

Mill Valley Public Library  
*Lucretia Little History Room*  
*Oral History Program*

**Hallie Iglehart Austen**

**An Oral History Interview  
Conducted by Benja Thompson in 2023**

TITLE: Oral History of Hallie Iglehart Austen  
INTERVIEWER: Benja Thompson  
DESCRIPTION: Transcript, 20 pages  
INTERVIEW DATE: June 6, 2023

Drawn to Mill Valley's beautiful nature and history of spiritual practice, Hallie Iglehart Austen shares their love for the land. A noted leader of both the spiritual feminist movement and ocean conservancy efforts, Hallie finds an innate connection between environmental activism and spiritual worship. From an early childhood studying Greek myth, Hallie's dedication to Goddess studies led them throughout the world, including an extended stay in Tibet, where they participated in rituals led by Buddhist monks.

Invigorated by the 1970s consciousness revolutions of the Bay Area, Hallie recounts the social and political milieu that set the scene for her book, *Womanspirit*. As part of her work on Goddess studies, Hallie would lead conferences and workshops detailing this vital aspect of early human history. Hallie also discusses their time in Druid Heights, learning from Elsa Gidlow and Anne Kent Rush, and their relationship to rituals.

Transitioning into ocean conservancy with a spiritualist perspective, Hallie worked for decades to clean up beaches locally and beyond through multiple organizations. Now, Hallie can explore the intrinsic connection between their spiritual practice and environmental praxis.

This oral history provides an expansive scope through the major movements of feminist spirituality and environmental activism from the perspective of a leader in both fields. Hallie's celebration of her 'momo' stage of life brings a heartwarming presence to the conversation, and finds hope in the personal connections she continues to make in Mill Valley.

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## Oral History of Hallie Iglehart Austen

June 6, 2023

**00;00;00-00;00;24 Benja Thompson:** Today is June 6th 2023. My name is Benja Thompson, and this interview is for the Mill Valley Public Library's Oral History program. Today I'm speaking with Hallie Iglehart Austen at the Mill Valley I'm sorry, at her home in Mill Valley. Thank you for joining me and for contributing your oral history to our community.

**00;00;24-00;00;27 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Thank you Benja, for your interest. Thank you.

**00;00;29-00;00;31 Benja Thompson:** So what brought you to Mill Valley?

**00;00;31-00;02;47 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Actually, it was Elsa Gidlow that brought me to Mill Valley. I met Elsa in the back of a VW Bug in the mid-seventies at a Goddess conference in Boston, and there are about four of us sitting in the back seat of this VW bug and I was very close to Elsa and we found out that we both lived in the Bay Area and she said, "Oh, you must come visit." So my mentor, Anne Kent Rush, and I drove out one day and spent the afternoon with Elsa at her, in her living room at Druid Heights, and it was a really magical afternoon. And somehow, I guess Elsa mentioned that she had a little space for rent called the Goat Cabin, which had been a goat shed. And so Kent, my mentor, and I rented it for the vast sum of \$75 a month. And Kent never came out there, but I would come out once a week, one night a week. I was living in Berkeley at the time and very involved in teaching... WomanSpirit and doing rituals and doing performance type stuff. And it was so great just to get out there and not answer the phone at, you know, for 24 hours and get to know Elsa a little bit. And there was also a horse there that just kind of roamed free. He belonged to one of the inhabitants, and I grew up with horses. So I asked if I could sponsor him. And that was also probably hardly any money at all. So I used to ride this horse on bareback saddle out to Muir Beach and back, and it was just from Druid Heights. It was just such an incredibly wonderful, free time. So that was Druid Heights, and coming out here and being close to the wild lands, but 10 minutes from downtown Mill Valley, was such an incredibly special part of my life. The freedom juxtaposed with the sophistication and creativity was really, really wonderful.

**00;02;48-00;02;48 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;02;48-00;04;03 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** In the mid-eighties, I lived out at Druid Heights full time for 14 months. I would have lived longer, but the people who owned the lease realized they'd made a huge mistake and wanted to get back. So I wound up for 18 years on Inverness Ridge. And then the miracle: I was looking to rent in this area in Tam Valley, because I knew I couldn't afford to buy. And then a miracle happened and I was able to buy this place. And here I am in Mill Valley, and I'm so grateful to be here. I've been here for 20 years now because it's perfect. Well, maybe I'd still rather be at Druid Heights, but that's not possible. And when I built this part of the house, I thought, I'm closer energetically to Druid Heights. I mean, I know it's right over there because I know that, that land, that ecosystem so well, so deeply in my bones. But I love being here because it's a perfect combination of creativity and human activity, but also the the open space. So I'm really grateful to be here.

**00;04;03-00;04;07 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, that does sound like a beautiful blend of the nature and the culture.

**00;04;08-00;04;12 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Mm hmm. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, that's, that's a good way of putting it.

**00;04;13-00;04;16 Benja Thompson:** And then do you have favorite memories or places?

**00;04;17-00;06;09 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Well, Druid Heights is right up there. And Druid Heights used to be, technically, part of Mill Valley. I mean, that was the address, was Camino Del Canyon, Mill Valley. Certainly Druid Heights. And also riding Boo, the white horse, out to Muir Beach and back. And that was such a, a free time and a lot of photographs of me and Boo were generated from that that have since become rather iconic. So there was... I'm just trying to think... so a lot of my memories from that time were obviously related to Druid Heights. Downtown Mill Valley was the closest town center. There was a little old health food store there, tiny little place that we used to go to. Elsa was getting older, and so sometimes she would ask me if I was out there if I would drive her somewhere. So to give you some background: when I graduated from college in 1970, I drove from England to Nepal and back again with some friends, and that was a radically life changing experience. And on that trip, so it was in a VW bus. My friends and I had some books, and there was some books that we took with us. Or then a couple of years later, when I went back to live in the Himalayas, carried in backpacks. And two of the people that Elsa asked me to drive her to go meet were people whose books we had carried.

**00;06;09-00;06;10 Benja Thompson:** Oh, wow.

**00;06;10-00;07;39 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** That was in the early seventies. And I was helping her in the late seventies and mid eighties. So it was so amazing to meet Lama Govinda, who wrote a book called Way of the White Clouds. Lama Govinda was the first Westerner to go into Tibet and become a Tibetan lama, or priest teacher, and meet him and Li Gotami, his wife. I'd just devoured The Way of the White Clouds. I still have it over there, even though my library is much reduced. And then my partner at the time had the four volumes of R.H. Blythe's haiku poetry, he had a volume for each season. Carried all four volumes and Elsa wanted me to take her up on Panoramic to a party for R. H. Blythe, who was visiting. So it was so amazing to get to meet these almost mythical elders through Elsa. Quite honestly in the seventies, I couldn't really relate much to Mill Valley because it seemed very kind of precious. And now I am so grateful to live here because it's so great to have so much, so many good resources and services available. And then this incredible land and to live in a place where people love the land. It's really special.

**00;07;41-00;07;42 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, really important.

**00;07;42-00;07;42 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah.

**00;07;43-00;07;49 Benja Thompson:** I was wondering, did you know of Elsa before meeting them, or was your introduction...?

**00;07;49-00;08;12 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** I don't think so. I mean, this is like 1976, '75, and I just moved to the Bay Area in '73, so I don't think I'd... no, I was very involved in all the creativity that was going on in Berkeley at the time. We were kind of off there. So it was just by fortune, good fortune that we met.

**00;08;13-00;08;22 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. Yeah. I-- would you like to go into that sort of scene at Berkeley? Like, what was that like in the seventies?

**00;08;24-00;011;55 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Oh, it was fantastic. There was so much creativity and it was a different economy then, so people had more time. I taught my first Womanspirit, I called it feminist spirituality, spiritual feminism class in San Francisco in 1974 because I needed to synthesize those two parts of my life because, at the time, there was no place for either in the other movement. Feminism would have nothing to do with spirituality because from a Marxist perspective it was 'opiate of the masses,' and spirituality, which was religions or maybe a few yoga ashrams, was very hierarchical and male dominated. So women were, now we know, usually being sexually molested by the teachers and so forth. So, but I needed to bring those two parts of myself and, and Kent Rush, who I mentioned as my mentor, really pushed me to do that. She said, "Teach a class." I said, "I can't do that." You know, I'd just come from living in Asia and seriously considering becoming a Tibetan nun. Anne said, "Sure you can, you've had these experiences." So I did. And it was so exciting finding out that other people felt the same way I did, that we could meet in a circle and not in a hierarchy, that women's bodies were sacred, that the earth was sacred, that we could listen to our hearts as well as to our minds. And this is, it turned out there were other people having the same ideas at the same time. So there was this uprising.

So my life in Berkeley, a lot was teaching workshops and putting on conferences at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz and doing a lot of moon rituals and being involved with the neo pagan movement. Berkeley was a hotbed of the neo pagan movement. And then there was a whole scene down on 8th Street in Berkeley. There were these big old warehouses where there were dance studios. Terry Sendgraff was teaching Motivity, which was dance and improv with low flying trapezes, and Ruth Zaporah was teaching Action Theater, which was basically improv, and Arina Isaacson, who now lives in Fairfax, who's teaching clowning, and we were just having so much fun. And for me personally, it was very liberating because I'd grown up on the East Coast. I was a debutante, you know, you're supposed to behave a certain way. And certainly traveling overland in Asia stripped me of some of that. But I still had this reserve. And as a woman growing up in this culture, I had this reserve too, you know. I was of a generation where you were kind of just expected to get married and you went to a good college, but then you got married and you had kids and you're not supposed to assert yourself or say something like, "Would you like to see my book?" So doing improv and clown classes and learning to fall on the ground. That was really good for like, just shaking.

**00;11;58-00;11;58 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;11;59-00;12;43 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Shaking me up and anybody up. And it just made us more real, I think. So that was Berkeley. And then there was overlap with stuff that was going on in the political feminist movement, like the Take Back the Night marches. And so some of us were asked to create a closing ritual for a big conference on violence against women and then a closing ritual for a Take Back the Night march that ended in North Beach. And these were all great. That was the beginning of "the political feminist movement," beginning to see the value in "spirituality."

**00;12;45-00;13;03 Benja Thompson:** Thank you, yeah. And then, you've cited Greek mythos as a catalyst for your interest in goddesses, and spirituality. Was there a specific story that spoke to you, or how do you find that in yourself now?

**00;13;04-00;13;53 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Myth is extremely important. And I just gave this talk at the conference of the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology. They asked me to do the keynote speech, which surprised me because my speech was about doing ocean activism. But they wanted that, they wanted that integration. Briefly, myths reflect history, but they also create history. So whatever myths we grow up with tell the values of our society. So then we behave in that way so that in the future people look back and see us. You know, they look back at us as history.

**00;13;56-00;13;56 Benja Thompson:** Thank you.

**00;13;58-00;15;05 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** I had devoured Greek mythology. Matter of fact, when I was 11 years old, I read Edith Hamilton's book on mythology, which was this thick-- I read it from the front to the back. And then when I finished, I started again at the front and went all the way to the end. Now I know how patriarchal all those myths were, and they were all about the goddesses being jealous and fighting or the women being abducted and raped. I started studying ancient Greek when I was 12 years old and Latin and mythology. I think I was so drawn to them because I felt like I was reaching farther back into time. I could kind of just feel, a bit, the goddess cultures that preceded the Greek culture. And it wasn't until later in the seventies when people started doing more research and saying, "Yeah, there was a lot more going on before these patriarchal myths." And just as an example. I mean, you may know this: are you familiar with the myth of Inanna?

**00;15;08-00;15;09 Benja Thompson:** Not by name, no.

**00;15;09-00;17;17 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** So Inanna was about 5000 years ago. She was Sumerian, Queen of Heaven. And in the myth, which was just being translated in the seventies, I remember when it was just a few little cuneiform tablets were being translated. In the myth, she decides she wants to go to the underworld to visit her sister, Ereshkigal, who's the queen of the underworld. And so she goes through this process of seven gates she has to go through, and every gate she goes through, there're these beings that take away her crown or her belt or whatever. And they all represent her powers.

And she says, “What is this? What are you doing? What are you doing? What is this?” is the translation. And they say, “Be quiet, Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect and may not be questioned.” So she winds up in the underworld, totally stripped of all her powers, and, and she dies for three days. And then these beings come down, sprinkle the water of life on her, and then she rises again. Well, fast forward several thousand years, and you have the story of Jesus was dead for three days. And also what else is dead for three days? The moon disappears from our sight every month for three days at night.

If you go back to 1500 BCE, there's the Minoan culture, which lived in peace for a thousand years. They were very sophisticated. They had incredible art. Caroline Casey says, “Great art and sexy clothing.” And this ring that I wear is a copy of a Minoan seal ring, and it's a kneeling priestess with a dolphin on either side. So that's just an example of what they valued.

**00;17;18-00;17;19 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;17;19-00;17;39 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Dolphins! Not, you know, swords and lions rampant, and all this kind of stuff. So, I think the myths that are usually taught in school are a fake shadow of thousands of years, tens of thousands of years, hundreds of thousands of years of human mythology.

**00;17;41-00;18;13 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, that just makes me think of the Ursula K. Le Guin essay of ‘The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,’ where oftentimes the tool is thought of as like a bone shard or like a weapon, right? As opposed to a bag and a vessel to carry things. And it's, it's so interesting, the cyclical sort of movements of resurgence that these histories seem to be seeing now. Like, I feel like a lot of people are doing more research and celebrating those histories.

**00;18;21-00;18;23 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah, yeah.

**00;18;28-00;18;43 Benja Thompson:** Starting with studying ancient Greek history when you were 11, could you describe your spiritual journey to where you are now?

**00;18;46-00;23;55 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** I've tried to make it simple. I describe it in the first book, of the first chapter of my book, *Womanspirit*, because I wanted to tell the story of how I got from growing up in a traditional fifties American way to where I was. And really that trip overland radically changed things. I mean, before I left, I'd started to meditate... but winding up living in the Himalayas with the Tibetans and meeting people who were refugees who had walked over the Himalayas. 18,000 foot passes with whatever they could carry, for freedom. And they were just, they are, so... happy? Not happy, that seems like too superficial, but good hearted and smart. And the women and the men seemed pretty equal. They were refugees, they were working on the roads. Breaking up rocks with hammers. And if they found an ant on the road, they would pick it up and take it to the side of the road because they believe that we're all part of everything. So we take care of all, all of life. So this is very different from our Western individualistic sense.



It's a sense of everything is everything. So I still carry ants or moths out. Catch and release. So I was very influenced by them and also living in the Himalayas, in a remote place. At the time, I just really wanted to find as remote place as possible. And the mountains really had an impact on me. And living very simply had a deep impact on me. I was 22 years old and... so there was that.

And then... there were the decades of doing Womanspirit, which was more of a collective experience, but there's so much, so different kinds of meditation that I did. And then a particular form of dreamwork that I still do-- the Senoi dreamwork. Ritual is an important part of my spirituality. So it's all evolved over the decades, and I'm trying to just make it simple. I would say, what I've just moved to, more and more, or come around, another turn on the spiral, is back to the oneness of all life. And myself as an individual has just dissipated more and I'm just more aware of the oneness of all of life. And part of that has been from-- I got very sick in the nineties from what was later determined to be Lyme disease, but that wasn't on anybody's radar out here in the nineties. I was in the underworld for ten years and I literally could do nothing. Couldn't even read. That time in the underworld really cleared away a lot of my attachments and ego. Not totally, obviously, but I saw ironically that I had become very attached to my work. That's a very Western thing.

Anyway, when I came out of that, I started doing a particular form of Qigong that I do now, and that, just doing that practice, which is based on connecting with the infinite potential of the universe, all the invisible energy of the universe, and drawing it into oneself, works very well for physical healing, but also mental, emotional, spiritual healing. So I am sure doing that practice for the last 14 years has affected me. And I started teaching it right away too. On a visceral level, it's much more of an experience of the oneness of all of life. One of the intellectual explanations of this practice is the oneness theory. But I've had enough of theories from my years of academia, and I love just working with the energy. And I feel like in maybe a couple of hundred years, people will look back and say, "Can you believe they didn't know about energy?" Like we look back that people thought the world was flat, you know.

**00;23;59-00;24;31 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. And it just makes me think of how much of your experiences have been community oriented, whereas you're teaching the movement flows now. You've been doing conferences throughout your history. What is that experience, working with and teaching people and spreading knowledge? How does that feel?

**00;24;32-00;25;53 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Well, having written two books that I spent years by myself writing, it's really wonderful then to be able to share my experiences with kindred spirits. And that's so wonderful. When I went to this conference just last month in New York (and I hadn't been in that kind of setting for 30 years) I just felt like I was coming home. Because I've been doing this-- I was sick for ten years and then I did ocean work for twenty years, and that was working with people too, but not like teaching and so forth. I'm the oldest of five children and I like my alone time. And I really love being with people. And I also think, that's a really good question, Benja. What it is, I found out early on is, I like being with people when we're in a kind of a, for lack of a better word, I'll say 'transcendent space.' I don't have much interest in talking with people, you know, just kind of chit chat. You know, making small

talk, kind of thing. So being able to do Womanspirit or Qigong is just a great way to be sharing with people, but in this more holistic way.

**00;25;53-00;25;54 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;25;54-00;26;16 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** If that makes sense. It's on a mental level, it's on a physical level, it's on an emotional level. I don't like to use the word spirituality because it implies something that's separate from everything else. And to me, what it means is everything is one. So, but, we can use that. Sometimes we have to use the limiting language that we have.

**00;26;17-00;26;26 Benja Thompson:** Thank you. What would you say the Sacred Feminine and the Goddess means to you?

**00;26;26-00;27;43 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Now that's evolved over the years, of course. Right now, it's really life. The life force of this planet and all the different ways that it emerges. I mean, ultimately, I know that the ultimate is beyond gender or sex or, you know, encompasses everything. But I do feel like, and I say this a lot in my writing, if we just emphasize the feminine and the goddess for a few centuries, maybe we'll come a little bit back into balance. So we need to do that. Also because we've relegated these values to the feminine and to women, like nurturance and cooperation and peacemaking and relationship and sensuality and all this. And they're really human qualities, but we've put them over there, so we need to reclaim them and emphasize them, and then hopefully we can get to, all of us, a more healthy and whole place.

**00;27;45-00;27;48 Benja Thompson:** Could you describe what we're watching now?

**00;27;48-00;28;08 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Can you see the-- yes, I just noticed, and I have never seen this, there's this very large black raven out on the rooftop, peering in, literally peering around like, "What are they talking about? Now, this is interesting, huh? I wonder if I can get in there."

**00;28;08-00;28;10 Benja Thompson:** Very inquisitive.

**00;28;10-00;28;14 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. Yeah, Very inquisitive. Yeah, that's funny.

**00;28;19-00;28;22 Benja Thompson:** I suppose that's a good example of the oneness of everything.

**00;28;22-00;28;24 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yes, yes, yes.

**00;28;24-00;28;30 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. Just, life, everywhere, is always, is always spinning in that spiral.

**00;28;30-00;28;40 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Mmhmm, yeah. And we just don't notice it a lot of the time. We got our blinders on or we're focused on doing.

**00;28;40-00;28;41 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;28;41-00;28;48 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** So it's like you and I have created a sacred space together. I mean, I can feel it. You feel it?

**00;28;48-00;28;49 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;28;49-00;28;56 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** And the raven wanted to just enjoy the vibes.

**00;28;57-00;29;07 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, yeah. There is something very special about, sort of the, like, a shared flow state that can arise.

**00;29;08-00;29;10 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Mmhmm, yeah.

**00;29;12-00;29;21 Benja Thompson:** So you've mentioned your book, *Womanspirit*. Could you describe sort of your process of writing that?

**00;29;21-00;33;01 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. Well, I had gone to a very academic girls school for twelve years, and was president of the literary club. So I learned how to write. When I got to college, I had to learn to write a whole new way. And that was very academic, Ivy League. Then when I came to the Bay Area, I realized that I wanted to write because I wanted to reach more people than I could in my living room, quite honestly. I had to learn a whole other way of writing, which was much more direct and engaging and personal and simple, simple, simple, rather than the convoluted academic, argumentative way of writing. So that was a lot of work. So it took me years to write the book, but it was also because the work was just evolving then. I mean, the classes and so forth.

I started out on a typewriter and then a friend of mine, a German woman I met when I lived in the Himalayas, in Dharamshala, she lived there. She came through town and she wanted a portable typewriter to take back to the Himalayas. I had one, and she traded me. What she gave me was this electric typewriter that had this amazing capacity. It would erase the last few letters if you punched a button. So I started off on that and wrote the whole book on that electric typewriter. And it was just trying to put into words in as simple and appealing a way as I could, all this amazing stuff that I was discovering and that other people were discovering at the same time. I mean, it wasn't just women. There are a lot of men involved in the neopagan movement, too.

And so I worked and I worked and I worked and I finally got what I thought was a complete manuscript, but I really wanted a mainstream publisher to publish it. I knew I could have gotten it published straight away by feminist press, but I wanted to reach a broader audience, and that was several more years of editing, like, you know, classic writer's well, not 'well' of rejections, but numerous rejections. So I kept paring it down, simplifying, paring, and did a ritual of this where I realized that I needed to burn my old manuscripts, even, you know, the ones that had been rejected, precious as they were to me. So I had asked a few friends to come over and help me burn them. Marcelina was one of them. We lit the fire and I was putting the pages in and then, you know, a scrap of the paper where you could still see some the words on it would float out in the room. And I was like, "Oh,

maybe I should keep that.” And Marcelina grabbed it away from me. “No, you have to burn it.” And soon after, Harper and Row did accept my very latest version of the book. So it was a long process, but it had a good ending.

And that was a gift of the Bay Area. I'm so grateful to Harper and Row's religion department. Was, and probably still is, in San Francisco. So there was a period of time there in the late seventies, early eighties, where there was one editor there who published a lot of our books that we were doing and helped get what we were doing more into the mainstream.

**00;33;01-00;33;33 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. And to your point earlier of, you know, encouraging the Sacred Feminine and the qualities that had been relegated to like one gender, allowing that to be embraced by everyone as a whole, having your work in a more mainstream like channel then people who might not otherwise be reading it would then be encouraged to read it. And then it opens up that whole area.

**00;33;36-00;33;36 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah.

**00;33;36-00;33;39 Benja Thompson:** Sort of like consciousness stream.

**00;33;40-00;33;53 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. Yeah. That's a good way of putting it. So it was worth those sometimes very depressing years of rewriting.

**00;33;53-00;33;57 Benja Thompson:** What did it feel like then when you were holding your book for the first time?

**00;33;57-00;34;35 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** It was so wonderful. And again I had a big ritual and 80 people, a big party to celebrate. Yeah. Celebrate those years of work. Completion. But also that birth of my first baby. You know, at first I thought, “Okay, now I don't have to write anymore.” But sometimes there are... sometimes there are things that want to come through us. So... we agree to do more. Which I'm thinking of my second book.

**00;34;36-00;34;39 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. Would you like to talk about your second book?

**00;34;40-00;38;40 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Well, when I used to teach my Womanspirit classes, I would show images of goddesses from different cultures. As much as I could from different parts of the world. And I'll say, also, when I started doing this, I remember going to Shambhala Bookstore in Berkeley on Telegraph Avenue. This is in the mid seventies. There were two books about goddesses on the shelf. And now, you know, there are whole bookstores of goddess books and so forth. And those books, those two books, two of them were, maybe there were three, two of them were written in the 1800s. So, and bless their hearts. These men, these Jungians, were researching this stuff, but it was all European and... I was really wanting to show that the goddess and the sacred, that the feminine has been honored in cultures all over the world, both to show the universality of it, but also to honor different cultures rather than the Eurocentric perspective.

So I gathered images that I would show in my classes just to ground people and start off with that. Particularly in the seventies, is like, “Wow,” you know, “Look, there really were goddesses.” Back in Paleolithic times and Neolithic times, that's all there were, were goddesses. And, you know, it's just something people aren't really aware of. So people were asking me to do a book of these images that I'd collected. And I really felt torn because it was the late eighties and I was starting to get concerned about the environment. Such a funny word, the ‘environment.’ But what was going on in the natural world and, in particular, was concerned about the Amazon and still am concerned about the Amazon. But I tried to give the book, I tried to give the images, I tried to give away to other people twice, let them write the book, but it kept coming back to me.

So I did write the book and did an enormous amount of research. Because I could find an image of, say, you know, a goddess from... I'm trying to think of a good example... from Gabon in Africa. This was an amazing mask of, woman from the land of the ancestors. Very, very beautiful. But then I had to find a whole other book, try to find another book, that would help me understand what the cultural context of this mask was and how it was used. So it was a lot of work and it's a very complete... complete body. And I've had people of color thank me for including such a wide range of cultures because there really weren't any other books that did that. And that was gratifying to me because I was concerned about cultural appropriation, but I certainly wasn't making any money on that book. I mean, it cost \$20,000 just for the permissions to reproduce the images. But I feel good about it. And then, then I got very sick when it came out and... when I came out of the illness, I knew I had to go back to my previous desire to work for the natural world, for those who have no voice in human affairs.

**00;38;40-00;38;45 Benja Thompson:** Would you like to talk about how that process has been and what your work there has been?

**00;38;45-00;45;37 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Well, again, there was this synchronicity and I feel like my time in the underworld, my time of illness, opened me up more to synchronicity. And to the dream world, too. I had some very amazing dreams when I was sick. I mean, not that I recommend it, this horrible, nightmarish experience, because I didn't know if I was going to live or die, or I didn't feel like I'd ever get well. But thankfully I did. And I had been in Hawaii and I'd been there when the Navy was testing underwater sonars. And usually in the wintertime in Hawaii, the humpback whales are all over the place and they're giving birth. You see them breaching or whatever. And in the middle of this season, which is when they're there to give birth and mate and so forth, they just disappeared when the Navy started doing this testing. And I was horrified, but I didn't know what to do about it.

And by a series of synchronicities, two people, that I kind of knew peripherally, and I wound up co-founding Seaflow, which was to educate people about this practice because there were whales and dolphins bleeding from their ears, beaching all over the world, and hardly anybody knew about it. And interestingly, in Seaflow, we very consciously integrated our, quote, spirituality with our activism. I mean, I would lead the rituals for the different seasonal passages and... and we did a particular form of decision-making called ‘concordance,’ which is kind of beyond consensus. I mean, it really involves everybody, it's a slower process and it's very ritualistic. We just keep going around and you listen to see what people's response to a different, to a particular question or issue is. And if anybody has any hesitation, you say, “Well, what's

underneath that?" You don't just go, "Okay, we've got a consensus, let's go." Because the theory is that there can be some wisdom in that hesitation. So we did that and, and all of us had a spiritual practice, but coming from different traditions. One did some shamanic journeying, and the other was very involved in Spirit Rock -- his wife was a teacher at Spirit Rock -- and I was coming from the Goddess tradition.

And... we were incredibly successful. We affected policy locally, statewide, nationally, internationally. And we kind of felt like it was because we were-- we didn't talk about it, but that we were bringing in a spiritual perspective and way of being. And we brought in art and music and stuff. We'd have community meetings once a month. Bring in some art or music or whatever, and then we get people writing postcards to their representatives, saying, "We have to stop this," and so forth. We got a big page and a half spread in the Chronicle. Rituals are really great photo ops. So most of the photographs are of me leading a spring equinox ritual at Rodeo Beach. There's one picture of people lobbying in D.C. But, you know, that's not that much of a photo op.

And then it was through a series of circumstances beyond our control, it was time for Seaflow to end. And, but we felt like we'd really accomplished our intention, which was to educate people because now a lot more people knew about this. And then I got really into doing the Qigong and teaching that, and then I felt like that Qigong gave me the, the strength to do this idea that I'd been thinking about since the late '80s, which was Beach Cleanup Stations, how to make it easy for every day to be beach cleanup day. So I wound up founding All One Ocean and worked for about ten years. I'm now no longer actively involved in that. Setting up around 45 Beach Cleanup Stations around here and in Hawaii and Alabama and Iowa and Mexico and Alaska. Again, it was something not many people are thinking about in 2010: ocean plastics.

So it was just as much an educational thing as, you know, getting people to clean up the beach. But getting people to clean up the beach had a whole other level. It was, it was important to get the trash out of the oceans, but it also made people think about where this trash comes from, their own purchases. But it also, I realized what I was up against was trying to get people to do something they may have never done before, which was pick up what they perceived as somebody else's trash. I mean, people are more into doing that now, but in 2010, it's like "Ew," or "That's somebody else's job, that's a maintenance person's job." And there's a whole... it's a psychology, but it's more than that.

So I figured if you get somebody doing something that they've never done before and starting to take responsibility for our collective situation, it's not just, "I'll pick up my trash, but I won't pick up other people's trash," then maybe they can start thinking about our whole collective situation and what we can together do about it. So there's many layers of it. And one of the people who is on our board, who's a great advisor for me, was J. Nichols, who wrote 'Blue Mind,' who's an amazing oceanographer and big hearted, brilliant guy. He explained to me that scientists used to think that the way to change people's behavior was to change their thinking, but that then they realized no, the way to change their thinking was to change their behavior. So, you know, he said, "That's just what you're doing." So it was a very whole, interesting arc.

**00;45;37-00;45;38 Benja Thompson:** Mmhmm. Thank you.

**00;45;38-00;46;17 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. And also, of course, collaborating with other people who were trying to get people to pay attention to plastics in the ocean. And what I realized is that it was such a depressing topic that we had to make it fun. So we had these, we started saying we were mermaids and dress up as mermaids for events and we had a mermaid fundraiser, festival, fundraiser at the Mill Valley Community Center, and some of us put on mermaid tails and people got to swim in the pool with the mermaids. And we had dolphin hats that-- and actually, a neighbor of mine, Michael Reppy, lives just down the hill here, he had made for a campaign he was doing-- so we'd wear the dolphin hats to attract attention and to raise money. So we had fun and it also made it more effective.

**00;46;39-00;46;40 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, yeah.

**00;46;41-00;46;56 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** So I realize in retrospect it was kind of theater, you know. We were doing that, but I didn't think of it that way. I just sort of was like, "How can we have a good time dealing with this really difficult, awful situation?"

**00;46;57-00;47;20 Benja Thompson:** And existential and almost abstract where it's not something that you necessarily encounter every day. And it's hard to sort of fathom because of how massive it is. So then making it like both an immediate interaction as well as like almost a playfulness to then initiate action. That seems like a really smart approach.

**00;47;20-00;47;39 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. And also when you say that I realize if somebody does pick up a piece of plastic or starts feeling responsible for the earth, that is a way for them to interact personally with this vast abstract... problem.

**00;47;39-00;47;39 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;47;40-00;48;09 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Because most people aren't going to sit and watch videos of whales dying from plastic. I mean, that's not easy. I've done it. So yeah, how to get them, how to get people aware. So a lot of the ocean work I've done, both with Seaflo and All One Ocean, I realize in retrospect, was education. Education, education. Because people do care. It's just they don't know.

**00;48;12-00;48;20 Benja Thompson:** And there might be a level of, like, powerlessness someone might feel. So then having an opportunity to act.

**00;48;20-00;51;14 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. When I used to give talks-- I actually was asked to guest teach a marine biology class at Tam High for a while, which was so funny to me because I know nothing about science. But in that and in this talk I just gave, the Association for Women and Mythology, I show these quotes from these marketing analysts from the '50s, and also a cover of Life magazine.

The cover of Life magazine shows this family gleefully throwing away their TV dinners or whatever, and it's called 'The Throwaway Society.' And so I see, we're at this point of just, "Yeah, you can just throw away the planet." I mean, literally, we see these people saying, "Oh, no, it's okay, we'll go to Mars." And there are these quotes from these 1950's analysts where they say, "We must make a religion out of consumption. We must make rituals out of buying things and using them up and throwing them away as quickly as possible." I mean, it goes on and on like that. It's just incredible how calculated and how manipulated we all got into consumerism for a few people's benefit, and trashing the planet in the meantime.

And there's this addiction to convenience, but it's also this lack of spiritual -- coming back full circle -- the lack of spiritual sense of oneself. There's a conversation that Bill W., who's the founder of AA and Carl Jung are supposed to have had where they agreed that the cause and the remedy of addiction, any kind of addiction, is spiritual development. So that if you grow up, which we certainly did a lot in this American culture, without a sense of spirit, of connection with all of life and even of the value of our own lives, then it's really easy to be manipulated into addiction. Whatever it is. Again, for somebody's benefit. So coming back full circle to spirituality, ritual, meditation, all these things as ways of not just saving ourselves, but saving the planet. I think it's really core. I mean, it may sound simplistic, but it's really core.

**00;51;14-00;51;20 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. To the point of the oneness of everything. If you're healing yourself, then you're healing the world.

**00;51;27-00;51;40 Benja Thompson:** And... on the point of rituals, could you explain the tradition of the Yule solstice ceremony as practiced by Elsa?

**00;51;40-00;54;13 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Elsa Gidlow, my spiritual grandmother, did her first, in my understanding, her first Yule Log ceremony in 1940. And the Yule Log ceremony, my understanding, is a traditional English Celtic British ritual where you keep a piece of the fire, a piece of the log, or the burnt wood from the winter solstice fire, and you keep it all year in a special place and then you use it to start the next winter solstice's fire. So Elsa did this and she would keep her little piece. And when I knew her, she would do this for the community at Druid Heights. So we would gather in her little living room and she would invite each of us to put maybe a pine cone or a piece of, you know, some evergreen little twig or something, to take turns going up and putting that in the fire and saying what it was we were releasing from the previous year. And then she would keep a part of the fire. You have to be careful because the fire can burn it all out. So you have to break down the fire.

And she kept doing that and, and she would give away to some of us, you know, a piece of the Yule Log for ourselves to then spread and do other places as well. And I started adding in after she died, that each person lights a candle from the fire and says what it is -- their intention for the coming sun cycle. Because I like to have both. The letting go, you know, the past and the future. So some of us are still doing the Yule Log ceremony. I've done it here in my hearth in Mill Valley. I've done it in Hawaii at Mayumi Oda's, who used to live at Muir Beach and very involved with the Green Gulch. I've done it in



Maryland in my family's farm where I grew up, and now it's spread, I'm sure a lot of places. Hmm. And it would be great to do it at the library in Mill Valley.

**00;54;13-00;54;14 Benja Thompson:** That would be fantastic.

**00;54;14-00;54;15 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** And it seems so perfect.

**00;54;15-00;54;16 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**00;54;16-00;54;21 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** When I thought of the other day, I was like, “Oh my gosh, that’s so obvious,” because you have that fabulous fireplace.

**00;54;21-00;54;26 Benja Thompson:** I know. Yeah. Yeah, that would be, that would just be wonderful.

**00;54;27-00;54;35 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, I can-- I just get this sense of Elsa's, just smiling. She would just love that. Yeah.

**00;54;36-00;54;43 Benja Thompson:** Mm. Yeah. The library has, in addition to her autobiography, it has some of her poetry as well.

**00;54;43-00;54;45 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Mmm, right.

**00;54;45-00;54;50 Benja Thompson:** One of which has the poem “Chains of Fires.”

**00;54;50-00;55;45 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Oh, so thank you for mentioning that. I love that poem so much. I actually use it as the frontispiece for my first book, “Womanspirit.” And we, we, when I say ‘we,’ I know when Marcelina leads it or when I lead it, we always read that poem at the beginning as an invocation. We tell the story and then we read that poem and I changed the words. She keeps saying ‘every woman.’ And I say, ‘every person who's kept a fire.’ To be more inclusive. The history and the invocation and the putting in the old Yule Log and then letting go and then the lighting of the candle for the new and then there's the celebration.

**00;55;45-00;55;52 Benja Thompson:** Do you remember the first ritual you took part in or like initiated yourself?

**00;55;52-00;59;34 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** The first ceremony I took part in that was really meaningful, actually, was when I lived with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile. And so I, it was early ‘70s, and I took part in the ceremonies that His Holiness was leading. I mean, they were all in Tibetan. I didn't know what it was. And there were about ten Westerners there, and I didn't know what was being said. But I got, I could feel the power. I mean, it was tangible and I felt like that really initiated me to the power of ritual. And then I moved to the Bay Area and found Goddess people doing ritual.

In these ceremonies, the Lamas would often take a cord and they will bless it. And then they break, people break, make pieces of the cord and they give it out to the people and they then wear it around their necks or around their wrists. And so they're keeping the blessings of that ceremony.

And I had a dream in the mid '70s... that I was leading a ritual where, instead of it's being the Lama, even the Dalai Lama, somebody on high, blessing the cord, that it was a circle of people. And I saw this cord woven throughout the circle, a piece of yarn or whatever, and that we, the circle, were blessing the cord and then we broke it and we each had a piece that we took home with us and somebody wrapped it around our wrist, around our neck. So then I was teaching a class and somebody in the class said, "I really feel like doing a special ritual." And I said, "Well, I did have this dream." So we did this cord ritual, and this is something that has spread all over. I mean, I see people all the time doing this ritual. I was at this conference, the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology. They had a day long, which was afterwards, which was called, the Maternal Gift Economy, which is about what is it like to live in a gift economy? Not in a trade, but in a gift economy. The theme of the conference was 'sacred waters.' So they did the cord ritual, which I did write about in my first book. In blue, to represent the waters.

Then somebody else told me, "Oh, yeah, you know, they do that at Spirit Rock all the time," or, "They do it here, they do it there." And as far as I know, my dream created that ritual. So it's that interesting interrelationship with other forms of consciousness, with ritual. And then something just has a life of its own. Maybe other people thought of it at the same time, but I think it came from that dream.

**00;59;34-00;59;35 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, yeah.

**00;59;35-00;59;36 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** I don't know if that's helpful.

**00;59;37-00;59;44 Benja Thompson:** No, absolutely. Thank you. So what would you say your identity and expression of that identity means to you?

**00;59;44-00;59;50 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Do you mean like sexual identity or just identity as a being?

**00;59;50-00;59;51 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, however...

**00;59;51-01;02;55 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** It's really evolved from trying to find my identity, which was really important, particularly as a woman in this culture. What I felt like was that, you know, a lot of Eastern religions have a lot of value and are really important, but a lot of it is about teaching people to overcome their ego. But what I was saying, "Wait a minute, women don't have egos in this culture." We're supposed to live through somebody else, whether husband or our children or we're supposed to be nice and subsume our needs so we never develop them. So first we have to develop an ego before you can let go of it. So I felt like that was what I did and... and then now it's evolved to, I still have this ego that talks away in my head and stuff like that. You know? But it's getting the distance and the perspective from that.

I've always felt like in making decisions, what was most important was to think about what did the most good for the most. Like something might be a sacrifice for me or somebody else, but it's going to benefit a whole, whole lot of people. So I think that was a step, and I think that's like the utilitarian principle or something in Western philosophy. I can't remember, John Stuart Mill or something I studied in college, I don't know.

And so that's evolved to realizing that the most important thing for each of us to do is to take care of ourselves first, be responsible for our own health. Because I lost my health and, but I think I lost my health because of patriarchy, but, a lot of patriarchal medicine had really wrecked my body. But so we have to take care of ourselves first. And that's really important for people who've been raised to take care of others and not think about themselves. Because however we are, whatever strengths we have, we're going to best be able to serve the whole. If we're not taking care of ourselves, then that can be martyrdom or burnout. And I take great joy in feeling connected with other beings. And, you know, human beings, plant beings, animal beings. Does that answer your question?

**01;02;56-01;02;56 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. Thank you.

**01;02;56-01;04;41 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** There's a local Tibetan family that we've kind of adopted one another. They live in a low income housing in Mill Valley, which is so amazing to go to, because it's like going to the United Nations, there are people from Africa, people from Middle East, Asia, you know, and the rest of Mill Valley is so European-American. And anyway, this, this family and I found one another and they have two boys, seven and ten, and... they're wonderful people. But I realized they didn't know they could go out in the land here. WildCare had this family day over at the Audubon Center in Tiburon. And so I started getting them scholarships to go to events at Slide Ranch. And then I started taking them out on hikes to see the waterfall on Mount Tam or to go to these different places. And we have this wonderful time together. Anyway, the two little boys started calling me 'Momo,' which is Tibetan for grandmother, and it also is Tibetan for the dumplings, that is a main food of Tibetans, you know. So I realized a couple of weeks ago, "Oh my gosh, I'm in the Momo phase of my life." This is really great. And I also love that Momo means dumpling.

**01;04;41-01;04;42 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**01;04;42-01;05;05 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Because it's like, okay, you can just kind of relax. And I mean, I'm still very active, but I, so that's my identity now. I mean, I'm still the teacher, I'm still the author. You know, I'm still the holder of different traditions, but Momo, it feels like a really fun place to be.

**01;05;05-01;05;06 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. Oh, that's beautiful.

**01;05;06-01;05;07 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Isn't it sweet?

**01;05;07-01;05;15 Benja Thompson:** And so, you know, we talked about language earlier, such an interesting sort of scenario there.

**01;05;15-01;05;15 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah.

**01;05;15-01;05;21 Benja Thompson:** I mean, it means both, like, grandmother and yeah, like this nourishing, like, staple.

**01;05;21-01;06;47 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Oh, I didn't think of that. That's right, that's totally true. And I did read that in Tibetan culture all older women are called Momo. Which speaks to this collectivity that we don't experience in our Western culture. And I see it in Hawaii where any older woman is Auntie, an older man is Uncle. And a friend of mine, from here, who, an ex-partner of mine actually, who moved to Hawaii. And she said that this little girl came up to her in the parking lot at the beach and said, "Auntie, will you tie my shoelace?" It's like any older woman was part of the family. So I mean I know that we, this family and I, have a pretty special relationship but it, I think what you pointing to the collectivity. But you were pointing to the nourishment, which was really great, I love that. And it is a collective concept and I know that it's special for them because the mother said to me, "We don't have family here." And I said, "Well, I don't have family here either," blood family. So, you know, we're fulfilling that for them. And I look out for them and they look out for me and it's really sweet.

**01;06;47-01;06;51 Benja Thompson:** Oh, I love hearing about that connection.

**01;06;51-01;06;55 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** It's great.

**01;06;55-01;07;13 Benja Thompson:** And so you've mentioned recently your conference at the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology, where you received the 2023 Demeter Award for Leadership. How did that feel to be recognized like that?

**01;07;13-01;08;20 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** It was really great because again, it's along this Momo thing, you know? I did a 75th birthday ritual, which really felt like I needed to do, just energetically, and then the Momo, and then getting the award, it felt like, "Okay, that's a wrap." But also because at that conference I was talking about my 20 years of ocean activism within the context of a women's spirituality conference. So it was bringing together 40 years of my life that always seemed really separate because I used to think, "How did I get from talking about the Goddess to talking about trash?" I mean, I was like... but, you know, it's recognizing the integration of those. So I did. And then getting this award was, it was very sweet. It's also a very pretty award, so I really like that, you know. It did feel like, "Okay, now you can be Momo."

**01;08;21-01;08;36 Benja Thompson:** And it's hard to think of a more, you know, Goddess like healing action than, like, working with the ocean. Right? So it's certainly, like, it feels like there's a very deep connection there. Yeah.

**01;08;36-01;09;38 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. And I think these people at this association understood. I've just been away from the women's spirituality movement for a long time, and they totally got it. That activism is an act of worship, which is what I always say, you know, "Every piece of trash you pick up is a prayer," or every, you know, march you go on is, you know, is a ceremony. So they got that. So I was really glad to see that. Yeah. And it felt like coming home. I mean, I knew that it would be like a homecoming, to come back to that community after 30 years. There was a lot of love there. I got a lot of love, which was really nice. I was mostly just very happy that I only looked at my notes a few times in the whole time I spoke. So that was more important to me than the award. That was kind of an award, I guess, you know?

**01;09;38-01;09;39 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, that's true.

**01;09;39-01;09;40 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** So that was good.

**01;09;40-01;09;50 Benja Thompson:** I really love that phrase, of activism as like worship. That, that feels so vital. Yeah.

**01;09;50-01;10;14 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. It's interesting. I've never-- I mean, I've talked about that a lot or written about it but I've never used that phrase. I mean, I say, 'we have to combine activism with spirituality, with spirit.' You know, 'we need both wings in order to be able to fly,' things like that. But yeah, 'activism as worship' is, I mean, what could be better?

**01;10;14-01;10;21 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. Just having every, every breath be intentional and...

**01;10;24-01;10;24 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah.

**01;10;24-01;10;25 Benja Thompson:** Yeah.

**01;10;25-01;10;58 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** And also a celebration. You know, and worship is, its better form is celebration. So activism is a celebration of life and fighting for life. And every breath could be a celebration too, as a way for each of us to remember who we really are, which are miracles. There are miracles going on inside of us all the time, and we're all so very blessed.

**01;10;58-01;11;05 Benja Thompson:** Might you have a piece of advice, the, for this sort of new wave of activists?

**01;11;05-01;11;58 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah, that's a great question. And what just came to me when I read that is: hang in there. Hang in there. It's like, what I always say is, we humans created this situation. We humans can get ourselves out of it. And, you know, it has to be us because, you know, it's human creation and, you know, the raven isn't going to know how to undo or change things, but there is progress going on. It's really, it's really, it's really wonderful. There's a lot of tragedies going on and there's also a lot of progress going on. So hang in there. I

mean, it may sound really simplistic, but that's been my motto all along. And also, what else is there to do?

**01;11;58-01;12;03 Benja Thompson:** Yeah, if not continue?

**01;12;03-01;12;22 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** And that itself is an act of worship. And, you know, there's some great quotes like from some Hebrew texts that you are, 'you're not obliged to finish the work, but you are not allowed to abandon it.'

**01;12;22-01;12;24 Benja Thompson:** Hmm. Mm hmm.

**01;12;25-01;14;01 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** And then there's the Hindu texts and Buddhist texts that talk about action without attachment to outcome. Joanna Macy said that a Tibetan teacher said to her once, "My dear Joanna, you have no idea how much energy you'll save when you're not attached to the outcome of your actions." Joanna has been campaigning for, you know, the planetary life for decades in various ways. So for her to be teaching that is a very powerful thing. And it's, then, that you do your best and then you let go of attachment to outcome and it does save energy. You don't waste energy despairing, or even elated. The Buddhists and Chinese medicine (which Qigong is based on a lot) it's like you want the middle way. You don't want the extreme emotions. Too much joy and too much sorrow are not healthy. So action. Joyful action. Loving action, maybe loving action without attachment to outcome in, in a community of like minded spirits.

**01;14;01-01;14;02 Benja Thompson:** Yeah. Thank you.

**01;14;02-01;14;04 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Yeah. Thank you.

**01;14;04-01;14;11 Benja Thompson:** And then the last question I have is, what's something that you, is there anything you hope to see for Mill Valley in the future?

**01;14;11-01;14;56 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** Oh, that's a great question. I'd like to see more, more heart and creativity, going back to the Mill Valley that I knew when I first started coming here. And less materialism. I pray for Mill Valley and for all of us, that this beautiful place be maintained and loved and cared for. The land and the people and the houses and the animals and the plants.

**01;14;59-01;15;07 Benja Thompson:** Okay. Thank you. Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about or bring up or mention?

**01;15;07-01;16;00 Hallie Iglehart Austen:** I just really want to thank you and thank the library. I was just talking with a friend of mine who moved out from Boston a couple of years ago and she moved to San Francisco, but she's looking to move to Mill Valley. She used to work in Africa. She used to work in Cambodia doing health care. I mean, she's been traveling

lots of places. She said the “Mill Valley Library is my favorite library in the entire planet.” She said, “I can think clearly there.” I don't know if it's the trees or what, but anyway. So thank you to the Mill Valley Library, and all of you who make it run.

**01;16;00-01;16;01 Benja Thompson:**      Thank you. Yeah.