yes.

**1:38:05 Debra Schwartz:** So with that final thought in mind, we'll conclude this interview.

**1:38:10 Otis Guy:** Perfect.

**1:38:10 Debra Schwartz:** I just want to say thank you very much on behalf of the Mill Valley Public Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society for carrying me along this ride. You've been on for a good long while, and I'll see you on Mt. Tam.

**1:38:24 Otis Guy:** No worries.