

**Mill Valley Oral History Program**  
*A collaboration between the Mill Valley  
Historical Society and the Mill Valley  
Public Library*

**David Freiberg**

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

TITLE: Oral History of David Freiberg  
INTERVIEWER: Debra Schwartz  
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In this oral history, David Freiberg, a key figure in the Bay Area music scene from the 1960s onward, recounts his life, career, friends, and family. Born in Boston in 1938 and raised in Cincinnati, David moved out to California in 1959 where he first took up playing the guitar. Touching down in Oakland, he moved to San Francisco in the early 1960s and then over to Mill Valley a few years later. David gives a detailed account of his time playing guitar with Quicksilver Messenger Service in the '60s and subsequently with Jefferson Airplane/Starship beginning in the '70s. He discusses many of his friends from that legendary milieu — well-known musicians from the Bay Area rock scene like Marty Balin, John Cipollina, and Paul Kantner — and reminisces about what Mill Valley was like in that era. He also discusses his current life with his wife Linda, also a musician, and his relationship with his daughters, Jessica and Polly. 80 years old and actively touring at the time this oral history was conducted, David concludes by offering advice to up-and-coming musicians.

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## Oral History of David Freiberg

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**Oral History of David Freiberg  
January 24, 2019**

**Editor's note:** The following transcript is based on a recorded interview. It has been edited for clarity and accuracy.

**0:00:00 Debra Schwartz:** Today is January 24, 2019.

**0:00:06 David Freiberg:** How did I ever live this long? [laughs]

**0:00:08 Debra Schwartz:** My name is Debra Schwartz. I'm with the Mill Valley Public Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society, and I'm sitting here with a wonderful, amazing, musical and interesting David Freiberg. Did I say it right?

**0:00:25 David Freiberg:** Freiberg. Yes, E-I, free mountain.

**0:00:29 Debra Schwartz:** Is that what it means?

**0:00:30 David Freiberg:** In German, yeah.

**0:00:32 Debra Schwartz:** And yes, how did you live this long? Because doing a little pre-research about you, you could have skipped and tripped and fallen any number of ways along the path that brought you to today.

**0:00:49 David Freiberg:** Sure could have, yeah. A whole pile of my compadres certainly did.

**0:00:53 Debra Schwartz:** Truly. So, congratulations. You look great.

**0:01:00 David Freiberg:** Thanks.

[laughter]

**0:01:00 Debra Schwartz:** You really do. I've interviewed a lot of musicians, and I'm always sort of surprised at how really great many of them look despite —

**0:01:09 David Freiberg:** Despite what you think they've been through.

**0:01:12 Debra Schwartz:** Just being on the road. And you're still performing.

**0:01:16 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:01:16 Debra Schwartz:** I mean, that will take a bit out of you.

**0:01:19 David Freiberg:** I did take 20 years off though. Between 1985 and 2005, I was not on the road, hardly at all.

**0:01:28 Debra Schwartz:** Well, for those of —

**0:01:30 David Freiberg:** But I think I'm healthy. Actually, I feel like I keep myself healthier if I'm on the road, for some reason.

**0:01:38 Debra Schwartz:** Interesting. So, I've introduced you as a musician, but there's more to your introduction because you are one of our local musicians who has been a part of the Bay Area music scene, a foundational part of the Bay Area rock music scene. Marty Balin once said he had the best seat in the house for the '60s. I think you were sitting in the same row with him.

**0:02:08 David Freiberg:** Yeah, he was kinda almost next to me, maybe a couple of seats away.

**0:02:11 Debra Schwartz:** A couple of seats away.

[laughter]

**0:02:14 Debra Schwartz:** So, that's something we can talk about today, the bands that you've been in, Quicksilver Messenger Service. I'm a woman of a certain age. I certainly remember your band from back in the day.

**0:02:25 David Freiberg:** Okay. I would never know that from looking at you but okay.

**0:02:28 Debra Schwartz:** And looking at me, by the way, I wanna apologize. People that are listening to this can't see is that I recently had some oral surgery, and the whole right side of my face looks like I've been in *Fight Club*, so I hope that's not too distracting for you.

**0:02:43 David Freiberg:** Having people looking at me disapprovingly if I walk down the street with you, right?

[laughter]

**0:02:51 Debra Schwartz:** And you seem such a gentleman. Anyways, sorry about that. But you really have quite an interesting story, truly, and I remember the Quicksilver Messenger Service so well, and of course, the other bands that you've been in which are —

**0:03:08 David Freiberg:** Which are, well, Jefferson Airplane, the last tailspin, and then as it changed into Jefferson Starship. That's basically been it. Now when I didn't play is when they dropped the Jefferson. That's when I left for 20 years.

**0:03:27 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:03:27 David Freiberg:** And then I rejoined after Paul Kantner had restarted Jefferson Starship in 1990 and asked me to sit in once in 2005. And it was fun.

**0:03:40 Debra Schwartz:** You stayed.

**0:03:41 David Freiberg:** I never left again.

**0:03:43 Debra Schwartz:** And you're still touring.

**0:03:43 David Freiberg:** And I'm still there, yeah.

**0:03:45 Debra Schwartz:** Okay, well let's start with a little contextual information about you yourself, your family. Can you tell me just a little bit about your family history and can you please include names wherever possible?

**0:03:58 David Freiberg:** Okay.

**0:04:00 Debra Schwartz:** And when you were born, you know, just background.

**0:04:00 David Freiberg:** I was born on August 24th, 1938 in Boston, Massachusetts to Roslyn Goldman Freiberg and Albert Freiberg, her husband, who was — let's see, I guess during the Depression his father was an orthopedic surgeon, a very good, prominent orthopedic surgeon and had plenty of money, so he kept him in Harvard University, I think, during the Depression. He has four of Harvard degrees and ended up being a lawyer, which I'm not sure that he really wanted to be. I thought he hated doing it, which was unfortunate for some people around him. [chuckles] But anyway — and then World War II happened in 1941-42, and he joined the Navy, and my mother, and my brother, and sister, and I moved back to Cincinnati, Ohio, which is where they grew up, and I spent quite a few years there, until I left in 1959 and came to the place that I idolized, which was San Francisco.

**0:05:28 Debra Schwartz:** You idolized San Francisco?

**0:05:30 David Freiberg:** Yeah, it was honest. On a family trip, we went through the West with four kids and two adults in the car, kind of like hell on wheels. [chuckles]

**0:05:43 Debra Schwartz:** I used to go on those family trips. [laughs] One part sightseeing, the rest arguing.

**0:05:48 David Freiberg:** It was really good. We went to all the national parks and everything, then drove into San Francisco. And as we came around the 101, all of a sudden the fog was just starting to come in 'cause it was summer, and it was just so gorgeous. I said, "I've gotta live in this place." And I never forgot that.

**0:06:06 Debra Schwartz:** And you were how old?

**0:06:08 David Freiberg:** I might have been in high school, actually. Might have been 15.

**0:06:13 Debra Schwartz:** Right then and there, you knew.

**0:06:15 David Freiberg:** I did. And I thought about it, and managed to screw my life up enough so that I —

[laughter]

**0:06:22 David Freiberg:** I had to run away, had to just get out of Cincinnati and —

**0:06:28 Debra Schwartz:** Oh now, that begs for explanation. How can you screw your life up, as you go to a Catholic school.

**0:06:35 David Freiberg:** Oh, I didn't really screw it up, but I always did poorly in college, and I went back and did summer school and got a 3.5 average, and saw what I was taking and thought "Alright, so I'm gonna major in English lit, huh?" And then said, "Why bother?"

**0:07:05 Debra Schwartz:** Well, back then, I would imagine that kind of major for your family would have been like, "Yes, you'll be interesting, but you won't be able to support yourself."

**0:07:12 David Freiberg:** So I married a Catholic girl and left. [chuckles] It didn't last that long, but it did move me to San Francisco.

**0:07:23 Debra Schwartz:** When you came to San Francisco —

**0:07:26 David Freiberg:** I'd never touched a guitar.

**0:07:28 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, okay, because —

**0:07:29 David Freiberg:** Oh, you should get into the musical part of it, I guess.

**0:07:32 Debra Schwartz:** We will, we will. We will get there because it's really nice to know what propels a person. Some people are musicians from childhood, and they want to go where the music is. Other people come upon their future in interesting and nefarious ways, but you were not a musician as a child?

**0:07:51 David Freiberg:** Oh yeah, I was.

**0:07:52 Debra Schwartz:** You were.

**0:07:53 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:07:54 Debra Schwartz:** What did you play?

**0:07:54 David Freiberg:** I started taking violin lessons at four. And I think that was 'cause my parents took me to see a Boston Pops children's concert, and I seemed to love it, and they just happened to be friends with the first violist, one of their best friends who always came over to visit. When he came over, he took out his viola, put it down, and I grabbed the bow, and they said, "Oh, he wants to play violin." In truth, I thought it was the baton and I —

[laughter]

**0:08:31 David Freiberg:** But whatever it was, I was a pretty mediocre violin player till I got into junior high and joined the school orchestra, and then they switched me to viola, and I loved that.

**0:08:44 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, the viola is a lovely sound.

**0:08:45 David Freiberg:** I loved it. I loved the tone, and went crazy, and all of a sudden, I was first violist, and then I was in the state orchestra and started playing in a string quartet.

**0:08:57 Debra Schwartz:** The thing about string instruments, is if you can play one, you can pretty much play them all. That's what I learned. I was a cellist and I could pick up the violin. Now, maybe you couldn't play it as well, but —

**0:09:07 David Freiberg:** Well, the same ratio anyway.

**0:09:08 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, right? Same ratio.

**0:09:11 David Freiberg:** But it's not the guitar, so that's different.

**0:09:13 Debra Schwartz:** No, it's not. But there are strings.

**0:09:16 David Freiberg:** There's strings, yes.

**0:09:18 Debra Schwartz:** So, we talked about you first coming to San Francisco and having that feeling, like, "This is where I want to be," and then you came later with your new wife.

**0:09:28 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:09:28 Debra Schwartz:** And where did you land?

**0:09:34 David Freiberg:** The last job I had in Ohio was — what do you call it? I worked for a trucking company as a tracer of lost packages. [chuckles] Anyway, so I theoretically had a job with an affiliate in Berkeley. And when we got out here, I think



we left on Christmas Eve 1959, and I had grabbed a bunch of money that I had inherited, and we took the San Francisco Chief out of Chicago on Christmas Eve, and ended up in San Francisco somewhere between Christmas and New Year's, and ended up living in Oakland. And the trucking job didn't work out, and the first job I could find to work on was at a pawn shop in downtown Oakland.

**0:10:37 Debra Schwartz:** Wow. There's some flavor for you.

**0:10:39 David Freiberg:** Yeah, yeah.

**0:10:41 Debra Schwartz:** So, Oakland in the '50s, the late '50s.

**0:10:46 David Freiberg:** Yeah, it was '59. Well, it was '60 by the time I got the job.

**0:10:53 Debra Schwartz:** What was it like for you? How was it different from Cleveland?

**0:10:57 David Freiberg:** Cincinnati.

**0:10:57 Debra Schwartz:** Or Cincinnati, excuse me.

**0:11:00 David Freiberg:** Well, it was in California, so winter wasn't winter. And I don't know, other than that, it wasn't that bad in '60. I never felt in danger in Oakland or anything.

**0:11:18 Debra Schwartz:** How about good? What was good about it, besides the weather?

**0:11:23 David Freiberg:** Not much. I still would rather have been in San Francisco.

**0:11:26 Debra Schwartz:** Interesting.

**0:11:27 David Freiberg:** And I didn't particularly like working at the pawn shop. I just thought I'd stay in transportation. I always loved the railroad, so I ended up getting a job in the freight — what do you call it? Freight rail plate? A job at Southern Pacific. And then I moved to San Francisco.

**0:11:53 Debra Schwartz:** And so, you were in San Francisco, and now it's into the '60s.

**0:11:58 David Freiberg:** Yeah, and I still have never touched a guitar.

**0:12:01 Debra Schwartz:** Still haven't touched a guitar.

**0:12:02 David Freiberg:** No. And I hadn't been playing violin or anything for a while, for a long time. In college, all I did, actually, was act and sing in choruses, but never took a course in it.

**0:12:14 Debra Schwartz:** So, I see this guitar in your future and how did you make your way to it?

**0:12:21 David Freiberg:** Well, my wife left me, just disappeared one day. I had no idea where she was, didn't hear from her for a while, and I eventually found her, and the only thing I could think of to do was to buy a guitar, 'cause I really loved folk music, and I never played a guitar, which seemed kind of stupid. So, I went out and bought a guitar, bought the *Sing Out!* magazines and started learning. I loved Pete Seeger and the Weavers, and I went and saw Pete Seeger at the Longshoreman's Hall in San Francisco, and he was my hero after that, just the way he could sing a song, get everybody to sing with him, still my hero, actually.

**0:13:24 Debra Schwartz:** So, you picked up the —

**0:13:25 David Freiberg:** And so, I got a guitar and started learning how to play, and started hanging out in coffee houses and singing at hootenanny night on the open mic hootenanny nights, 'cause I saw the people who were doing it, I said, "Well, if they could do it, I could." [laughs]

**0:13:39 Debra Schwartz:** "I can't be worse than that." Did you think that?

**0:13:41 David Freiberg:** Huh?

**0:13:41 Debra Schwartz:** Did you just think, "I can't be worse than that person"?

**0:13:44 David Freiberg:** Yeah, absolutely.

**0:13:46 Debra Schwartz:** And you have the most beautiful voice.

**0:13:48 David Freiberg:** It took some time, but yeah. And one day, I noticed a little card up on the bulletin board at one of the coffee houses and it said, "Wanted: Folk singers for peace." We were — I'm paraphrasing — we were going to travel without money down through Mexico, all the way down through South America, living with the people, for peace and brotherhood, to spread peace and brotherhood. And that sounded like a nice thing to do.

**0:14:29 Debra Schwartz:** This is what year?

**0:14:31 David Freiberg:** Probably '62.

**0:14:33 Debra Schwartz:** Because Vietnam —

**0:14:38 David Freiberg:** I hadn't been drafted or anything, but I wouldn't have been.

**0:14:43 Debra Schwartz:** You wouldn't have been?

**0:14:44 David Freiberg:** I don't think so.

**0:14:45 Debra Schwartz:** Too old? Too young? Heart condition?

**0:14:49 David Freiberg:** Well, my wife had ended up coming back to me pregnant.

**0:14:54 Debra Schwartz:** Oh. [laughs] I see.

**0:14:57 David Freiberg:** And so, all of a sudden I was a father, although I really wasn't, but anyway —

**0:15:04 Debra Schwartz:** Gotcha.

**0:15:06 David Freiberg:** So, I wouldn't have been drafted at that point.

**0:15:11 Debra Schwartz:** You're a father, yet you're going to go on the road for peace?

**0:15:17 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:15:18 Debra Schwartz:** Okay.

**0:15:19 David Freiberg:** So I talked Southern Pacific into giving me a leave of absence for a couple of months, and there was only three people that ended up going. The guy that was starting the thing and a little Jewish girl named Sandy, who just graduated from college.

**0:15:36 Debra Schwartz:** And the guy who started the thing?

**0:15:37 David Freiberg:** The guy that started was an ex-Marine.

**0:15:39 Debra Schwartz:** His name?

**0:15:40 David Freiberg:** Michael.

**0:15:43 Debra Schwartz:** So you, Sandy, and Michael.

**0:15:45 David Freiberg:** Yeah. We played a bunch of music, sat around and played songs together. Sandy and I were both Jewish, so we knew a bunch of Hebrew folk songs. This is a long story, but we took the third class train out of Mexicali to Mexico City, and we bought tacos off people that were selling them at the train stations and never did get sick.

**0:16:27 Debra Schwartz:** So you were just free and easy?

**0:16:29 David Freiberg:** And we ended up coming into Mexico City, we had like 12 pesos between all of us. Went to the American Friends Service Committee and found a place to sleep, and started going out to parks and opening up the guitar case and started to sing, and people would throw pesos in it.

**0:16:46 Debra Schwartz:** So you were street musicians.

**0:16:47 David Freiberg:** Street musicians at that point. People would ask us to sing, and we went out and found and talked to some people that were interested in the same sort of things, politically, at the University of Mexico, and met an artist who said, “Why don’t you come stay at my place?” He was from Colombia and he was a student of Siqueiros, the muralist, who was in prison at that point for, I guess, for being too far left. [chuckles] Whatever. And we were having a good time. One time we played for our dinner at the kosher restaurant in Mexico City.

**0:17:31 Debra Schwartz:** The name of the restaurant?

**0:17:32 David Freiberg:** I don’t remember.

**0:17:33 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, okay.

**0:17:35 David Freiberg:** But there were a lot of Jews in Mexico City, most of them owned jewelry stores, it seemed. [chuckles] We were set up in a park and somebody asked us if we’d sing at their meeting and we said, “Oh, sure.” So we went and sang at the meeting, had no idea what it was. None of us really spoke Spanish, other than “tortilla.” [chuckles]

**0:18:03 Debra Schwartz:** So, I’m gonna guess what kind of meeting this is.

**0:18:08 David Freiberg:** It must have been communist, yeah.

**0:18:10 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, it must have been.

**0:18:12 David Freiberg:** And there was somebody up there, he was talking about “Yanqui imperialism,” and things like that.<sup>1</sup> And so, we got up and sang, I don’t know, “I Have a Hammer” probably, and —

**0:18:25 Debra Schwartz:** [sings] “If I Had a Hammer.”

**0:18:26 David Freiberg:** Right. “I’d sing it in the morning.”

**0:18:28 Debra Schwartz:** “Sing it in the morning.”

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<sup>1</sup> “Yankee imperialism.”—Editor.

**0:18:30 David Freiberg:** “Sing it in the evening.”

**0:18:31 Debra Schwartz:** “In the evening.”

**0:18:32 David Freiberg:** “All over this land.”

**0:18:32 Debra Schwartz:** “All over this land.”

**0:18:34 David Freiberg:** Anyway, okay.

**0:18:35 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, right.

**0:18:36 David Freiberg:** Compared Pete Seeger to Siqueiros. [chuckles] And the next morning —

**0:18:46 Debra Schwartz:** That fast?

**0:18:47 David Freiberg:** Knock, knock, knock on the door.

**0:18:49 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, there must have been agents in the audience.

**0:18:50 David Freiberg:** They arrested all of us Yeah, of course.

**0:18:54 Debra Schwartz:** So that was it. What a buzzkill on your free and easy —

**0:18:57 David Freiberg:** And they arrested the poor artist too, who had nothing to do with it. He wasn’t even there.

**0:19:06 Debra Schwartz:** Judged by the company you keep, I guess.

**0:19:09 David Freiberg:** Poor guy, he was a sweetheart.

**0:19:11 Debra Schwartz:** And so, what happened?

**0:19:12 David Freiberg:** He was really good too. I don’t know what happened to him, I never found out. He probably got deported back to Colombia.

**0:19:25 Debra Schwartz:** And how about you? Registered as communists and enemies of —

**0:19:28 David Freiberg:** Well, no. They questioned us and realized that we really didn’t do anything other than be left-wing.

**0:19:37 Debra Schwartz:** Be young and dumb.

**0:19:38 David Freiberg:** So they throw us in jail overnight and woke us up early in the morning, put us in a car and drove us directly up to an American Airlines flight, put us on it, and all of a sudden we found ourselves, after eating, begging for food and everything, and we were in first class back to San Antonio. But they left us in San Antonio.

**0:19:57 Debra Schwartz:** But there's nice music in San Antonio, yes?

**0:20:00 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:20:01 Debra Schwartz:** So what happened?

**0:20:02 David Freiberg:** Turns out Sandy's college roommate's father was Lyndon B. Johnson's personal attorney in Austin. And we were really annoyed getting deported 'cause that ruined the whole thing. All of a sudden here we are back again and we never got out of Mexico. And so, she was gonna to try to talk to her roommate's father, and I don't know what he could do about it. But anyway we hitchhiked up to Austin, and while she was doing that, Mike and I went to the student union where they were having a Folk Music Society meeting, and sat around picking and singing with everybody and noticed there was a real nice guy with a beard, who talked to us, named Chet. And there was this girl playing autoharp with this really huge voice, and she was singing an Irish murder ballad, I think, at that point, but she sounded really bluesy. It was really interesting, and we traded addresses. That was Janis Joplin.

**0:21:16 Debra Schwartz:** That was Janis Joplin?

**0:21:17 David Freiberg:** And Chet was Chet Helms, who ran the Avalon Ballroom. And so traded addresses with him.

**0:21:27 Debra Schwartz:** So, they were living here at that time.

**0:21:29 David Freiberg:** No. She was in Austin.

**0:21:33 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, so she hadn't come to the Bay Area yet?

**0:21:35 David Freiberg:** No, not yet.

**0:21:37 Debra Schwartz:** Did she come to the Bay Area because of you?

**0:21:39 David Freiberg:** They came and slept on our floor for a couple of weeks, or a week or less, I don't know. And Chet had told the story that if I hadn't been deported from Mexico —

[laughter]

**0:21:50 Debra Schwartz:** I've never heard this before.

**0:21:55 David Freiberg:** Anyway.

**0:21:56 Debra Schwartz:** Wow. So, what was Janis like at that age? How old was she?

**0:22:03 David Freiberg:** I don't know, 18?

**0:22:08 Debra Schwartz:** And she had that bluesy voice.

**0:22:10 David Freiberg:** Yeah. She came up and she was playing around. I know she'd sang some stuff with Jorma Kaukonen, who would be in Jefferson Airplane. He was a student at Santa Clara University at that point. And I ended up singing with this girl named Mikaela, as David and Mikaela, during —

**0:22:38 Debra Schwartz:** That was your group then?

**0:22:39 David Freiberg:** That was my group, yeah.

**0:22:41 Debra Schwartz:** And you're continuing with your folk music.

**0:22:43 David Freiberg:** Yeah, and I ended up leaving the Southern Pacific.

**0:22:49 Debra Schwartz:** So at that time, were you thinking to yourself that, "This is what I want to be"? A musician.

**0:23:00 David Freiberg:** It seemed like it. Mikaela and I were able to make more money on a few weekends a month than I was actually making at — well, sometimes it was iffy.

**0:23:13 Debra Schwartz:** Did you have confidence in your ability as a musician?

**0:23:16 David Freiberg:** Nah.

**0:23:16 Debra Schwartz:** You just jumped and hoped.

**0:23:18 David Freiberg:** I was learning as I went along, just picking and singing with everybody that was around. This is real folk music. Jerry Garcia was around. We knew all these people that were playing at the clubs. Paul Kantner.

**0:23:37 Debra Schwartz:** Yes. So, I interviewed Marty Balin, your friend.

**0:23:39 David Freiberg:** Yeah, he was playing with the Town Criers at that point.

**0:23:43 Debra Schwartz:** Was it kind of like musicians in their earlier stage, sort of in the learning phase, or maybe there's a phase —

**0:23:52 David Freiberg:** No, we were all learning.

**0:23:53 Debra Schwartz:** You were all learning.

**0:23:54 David Freiberg:** I think we all were. Jorma actually took lessons from — I'm having a senior moment.

**0:24:05 Debra Schwartz:** That's okay. If it comes to you, we'll add it. Had you any concept in your mind at all at that time, that the people, your community of musical friends, would go on to be such amazingly successful, including yourself, musicians? Was that ever in your head? Did you have that in the horizon of your mind?

**0:24:28 David Freiberg:** I was just enjoying learning. It turns out also, the first time I smoked dope was in Mexico City at that, so I have them to thank for all my arrests.  
[chuckles]

**0:24:41 Debra Schwartz:** What were there, three arrests for pot?

**0:24:43 David Freiberg:** Yeah, but always for less than an ounce of marijuana.  
[chuckles]

**0:24:51 Debra Schwartz:** It may be hard for some people to remember, but there's a time in California where the smell of marijuana was as prevalent in all outdoor spaces as the smell of the pines or the ocean air. It was the scent of the '60s.

**0:25:09 David Freiberg:** You had to be really pretty dumb to get arrested though.  
[chuckles]

**0:25:13 Debra Schwartz:** Are you bragging now about your dumbness? How did you get arrested? We're talking at this point in 2019, when marijuana's basically legal. It is, and it's being produced on huge scales, but back then it was so very different.

**0:25:34 David Freiberg:** Yeah, let me see. I think I made a left turn at Masonic and Fell Street, not realizing it was after four.

**0:25:42 Debra Schwartz:** That's what precipitated your arrest for possession?

**0:25:47 David Freiberg:** The policeman that stopped me looked under my front seat, 'cause he thought he saw me putting something under there, which I did. [chuckles] It was a little baggy of less than an ounce of grass. And boom, I'm arrested.

**0:26:04 Debra Schwartz:** This is your second time now being yanked by the neck and thrown into a jail cell. You've got Mexico and now you've got here in San Francisco.

**0:26:14 David Freiberg:** Yeah.



**0:26:14 Debra Schwartz:** May I ask, were you a long-haired man at that time? Did you fit a profile that the officer might have had in San Francisco in the '60s?

**0:26:27 David Freiberg:** I probably had long hair.

**0:26:29 Debra Schwartz:** Because remember how cops could be. They could profile you on the length of your hair.

**0:26:32 David Freiberg:** Yeah, I probably had long hair at that point. I don't really remember. Wait, I'm looking back — I used to have my mugshot. No, I had a mustache, I think, and slightly long hair. I looked more like an Italian fisherman or something, in the mugshot, anyway. [chuckles] And actually, I was living with Paul Kantner and a bunch of people, a community living in a flat that was on Turk and Fillmore more or less, right across from the Pink Palace. That's gone now, but —

**0:27:22 Debra Schwartz:** Yep, I remember.

**0:27:22 David Freiberg:** You remember the Pink Palace?

**0:27:23 Debra Schwartz:** Hard to forget.

**0:27:24 David Freiberg:** Yeah. And so when I got busted, I said, "Oh, I don't know. What am I gonna do?" We really weren't working. I had broken up with Mikaela, and Kantner, Paul and I had been through a bunch of stuff. We probably lived together for about a year in various places in San Jose and Venice, California, thinking we were gonna become folk singer, but really getting a group that we could make money with.

**0:28:03 Debra Schwartz:** This is before —

**0:28:04 David Freiberg:** It wasn't — but there we were, watching the Beatles' movie, and thinking, "Now that's what we should be doing."

**0:28:14 Debra Schwartz:** Which one? *A Hard Day's Night* or *Help*?

**0:28:16 David Freiberg:** *Hard Day's Night*, yeah, then *Help*. *Hard Day's Night*, resembled what we were really doing, what we were actually doing.

**0:28:31 Debra Schwartz:** You mean all the — [chuckles]

**0:28:31 David Freiberg:** I'm sure the Beatles weren't doing that, but they kind of did when they were in Hamburg, as we find out. [chuckles]

**0:28:41 Debra Schwartz:** And this is before Kantner met Marty Balin?

**0:28:44 David Freiberg:** Yes, this was before. And so, then I moved to Marin County.

**0:28:52 Debra Schwartz:** In what year was that?

**0:28:57 David Freiberg:** '64? '65?

**0:29:00 Debra Schwartz:** Wow. You preceded some of the others moving here, because a lot of them came in the late '60s. The Grateful Dead —

**0:29:07 David Freiberg:** Well, I got a job. I went and got a job in a freight forwarding company, because I had experience doing that kinda stuff. And apparently my supervisor at Southern Pacific said he'd hire me back in a second, and that really surprised me 'cause all that guy ever did was yell at me. [chuckles]

**0:29:29 Debra Schwartz:** So, you moved to Marin County. Where specifically in the county did you move to?

**0:29:35 David Freiberg:** Well, I lived at an illegal rental somewhere that was somebody's basement, back behind where Whole Foods is.

**0:30:00 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, over in the Homestead Valley? Here in Mill Valley?

**0:30:03 David Freiberg:** Homestead Valley, yeah, yeah, yeah. And then I ended up renting a little house that overlooked the San Rafael Bridge in San Quentin Village. And so, what I'd do is go to work and come home, smoke dope, as much as I could, get out my 12 string and sing Beatles songs. I learned all the Beatles songs and sang them to the San Rafael Bridge, till I fell asleep. And then, I'd do the same thing the next day. And one day, there was a knock on the door and it was an acquaintance wanting a little dope, but to me, it was audience. [chuckles] "Listen! Listen to all these Beatles songs." And then he said, "You know, I need some dope. Do you have any?" I said, "I just got seeds and stems." I didn't have very much, and I said, "I'll split what I got with you." He tried to give me \$10 for it, and I said, "Nah, man."

**0:31:05 Debra Schwartz:** I think that's what a lid cost back then, \$10.

**0:31:08 David Freiberg:** Yeah, but this wasn't a lid, this was just a little —

**0:31:09 Debra Schwartz:** Just a tiny bit.

**0:31:09 David Freiberg:** Just a little bit of stuff.

**0:31:11 Debra Schwartz:** How generous.

**0:31:11 David Freiberg:** Mostly stems and seeds, really. I said, "No just take it." And he says, "Well, here, take this five." And I said, "Oh, okay."

**0:31:20 Debra Schwartz:** Uh-oh. Oh no. [chuckles] I got it.

**0:31:23 David Freiberg:** You got it.

**0:31:24 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, I see.

**0:31:25 David Freiberg:** He was wired, too.

**0:31:26 Debra Schwartz:** Yes. Oh.

**0:31:27 David Freiberg:** He had been busted for selling to people and he was representing —

**0:31:34 Debra Schwartz:** A set up.

**0:31:34 David Freiberg:** That I was his connection, but that was the first time he ever tried to get anything from me.

**0:31:39 Debra Schwartz:** He set you up.

**0:31:39 David Freiberg:** Yeah, he set me up.

**0:31:41 Debra Schwartz:** That's your second arrest.

**0:31:42 David Freiberg:** That was my second. So, off I go to San Rafael Jail.

**0:31:44 Debra Schwartz:** No, wait, that's your third.

**0:31:46 Debra Schwartz:** Second.

**0:31:46 Debra Schwartz:** Oh no, that's for pot. Second, yes.

**0:31:48 David Freiberg:** Well, I wasn't really arrested, I was just —

**0:31:51 Debra Schwartz:** Third. The first one was a detainment, I suppose.

**0:31:53 David Freiberg:** I got detained and deported. Not arrested, deported.

**0:32:00 Debra Schwartz:** Wow.

**0:32:01 David Freiberg:** Yes. It was a big headline in *La Prensa*.<sup>2</sup> I saw it years later.

**0:32:07 Debra Schwartz:** But for the second pot arrest, that was a set up.

**0:32:10 David Freiberg:** And so, there I was. I lost that job obviously, and didn't know anybody to co-sign for the bail, and I was in there for 30 days or so.

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<sup>2</sup> A Mexican newspaper.—Editor.

**0:32:24 Debra Schwartz:** In the Marin County lock-up in San Rafael?

**0:32:25 David Freiberg:** Yeah, until they finally realized, “Hey, this guy isn’t gonna get bail.” [chuckles] We better —

**0:32:31 Debra Schwartz:** We’re tired of feeding him.

**0:32:32 David Freiberg:** We better let him go on his own recognizance.

**0:32:38 Debra Schwartz:** What was the San Rafael-Richmond Bridge’s favorite Beatles song? Or did you have one?

**0:32:48 David Freiberg:** That would be interesting.

**0:32:51 Debra Schwartz:** There’s certain sounds that I think would accompany the hum of the bridge.

**0:32:58 David Freiberg:** I don’t remember.

**0:33:02 Debra Schwartz:** Which is one of your favorite Beatle songs? Or do you have one?

**0:33:06 David Freiberg:** Oh, I love them all. I really loved the Beatles. “Here I Stand.”

**0:33:18 Debra Schwartz:** “Hey, you’ve got to hide your love away.”

**0:33:20 David Freiberg:** “You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away.” That was one of the ones I really liked.

**0:33:25 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, it is a great Beatles song.

**0:33:26 David Freiberg:** That was the bridge’s favorite, I think.

**0:33:27 Debra Schwartz:** That’s the bridge’s favorite song?

**0:33:29 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:33:30 Debra Schwartz:** Interesting. I hadn’t realized the bridge was so romantic.

**0:33:34 David Freiberg:** Yeah, it doesn’t look it, does it? [chuckles]

**0:33:38 Debra Schwartz:** Actually, it’s a lovely bridge, how it hovers so close to the water.

**0:33:42 David Freiberg:** So, while I was in jail, Paul Kantner did come over and visit me. This was the old jail. This is the one that was across from where Macy's used to be in central San Rafael.

**0:33:53 Debra Schwartz:** On Fourth Street.

**0:33:54 David Freiberg:** The old court house, yeah. It must have been built around the Civil War, something like that. [chuckles] And so, Kantner came to see me in there and he noticed there was this little hole, a crack in the window, and he stuck a joint through it [chuckles] and told me that he was starting a band with Marty Balin and they think they were gonna call it Jefferson Airplane. And I said, "Wow, that sounds great." And so, when I got released, I was already been talking to John Cipollina and Jimmy Murray about — I was supposed to be forming a band with Dino Valenti, who apparently wanted a band, but he couldn't stay out of jail.

**0:34:37 Debra Schwartz:** Pot bust for him too?

**0:34:39 David Freiberg:** That's what I always heard, what I assume, but they really treated him badly. He was often in the state prison system.

**0:34:48 Debra Schwartz:** Oh dear.

**0:34:51 David Freiberg:** I don't understand why.

**0:34:56 Debra Schwartz:** So, you were saying?

**0:34:57 David Freiberg:** So, I was out in the streets and sleeping on friend's floors and stuff. I didn't have anything, didn't have a guitar. We were trying to form a band, and while I was doing that, my trial comes up for the first bust and they put me in San Bruno for a 60-day sentence, and gave me 10 days to turn myself in, 10 days to clear up my affairs. And I think I took acid on the night before I went in.

**0:35:35 Debra Schwartz:** You are incorrigible.

**0:35:37 David Freiberg:** That was funny.

**0:35:38 Debra Schwartz:** Yes. [laughs] You wouldn't have been the only one.

**0:35:42 David Freiberg:** I walk into the Hall of Justice in San Francisco and tried to get into the jail elevator and the doors go almost shut and open up and I push the button again, and then went almost shut and opened up. I'm still coming down from this acid trip [chuckles] and so I say, "Well, if it does that again I'm just gonna take that as a sign and just not go." So, they closed. [chuckles]

**0:36:11 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, almost.

**0:36:13 David Freiberg:** Yeah, almost. Well, I would've really been in trouble if I didn't turn myself in.

**0:36:16 Debra Schwartz:** Were you nervous about going to jail?

**0:36:18 David Freiberg:** Huh?

**0:36:19 Debra Schwartz:** Were you nervous about going to jail?

**0:36:21 David Freiberg:** Well, I'd already been in San Rafael jail for 30 days and I didn't like it, but it was weirder in San Bruno, 'cause they wanted me to cut my hair or else stay in the gay section.

**0:36:36 Debra Schwartz:** Whoa.

**0:36:39 David Freiberg:** And I probably should've stayed in the gay section, actually. It would have been much more entertaining. [chuckles] But it didn't sound right.

**0:36:55 Debra Schwartz:** So, when you get out of San Bruno jail —

**0:36:57 David Freiberg:** I didn't know what I know now. [chuckles]

**0:37:01 Debra Schwartz:** There was a lot of social programming back in that time.

**0:37:06 David Freiberg:** If I'd know what I know now, in a minute I would have stayed there. Just so stupid. But anyway — and then, hearing my friend Crosby singing "Turn, Turn, Turn" on the radio.

**0:37:18 Debra Schwartz:** With The Birds?

**0:37:19 David Freiberg:** Yeah, with The Birds.

**0:37:20 Debra Schwartz:** So, you're friends with David Crosby?

**0:37:22 David Freiberg:** Yeah. Actually, he was oftentimes resident of our house with Paul and Dennis while we were in LA.

**0:37:35 Debra Schwartz:** When were you in LA?

**0:37:38 David Freiberg:** Probably '64, late '64.

**0:37:42 Debra Schwartz:** He had grown up in Santa Barbara as I recall.

**0:37:45 David Freiberg:** I met him when he was in Pasadena, when he was playing with a group called Les Baxter's Balladeers. It was Les Baxter's folk group, anyway.

**0:38:01 Debra Schwartz:** Well, I have to say, when I was doing a little research about you before this interview, I hadn't known that you performed on David Crosby's solo album *If Only I Could Remember My Name*. Is that true?

**0:38:13 David Freiberg:** Yeah, I sang some of it.

**0:38:16 Debra Schwartz:** Which has got to be one of the loveliest albums ever made. It's truly beautiful.

**0:38:19 David Freiberg:** There's some beautiful stuff on there.

**0:38:21 Debra Schwartz:** Really beautiful, and it's haunting references to Mill Valley and this area.

**0:38:26 David Freiberg:** Tamalpais, yeah. [chuckles]

**0:38:27 Debra Schwartz:** To Tamalpais and downtown high at, what is it, 2:00 p.m. or something?

**0:38:32 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:38:33 Debra Schwartz:** Just beautiful. I probably listened to that album 2,000 times.

**0:38:39 David Freiberg:** Around that time, Quicksilver was recording. We hired a studio down in San Francisco, and Airplane were there and the Dead were there. While David was making that record, we were also trying to make the Planet Earth Rock and Roll Orchestra, and so, that was David and Graham, and Paul and Grace, and Jorma and Jack and Jerry Garcia and Phil Lesh, and me. And it could be all kinds of people. There were a few sessions where we spent all day or a whole night, just everybody around playing guitars and all got recorded. There's this underground tape and digital file of all those things. There's a bunch of songs that everybody was writing. It never finished at all, but it was interesting.

**0:39:41 Debra Schwartz:** The way you describe this, it's like you're in the incubation room for some of the best music, arguably, of the century. The music in the '70s, with the rock 'n' roll, the Dead, Crosby, Stills, Nash.

**0:40:00 David Freiberg:** No, no, no. That was about '69.

**0:40:02 Debra Schwartz:** '69. The music was so amazingly beautiful and wonderful, and you're there in the center of it. How did that feel?

**0:40:12 David Freiberg:** Kinda like Forrest Gump. [chuckles]

**0:40:13 Debra Schwartz:** Did you feel like that?

**0:40:16 David Freiberg:** No, no. [chuckles] No, I was just there.

**0:40:20 Debra Schwartz:** Did you ever have experiences when you're performing, you're an amazing performer, but you just thought to yourself, "Here I am, listening to this person sing this way and that song," and you didn't have to pay for the ticket?

**0:40:37 David Freiberg:** I was entitled to hear some of the coolest music of all time, just for being in San Francisco and being in one of the bands. I could just walk into the Avalon or the Fillmore or Winterland. I'd just say, "Hi," and then walk in. And so, I'd see whoever it was, Cream or Miles Davis or —

**0:41:00 Debra Schwartz:** You had carte blanche because of your —

**0:41:02 David Freiberg:** Yeah, because you're with the bands. [laughs]

**0:41:05 Debra Schwartz:** So, you were Quicksilver Messenger Service? Tell me a little bit about that band.

**0:41:11 David Freiberg:** So, after I got out of San Bruno — 'cause we hadn't quite got the band together when I got sent away. John and Jim met the other two guys, Gary Duncan and Greg Elmore, at one of the early Family Dog things.<sup>3</sup> So anyway, they had already started playing with him, and they said they would just wait for me to come out 'cause they thought I'd be the bass player since I was a 12-string player, whatever that means. It doesn't really translate. I'd never played bass before.

**0:41:55 Debra Schwartz:** They just reasoned it that way. They were just holding a spot for you, I suppose.

**0:42:00 David Freiberg:** I don't know. Well, I was part of it until I was rudely interrupted. [laughs] And so, they brought me out of there. Actually, they came to pick me up at the Hall of Justice.

**0:42:16 Debra Schwartz:** Really? They came for you when they released you?

**0:42:19 David Freiberg:** Yeah. John and Jimmy.

**0:42:19 Debra Schwartz:** When you were released?

**0:42:20 David Freiberg:** Yeah. I hadn't seen my probation officer first, and he was gone at that point, so I had to wait until he got back to the office. And so, I actually rode out with John and Jimmy and got stoned and then went back. [laughs] I talked to my probation officer and he says, "I know there's nothing wrong with marijuana, but it's illegal. And I told them that they should let you see what's gonna happen if you don't stop."

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<sup>3</sup> Family Dog was the commune/promotion company started by Chet Helms.—Editor.



**0:42:52 Debra Schwartz:** He is telling you after you're high?

**0:42:53 David Freiberg:** Yeah, and I was like, "Oh, alright. I'll definitely never do that again." [laughs]

**0:42:58 Debra Schwartz:** You are so typical of that time, I tell you.

**0:43:01 David Freiberg:** But what else could I do?

**0:43:02 Debra Schwartz:** What else could you do?

**0:43:03 David Freiberg:** You wanted me to say, "No, I'm gonna keep on smoking." No, I said, "Yes sir." Then we left, and I never talked to him again.

**0:43:15 Debra Schwartz:** So, then you entered into the Quicksilver Messenger Service phase after that?

**0:43:20 David Freiberg:** Yeah. I remember trying to figure out what to call it.

**0:43:23 Debra Schwartz:** How did you get that name?

**0:43:26 David Freiberg:** It's astrological, actually. Gary and Greg that were both born on the same day, September 4th I believe, and they're Virgos. John Cipollina and I were born on August 24th, Virgos. So those four people, all Virgos. Jimmy Murray wasn't a Virgo, he was a Gemini. But the thing they all have in common was the ruling planet of Virgo and Gemini is Mercury, and Mercury is Quicksilver, and is the messenger god. So it was Quicksilver Messenger Service, I don't know.

**0:44:13 Debra Schwartz:** Wow. I had no idea, but that's great. Jefferson Airplane is the name of someone's dog.

**0:44:20 David Freiberg:** No.

**0:44:21 Debra Schwartz:** That's what Marty said, in his interview.

**0:44:24 David Freiberg:** Well, it could have been, but the way I heard it from Jorma was that some friend was making up names from old black folk singers or blues singers and there's Blind Lemon Jefferson, so this was his Blind Lemon Jefferson Starship, [laughs] a blind Jefferson Airplane, Blind Jefferson Airplane or something. I think that's where it came from but I don't know.

**0:44:56 Debra Schwartz:** Whoever named the dog — well, that's what Marty said in his interview. But Quicksilver Messenger Service.

**0:45:07 David Freiberg:** It's just as good as anything.

**0:45:08 Debra Schwartz:** It really is. It's very clever.

**0:45:10 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:45:11 Debra Schwartz:** And John Cipollina.

**0:45:13 David Freiberg:** He's in Mill Valley near you.

**0:45:14 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:45:16 David Freiberg:** Well, he was really born in Berkeley —

**0:45:19 Debra Schwartz:** But he grew up here. And he has this legendary status as the ultimate 'rock god' kind of character, died too soon.

**0:45:30 David Freiberg:** Oh yeah.

**0:45:31 Debra Schwartz:** Tell me about John.

**0:45:34 David Freiberg:** One of the cool things about Quicksilver was there was Jimmy Murray and me, who are folk singers —

**0:45:47 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:45:47 David Freiberg:** And Jimmy left as soon as we started. Before, well, we were just sitting around and playing a little bit and everything like that. I don't know why. He's passed away now, too, but as soon as we started practicing and being serious about learning, you know, we're putting stuff together, he left, and moved to Maui. And I really didn't know why, but this meant Gary had to take care of a lot, more of the guitar playing, and he was really a good guitar player and should have been doing that. And so, it was probably a plus that we were four people instead of five people actually. And so John and Gary and Greg all were rockers, never played, never played folk music at all, and almost all the other bands around here, nobody ever really played rock 'n' roll before.

**0:46:47 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:46:47 David Freiberg:** We were all, you know, finger pickers. And Jerry Garcia's a banjo. All those guys were folk singers too, the Grateful Dead. And so the difference between Quicksilver and the other ones was that we really had a drummer and two guitarists, that never played folk music. I brought in a bunch of folk songs, but when we played them they weren't folk songs anymore. [laughs]

**0:47:18 Debra Schwartz:** They were folk songs on steroids.

**0:47:22 David Freiberg:** Right. So anyway, John was such a unique player, and he was just a really sweet guy, really wonderful person, who would talk to anybody, didn't really think that much about himself, you know, and really liked the old time rock 'n' roll players, like, you know, Link Wray, the original rock 'n' roll things. And he put guitars together. He always used the really skinny strings, and it had to be a Bigsby tail piece with the wang bar on it, which he used on every note pretty much, and which would take his guitar out of tune, as soon as you use it. His guitar was always out of tune, but he'd play it using the bar, so you couldn't tell it just made him sound unique. It didn't sound out of tune because it was pulled into tune, yes, but it was a very [makes guitar noise] thing.

**0:49:04:** And he used a couple of finger picks, a thumb pick and a finger pick, and some of the times would just be rubbing the strings going [makes guitar noise] so it would just make strange noises with the wah-wah pedal. And he designed pick guards for his guitar, so they looked like bat wings. He was just very unique and he had the stance and girls just fell over for him. He'd be standing there, and he was the prototype, I think, for —

**0:49:37 Debra Schwartz:** The rock god.

**0:49:38 David Freiberg:** For the rock guitar player, with his hair hanging down over one eye.

**0:49:45 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah.

**0:49:45 David Freiberg:** He was great.

**0:49:49 Debra Schwartz:** So how long did you stay with Quicksilver Messenger Service?

**0:49:54 David Freiberg:** Oh, in 1969, Gary Duncan left. He went off with Dino Valenti.

**0:50:05 Debra Schwartz:** Who had the hard time with the jails.

**0:50:08 David Freiberg:** Yeah. He was gonna become rich and famous in New York or something, and they went off and left us there. I couldn't talk him out of it. And he had a drug problem, he was getting into speed.

**0:50:24 Debra Schwartz:** That's a hard ride.

**0:50:25 David Freiberg:** I think Dino at least got him to quit. And after a year, they both came back, almost exactly a year. And so, then we had picked up Nicky Hopkins, the great English keyboard player, who played with the Rolling Stones and pretty much every band in San Francisco for one year, 'cause he liked it here. Actually, it was very

funny. He was born on February 24th, which is exactly six months [after John and me], so it's the exact opposite of John Cipollina.

**0:51:05 Debra Schwartz:** Mm-hmm.

**0:51:06 David Freiberg:** But he was just like John. They both collected little things. John would save every match book he ever had and set lists on little cards. The set lists, he would save every one of them. He had piles of stuff. [laughs] And Nicky was the same. They just hit it off. That's probably why he joined Quicksilver, 'cause they hit it off so well.

**0:51:30 Debra Schwartz:** If there's a kind of rulebook that you would go by as a young musician starting a band back then, what would be some —

**0:51:39 David Freiberg:** There was no rulebook. [laughs]

**0:51:40 Debra Schwartz:** No rulebook. There was no standard protocol, you didn't have a checklist, you didn't keep things in mind, you just — what?

**0:51:49 David Freiberg:** The most important thing would be to make sure you had enough marijuana. [laughs]

**0:52:05 Debra Schwartz:** I didn't expect that. [laughs]

**0:52:11 David Freiberg:** What was the saying? "It's more important to have marijuana than money." I don't know.

**0:52:23 Debra Schwartz:** But there were a lot of other drugs back then.

**0:52:28 David Freiberg:** Yeah, there was LSD and —

**0:52:31 Debra Schwartz:** Did it ever get to be a problem with your music, for you?

**0:52:35 David Freiberg:** Not mine. No, I didn't really like cocaine. A bunch of people really liked it. I tried it, but for me — I don't know. Once you took a hit of it, it's like, "Wow, that's pretty cool." And then you kept looking for that first pretty, "Hey, that's pretty cool," but it never happened again. And so you kept trying to get more and that made you want more, and you had to have more and it just didn't work.

**0:53:10 Debra Schwartz:** Just chasing your tail.

**0:53:12 David Freiberg:** Yeah, it was.

**0:53:13 Debra Schwartz:** I remember when I first met David Crosby.

**0:53:17 David Freiberg:** Ooh, he really got into it.

**0:53:18 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, he really got into it.

**0:53:19 David Freiberg:** Free basing.

**0:53:22 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:53:25 David Freiberg:** Actually, I went with Paul, and Grace, and a bunch of people.

**0:53:30 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, you were part of the intervention?

**0:53:30 David Freiberg:** Part of the intervention, yeah, in Noe Valley. He went off, but he didn't last very long. He always blessed the judge that put him in jail, [chuckles] 'cause that's who it really saved his life.

**0:53:46 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:53:47 David Freiberg:** Where he couldn't get any. And now he's playing some of the best music he's ever written. It's really good.

**0:53:56 Debra Schwartz:** That's something that comes up in my interviews with various people, the time when cocaine was considered healthier than alcohol, let's say, or whatever the spin was back then. But there was a time in Marin County's history when there was a lot, a lot of drugs, and then in came the coke, and then there was a lot of coke, and a lot of people got burned.

**0:54:22 David Freiberg:** Oh yeah.

**0:54:23 Debra Schwartz:** Was that sort of endemic in your profession? Yes, you're shaking your head up and down, yes. The pitfalls that you could come across as a musician —

**0:54:42 David Freiberg:** When I joined with the Airplane, Paul had already stopped coke. None. He didn't do any, and I don't think Grace did either. Grace's thing was alcohol. I don't remember much coke around Jefferson Airplane at that point. I mean, Jorma and Jack are absolutely straight now.

**0:55:19 Debra Schwartz:** So when did you join Jefferson Airplane?

**0:55:31 David Freiberg:** '72, I think.

**0:55:33 Debra Schwartz:** They were super hot at that point.

**0:55:36 David Freiberg:** Well, Marty had left. That was why I joined in.

**0:55:39 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, so were you the Marty replacement?

**0:55:42 David Freiberg:** I was theoretically the Marty replacement, yeah. I didn't think of it as that because, I mean, I sang harmony on the same songs that he would have sung harmony on. But at that point, we didn't try to have me sing "Today" or "Plastic Fantastic Lover" or any of those tunes. We just didn't do them.

**0:56:06 Debra Schwartz:** You just didn't do his beautiful ballads?

**0:56:09 David Freiberg:** Uh-uh.

**0:56:09 Debra Schwartz:** Did you ever feel the responsibility to live up to Marty Balin's history, and his singing, and his position?

**0:56:22 David Freiberg:** Well, now, if Marty songs are gonna get sung by somebody, it's gonna have to be somebody here. I mean, Kathy sings a bunch of Marty songs in the band, in Jefferson Starship now, and I sing some.

**0:56:35 Debra Schwartz:** I know. I came to your house and recorded and I think we took three takes. It was so beautiful. Two takes, three takes?

**0:56:46 David Freiberg:** I don't remember.

**0:56:46 Debra Schwartz:** It was so beautiful, I mean, so very beautiful. You do such a lovely, lovely job of it.

**0:56:51 David Freiberg:** Oh, thanks.

**0:56:52 Debra Schwartz:** It was a sad time then, because he had just passed away.

**0:56:55 David Freiberg:** He had just passed away, yeah.

**0:57:00 Debra Schwartz:** So you did join the Jefferson Airplane in '72?

**0:57:03 David Freiberg:** Yeah, and we did one tour, which was really successful as far as we could tell. There's an album called *Thirty Seconds Over Winterland*, which is live recordings from that tour. And that's my only Jefferson Airplane album, I guess. After that, I was in the band, but somehow there was never another tour. I think Paul and Grace each owed RCA a solo album. We were hanging out together anyway, so Paul, Grace, and I, made one called *Baron von Tollbooth and the Chrome Nun*, which is ostensibly Paul's solo debt to RCA. And it came out just saying that it was Paul Kantner, Grace Slick, and David Freiberg at the time.

**0:58:07 David Freiberg:** We put that out and then Grace had one called *Manhole*. So it was basically the same people who made *Manhole*, too. And after that was done, we said, "It doesn't look like Jefferson Airplane's gonna play anymore. And besides, RCA cut off

our salaries. [laughs] So what are we gonna call it?" And Paul's first solo album was called *Blows Against the Empire*.

**0:58:34 David Freiberg:** On it he listed everybody that played as the Jefferson Starship crew. I don't know that I brought it up or not. I have the feeling I brought it up, and I'm sure Paul and Grace thought they brought it up, but whatever. It was obvious that what we call it was Jefferson Starship. So, I called it Jefferson Starship, and put together a band, which, except for Pete Sears, was the band, as Pete was busy recording for Rod Stewart at that point in England, so he couldn't make it over for that tour. But when he got back, he joined, and it was Jefferson Starship, and we started making Jefferson Starship records.

**0:59:18 Debra Schwartz:** One of your songs from those records jumped out from a Netflix show that I was watching. It opens with, I believe, tell me if it's wrong that you wrote this song, but have you've heard of this show that opens with the song "Jane"?

**0:59:40 David Freiberg:** With "Jane"? Oh, yeah. *Wet Wild American Summer*, or something?

**0:59:45 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**0:59:46 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**0:59:46 Debra Schwartz:** *Wet Hot American Summer*, which is the funniest show.

**0:59:51 David Freiberg:** *Wet, Hot American Summer*, yeah. Oh, do you think it's funny? [chuckles]

**0:59:53 Debra Schwartz:** Yes. I do, because it's about young kids in camp, but all the actors are older. [chuckles] So, these are all adults playing young people.

**1:00:07 David Freiberg:** Right. It's all about playing young kids.

**1:00:08 Debra Schwartz:** But the song "Jane," did you write "Jane"?

**1:00:08 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:00:09 Debra Schwartz:** Okay. Well, that song has a presence and it really creates quite an interesting opening for that show. In fact, it makes it, in my opinion. That show's opening would be nothing without your song.

**1:00:25 David Freiberg:** Oh, cool. Thanks.

**1:00:27 Debra Schwartz:** So, tell me a little bit about your songwriting?

**1:00:35 David Freiberg:** I don't know. I wrote a bunch of songs, but I very rarely wrote the lyrics. Every now and then, I would. I wrote "Jane" with my friend, Jim McPherson, who has passed away, but he was a really good songwriter. He played in John Cipollina's band, Copperhead, after John left Quicksilver, and he played in Pete Sears' band. I saw Pete Sears, and I said, "Wow. These two guys are both really good keyboard players and bass players, and whatever the other isn't playing, they just switch back and forth." Their set was really cool.

**1:01:31:** By then, I started playing the piano, because it was easier to write songs for me on the piano than on guitar for some reason. I didn't know how to play the piano, but I could read music and I knew where the notes were and I knew harmony. It seemed easier messing around to write tunes with it, so I wrote a bunch of songs on the piano.

**1:02:05 Debra Schwartz:** Did you write the music? Or the lyrics and the music?

**1:02:10 David Freiberg:** I wrote the music and some of the lyrics, but Jimmy put them together. I'd say, if it wasn't for him, it would never got finished.

**1:02:23 Debra Schwartz:** But you don't sing it?

**1:02:26 David Freiberg:** No. I don't know, but then Marty was back in the band, it was kind of the same. How many lead singers can you have? And I said, "Okay I'll be a support, no big deal to me." 'Cause Marty was this Marty Balin, man. [chuckles]

**1:02:43 Debra Schwartz:** He's now a part of. At this point he comes and he joins the band Jefferson Starship.

**1:02:48 David Freiberg:** At that point, when I wrote it, he was the male lead singer, and Grace and I would sing harmony on everything. And I either played bass or keyboards, depending on what Pete and I decided.

**1:03:05 Debra Schwartz:** Were there any songs in particular during your Starship days with Marty back that you enjoyed?

**1:03:10 David Freiberg:** I actually wrote one with him and Bob Hunter for the Dead called "Tumblin'" that's on *Red Octopus*, but didn't really come out like I wanted it to, but it's a nice song, anyway, you could look for it. [chuckles] It's alright.

**1:03:31 Debra Schwartz:** Are your songs ever like children, you love them all, or do you have favorites?

**1:03:39 David Freiberg:** There's one I wrote with Gary Duncan on Quicksilver called "The Fool", which I really liked.

**1:03:44 Debra Schwartz:** Can you sing a few lines?



**1:03:46 David Freiberg:** I don't know. It's a long thing, and it's mostly instrumental. It's on the first Quicksilver album. So, you gotta check that one out.

**1:03:53 Debra Schwartz:** I'll have to go back and check my collection.

**1:03:56 David Freiberg:** It's a whole extravaganza. It's very hippy, and almost Buddhist, although I wasn't a Buddhist at that point, but the lyrics are —

**1:04:09 Debra Schwartz:** You mentioned earlier that you took a hiatus for 20 years.

**1:04:13 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:04:14 Debra Schwartz:** When did that begin?

**1:04:17 David Freiberg:** '85. If I hadn't done that, I wouldn't have met Linda, so that was really cool.

**1:04:22 Debra Schwartz:** Linda's your wife?

**1:04:25 David Freiberg:** Yeah. At one point Gary Duncan from Quicksilver was making an album. He had a studio in San Rafael. He called me up after I quit, or was fired, quit, it's the same thing. I was trying to figure out how to get out, 'cause this wasn't my kind of thing, and I knew I wasn't really doing anything and that's the reason I left Quicksilver too. I wasn't really doing anything.

**1:04:57:** So Gary called me out and said, "Hey, would you wanna come over and sing some background vocals? I got four songs that need background vocals, that the two chicks I had singing on were too stoned and none of it works. And I have this chick singer coming over. Would you wanna do that? And I said, "Sure, something to do, okay." So I went over to Duncan's Studio and it was Linda, and things just came to and we became friends. We each had other love interests at that point when we met, but then we became friends and by 1990, we got married.

**1:05:41 Debra Schwartz:** I've been to your house.

**1:05:42 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:05:43 Debra Schwartz:** It has the most wonderful feeling in it.

**1:05:47 David Freiberg:** Well, that's Linda.

**1:05:49 Debra Schwartz:** If as the prophet says, "Your house is your larger self, then I really like your wife."

**1:05:54 David Freiberg:** Good, yeah.

**1:05:55 Debra Schwartz:** Because there's such warmth and creativity and it's so natural. I don't know, there's just an ambiance that you just feel at home when you walk in.

**1:06:08 David Freiberg:** Yeah, I know I do. [chuckles] I'm glad you do, too.

**1:06:11 Debra Schwartz:** And with all the beautiful trees.

**1:06:13 David Freiberg:** Oh, it's a great place.

**1:06:15 Debra Schwartz:** And she's quite a singer in her own right, then.

**1:06:17 David Freiberg:** She's really a good singer, yeah.

**1:06:19 Debra Schwartz:** Do you perform together ever?

**1:06:21 David Freiberg:** Occasionally. She had her own band and I went and got into it, but somehow it always turned into Quicksilver, and it was kind of annoying.

**1:06:39 Debra Schwartz:** Let's talk a little bit about your family 'cause not all rock 'n' rollers or musicians who travel a lot and have such opportunities for girls and all kinds of cool stuff, not all of them actually have families that work out, in terms of love and domesticity.

**1:07:01 David Freiberg:** I'm always like that. I mean, my first wife disappeared after I got out here more or less. The girl I had during Quicksilver — I married Julia, but her name was Girl. Her nickname was Girl 'cause she had five brothers. So she was always called Girl. That's a funny story. We got married because she was underage and she was my friend, but I think the court said something like that if she wasn't married, she had to go back to high school, and she did not wanna go back to Tam High. And I said, "Okay, I'll marry you if you just wanna, you know." [chuckles] So we got married, and that's how it started, but we did have a kid together.

**1:08:12 Debra Schwartz:** Your child.

**1:08:13 David Freiberg:** My first child, Jessica. She was a wonderful person. She is a wonderful person, but she loved to travel for the joy of traveling and I didn't. I'd go if I could play, if I had a gig, I love that. But she would go take round the world trip by herself, just meeting people, and so that's who she was, and probably still is, still is. So, we had it kind of like, "Okay, we're together now, now we're not. Now we're together, now we're not." I mean, I went through the thing and I did have a lot of girlfriends.

**1:09:12 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, nothing sexier than a rock 'n' roll musician back then.

**1:09:19 David Freiberg:** So it seemed. [chuckles] I couldn't see it myself.

**1:09:23 Debra Schwartz:** Really, that's interesting.

**1:09:26 David Freiberg:** But it seemed like that, yeah.

**1:09:28 Debra Schwartz:** I mean, they've made movies about groupies.

**1:09:35 David Freiberg:** And so Girl is now Julia. She's married, been married to the same guy for a long time. He's Joe Satriani's manager. And he used to work for Bill Graham. He's Mick, and she's Julia Brigden now. We're still friends.

**1:09:55 Debra Schwartz:** Bill Graham?

**1:09:57 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:09:57 Debra Schwartz:** Were you close friends with him?

**1:10:00 David Freiberg:** Well, I'd say I was friendly with him. I could call him up and he'd take my call. [chuckles]

**1:10:11 Debra Schwartz:** I saw in an interview where you described that he was thinking about having a place for retired rock 'n' roll musicians.

**1:10:18 David Freiberg:** [chuckles] It's what he always told us.

**1:10:20 Debra Schwartz:** What did he say?

**1:10:21 David Freiberg:** He says, "You guys are just gonna go through that, go through your money." He says, "I know I'm gonna have to have a home for old rock 'n' roll old guys, so I'll take care of you guys when you're old." Then he went and got killed.

**1:10:35 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah.

**1:10:36 David Freiberg:** Ruined the whole thing.

**1:10:36 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, he could have just used his own, very own compound for you.

**1:10:42 David Freiberg:** Oh yeah.

**1:10:43 Debra Schwartz:** Okay, so then that's three marriages in total for you?

**1:10:50 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:10:52 Debra Schwartz:** Do you have other children as well, besides Jessica?

**1:10:57 David Freiberg:** Yes, I have one. It was Polly, my oldest one. I never married her mom, so. And she came to live with me when she was in high school.

**1:11:12 Debra Schwartz:** Now, you're 80 years old?

**1:11:15 David Freiberg:** Yep, I am.

**1:11:18 Debra Schwartz:** You look fabulous.

**1:11:19 David Freiberg:** Aww, thanks.

**1:11:20 Debra Schwartz:** But you're touring.

**1:11:22 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:11:22 Debra Schwartz:** For a man that doesn't really like to travel —

**1:11:25 David Freiberg:** I just got back from New Zealand.

**1:11:26 Debra Schwartz:** You're just back from the New Zealand and you're touring. Did you ever imagine yourself touring at 80 years old when you were a younger man?

**1:11:34 David Freiberg:** I couldn't imagine me even being 40 years old, but there you were.

**1:11:40 Debra Schwartz:** Do you not have to worry about your pot like you used to back in the day?

**1:11:44 David Freiberg:** I don't really smoke pot anymore.

**1:11:45 Debra Schwartz:** No more? When did you give that up?

**1:11:47 David Freiberg:** I don't not smoke it, but around 1983 or '4, I think, it seemed like it stopped working for me. It always made me wanna play music and really get into music and it stopped doing that. It seemed to stop me from doing it, actually, so I didn't see much point in spending a lot of money on it. I just stopped, but I still love the smell of it and I'm certainly not against it. Most of my friends do smoke pot, so very occasionally I'll grab a hit, so I just can't say that I don't smoke pot.

**1:12:34 Debra Schwartz:** My friends are musicians. They travel a lot. They're like the gypsies, traveling gypsies. Traveling can take a lot out of you. You're going to different time zones.

**1:12:44 David Freiberg:** Yeah. We don't have much going on. I think we have a show in a week or so, a one-off in Ohio.

**1:12:52 Debra Schwartz:** Do you enjoy performing on stage now?

**1:12:54 David Freiberg:** Mm-hmm. I love playing with these guys that I'm with.

**1:12:57 Debra Schwartz:** And who are you with now?

**1:12:58 David Freiberg:** That's in the band now? Chris Smith.

**1:13:01 Debra Schwartz:** Amazing.

**1:13:02 David Freiberg:** Well, he's my son-in-law.

**1:13:05 Debra Schwartz:** Oh my God.

**1:13:06 David Freiberg:** He married Polly, you see.

**1:13:07 Debra Schwartz:** Yes.

**1:13:11 David Freiberg:** But I played with him for years before, and all of a sudden, they met and "Oops." And Cathy Richardson, the lead singer, who's just killer but she lives in Chicago, so I only get to see her when I go on the road mostly. And Donny Baldwin who was playing with Jefferson Starship when I left and went on and played in Starship without the Jefferson. He stopped and he came back with them right about just after I rejoined, and Paul too, so he's been with us for a long time. And Jude Gold is the latest lead guitarist.

**1:13:56 Debra Schwartz:** Do you miss Paul Kantner and your friends?

**1:14:00 David Freiberg:** I do.

**1:14:00 Debra Schwartz:** How many of your friends have you lost along the way?

**1:14:02 David Freiberg:** Tons.

**1:14:04 Debra Schwartz:** Janis?

**1:14:05 David Freiberg:** Janis and Jimmy Murray is gone and John Cipollina is gone. Nicky Hopkins is gone. Jerry Garcia is gone. And Marty now. Paul. That's the curse of living. That's the curse of getting old. Some people drop off.

**1:14:32 Debra Schwartz:** If you had to do it again, would you do anything differently?

**1:14:36 David Freiberg:** I don't think so. Knowing what I know now, of course, I would but you don't.

**1:14:44 Debra Schwartz:** No? [chuckles]

**1:14:45 David Freiberg:** This is how you know what you know now. It's by screwing up. [laughs]

**1:14:49 Debra Schwartz:** But you are on tour now. You're still a performing musician.

**1:14:52 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:14:53 Debra Schwartz:** Do you think that you're stronger for your experience when you're out there? Did the audiences change? Did your relationship with the audience change at this point in your life?

**1:15:05 David Freiberg:** It seems to be getting better for me, but I don't know. It could be just the novelty that this guy's 80 years old [laughs] and he's still able to stand up there and scream, so I don't know.

**1:15:18 Debra Schwartz:** How about the amplification? Something I've been learning about in my interview with musicians is the damage that comes over time to be in exposure to loud noise. Is that ever a concern for you?

**1:15:31 David Freiberg:** Yeah. Well, I'm almost surprised that you can't hear the ringing in my ears.

[laughter]

**1:15:38 Debra Schwartz:** That loud.

**1:15:39 David Freiberg:** You always stick it up close to the mike. [laughs] No, but I do have a lot of tinnitus right now. I have since the 1970s probably. And it seems like it came mostly from standing close to the cymbals rather than loud amps.

**1:16:01 Debra Schwartz:** Amplification has changed and been refined and improved.

**1:16:07 David Freiberg:** Well now, on stage, when we go out there, I play through one amp but never turn it up very loud. And our lead guitarist plays through two Deluxe Reverbs which are just teeny studio amps, but they're miked and so they can be as loud in the house as you want them to be but they aren't so loud on stage that they drown out the vocal mikes and things.

**1:16:36 Debra Schwartz:** I see. Can you think back to your career?

**1:16:42 David Freiberg:** Plus, a lot of people wear the in-ear monitors which can save your hearing if you haven't lost it already, because they block out everything. It's there so you can get a very even balance of what you wanna hear so you won't get killed. They

actually can protect your ears. I don't know how many people actually do that but it can be done.

**1:17:11 Debra Schwartz:** I've heard that, Bill Champlin told me that it disrupted the sound. He couldn't quite hear things as easily.

**1:17:17 David Freiberg:** He didn't have the bass cut off.

**1:17:21 Debra Schwartz:** So he doesn't wear them.

**1:17:23 David Freiberg:** I wear one. I'm the only one in the band that wears them. So, my right ear can actually hear. Actually, I put my guitar in my right ear so that I don't have to turn it up real loud on the stage.

**1:17:39 Debra Schwartz:** I see. Yeah.

**1:17:41 David Freiberg:** That's manageable for the sound guys, but I can hear myself as much as I need to. And then my left ear has a speaker on these days.

**1:17:55 Debra Schwartz:** If you look back into the expanse of your career and you think, "Yeah, it's been a while," you've had a lot of performances in your life, you've been with some amazing musicians, you've really had an amazing career, people dream about having the kind of career that you've had, is there a particular night that stands out or a particular moment?

**1:18:27 David Freiberg:** Not one.

**1:18:28 Debra Schwartz:** Well, a few then.

**1:18:33 David Freiberg:** Most of the things that really stand out are things like playing at Monterey Pop, but that was mostly for all the people I got to hear close up. Otis Redding, I got to hear Otis Redding do this great set and I was just standing on the stage with my elbow on the bass player's amp listening to that one. I was on the stage, I don't know, not 20 feet away from Jimi Hendrix when he did this big thing and he burned his guitar on-stage. And The Who.

**1:19:13 Debra Schwartz:** How about Janis Joplin's performance.

**1:19:14 David Freiberg:** And Janis Joplin. Well, I heard both her performances, the one that was filmed and the one that wasn't. Yeah, her performance was great. Actually, it's probably one of her better performances she ever managed to pull off. But she was great.

**1:19:32 Debra Schwartz:** Interesting. It's beautiful that you say that your most memorable moments are you're experiencing the performances of other great musicians.

**1:19:44 David Freiberg:** I guess, but there were some really good ones playing, too.

**1:19:48 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, of course.

**1:19:49 David Freiberg:** Bunch of them with Quicksilver that were good. There were a lot insane ones. And a bunch with Jefferson Starship, too. Actually, we had a great time in New Zealand.

**1:20:10 Debra Schwartz:** Just this last —

**1:20:12 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:20:12 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, I saw on Facebook. It looked great. There's going to be a time though, when you segue from this stage to the next and you'll have friends already there for you, Marty and John and others. Yes, it's a metaphor.

**1:20:27 David Freiberg:** I don't know. I'll find out what that's like.

**1:20:29 Debra Schwartz:** If that happens, what will you say? Do you see yourself playing music through all eternity?

**1:20:41 David Freiberg:** I hope so. God, that would be wonderful but I won't know about it till I get there. I wouldn't know about this till I got here.

**1:20:53 Debra Schwartz:** Why don't we venture away from realms of possibility and return to realms of the past? Tell me about your time in Homestead Valley.

**1:21:02 David Freiberg:** Well see, I was working for that foreign freight forwarding company in the city because I got busted the first time. And so I drove. I just commuted from this little room underneath somebody's kitchen. I don't know whether it really was illegal but it —

**1:21:33 Debra Schwartz:** Felt that way.

**1:21:34 David Freiberg:** Felt like it could be. But it was nice. Actually, I think it was the place Dino Valenti was staying.

**1:21:45 Debra Schwartz:** You mean the house, the larger house?

**1:21:47 David Freiberg:** No, no. The room was where he was staying. I'm remembering more details now. I could get that if I watched his dog named Mondo who was a Great Dane.

**1:22:03 Debra Schwartz:** Great big dog.

**1:22:04 David Freiberg:** Great big dog.



**1:22:04 Debra Schwartz:** So if you would be the dog sitter, you'd get his —

**1:22:07 David Freiberg:** Yeah, I could leave him there all day. It was okay, apparently. I'm trying to remember the details of that, how I got to work and come back.

**1:22:16 Debra Schwartz:** So you're a commuter, you're a working stiff.

**1:22:18 David Freiberg:** I was commuting to the city, yeah. And all of a sudden, a guy showed up from New York who said he was Dino's bass player and he's supposed to take this place.

**1:22:33 Debra Schwartz:** This is your mooch.

**1:22:35 David Freiberg:** Yes. So I said, "Well, okay. As soon as I find a place, you can have it." So I found a place in San Quentin Village.

**1:22:45 Debra Schwartz:** So what was it like in Mill Valley? What was the ambiance of the town for you? What was it that you appreciated about it or didn't appreciate?

**1:22:55 David Freiberg:** It was quiet.

**1:22:56 Debra Schwartz:** It was a quiet town then?

**1:22:58 David Freiberg:** It was a real country. It was just out in the redwoods, really.

**1:23:04 Debra Schwartz:** Are you a hiker?

**1:23:08 David Freiberg:** Not really. I'm a walker. I like to walk but I don't think I did much hiking then. Actually, I think all I did was about the same. I'd go to work and then get back and play the guitar. [laughs]

**1:23:28 Debra Schwartz:** Go to bed. Wake up. Go to work. Come home. Play the guitar.

**1:23:31 David Freiberg:** Yeah. And it was the same after. His name was Bobby Collins, I think, the guy that came out. It turns out he wasn't Dino's bass player. I don't think he ever did play bass with Dino but, whatever.

**1:23:48 Debra Schwartz:** What were the places you hung out in town?

**1:23:49 David Freiberg:** It was actually nice. It was actually nicer, San Quentin Village with the view of the bridge and everything.

**1:23:55 Debra Schwartz:** What was it like in Mill Valley at the time? It's nice to remember the old spots. When you weren't working or playing the guitar, did you get out?

**1:24:02 David Freiberg:** Sonapa Farms.

**1:24:04 Debra Schwartz:** Sonapa Farms. Let's talk about Sonapa Farms.

**1:24:08 David Freiberg:** Village Music, of course.

**1:24:08 Debra Schwartz:** Village Music, yes, across the street from Sonapa Farms.

**1:24:11 David Freiberg:** More or less, yeah. I don't know. What else was there? I don't know.

**1:24:18 Debra Schwartz:** This is what year again? There were four hardware stores, at least in the late '70s, downtown.

**1:24:29 David Freiberg:** It had to be, '64, '65 — '65 probably.

**1:24:33 Debra Schwartz:** What was the general demographic of the town, do you recall?

**1:24:42 David Freiberg:** Well, there was John Cipollina and his family, and Gino Cipollina, the big real estate tycoon. [chuckles] up on Shady Lane.

**1:24:53 Debra Schwartz:** Their house is still there, the Cipollina house.

**1:24:56 David Freiberg:** West Blithedale Canyon, yeah. I'm sure it is. I haven't talked to Antonia for a while, but is she still there, I don't know? Actually, it was right down the street from there, on Eldridge, where Girl and I got our house, we rented the house there.

**1:25:25 Debra Schwartz:** Oh really? Which house was it?

**1:25:27 David Freiberg:** After Jessica was born in '67.

**1:25:31 Debra Schwartz:** What house is that? Do you remember? What street? Was it between Cottage and King? Or King and Shady?

**1:25:41 David Freiberg:** I don't remember the address. It was before King Street — after King Street, then you go around and get to Shady Lane.

**1:25:51 Debra Schwartz:** So Eldridge, in that area.

**1:25:52 David Freiberg:** It was right at a corner where a road that went up. It was past where Hiyakawa used to live, but I don't remember the actual address.

**1:26:05 Debra Schwartz:** Did you live next —

**1:26:07 David Freiberg:** It was just, maybe, a two-bedroom, but the second bedroom was down kinda underneath it, and it had a nice kitchen, and a lot of giant bamboo outside.

**1:26:23 Debra Schwartz:** Well, you had access to Blithedale Bridge right there from your house, because you could walk down West Blithedale to where Ralston meets Blithedale, and there's the Fire Road there. Or the old railroad grade.

**1:26:37 David Freiberg:** Yeah. I had access, but I didn't use it. [chuckles] But that was nice. But then, the landlord who lived up the street said she wanted to sell and offered it to us for some ridiculous — I mean, if you think about it now.

**1:26:58 Debra Schwartz:** Must hurt just to think about it.

**1:27:00 David Freiberg:** \$22,000 or something like that. [chuckles]

**1:27:02 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, opportunities lost.

**1:27:04 David Freiberg:** I didn't get it because I would have had to borrow the down payment, and I didn't want to borrow a down payment.

**1:27:10 Debra Schwartz:** And now it sells for \$2 million.

**1:27:11 David Freiberg:** I think there're two houses there now because there was an extra lot.

**1:27:16 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, ouch.

**1:27:20 David Freiberg:** If I had bought it and I just held on to it, I could've just retired. [chuckles]

**1:27:25 Debra Schwartz:** And we would have been denied all that wonderful music. Did you go to any of the local restaurants or bars?

**1:27:37 David Freiberg:** I'm not a bar person normally. So, I doubt that I went. I'm trying to think of a bar, other than the 2 AM club. I don't know. But that was always there, wasn't it?

**1:27:54 Debra Schwartz:** Since the beginning of the earth. How about some of the people you remember at Mill Valley?

**1:28:02 David Freiberg:** Charlie Deal?

**1:28:03 Debra Schwartz:** Everybody remembers Charlie Deal.

**1:28:05 David Freiberg:** Ol' Toilet Seat Charlie.

**1:28:25 Debra Schwartz:** Did you use to visit Marty Balin when he lived in his house on Blithedale?

**1:28:31 David Freiberg:** Yeah, I went by there a couple of times, a few times. One was when I was writing "Jane." That's his, the Jane part. Just Jane, 'cause I was just calling it "Girl," and I didn't wanna do that 'cause that would make everybody think it was Girl, and it kind of was. It was about some stuff that we had gone through, but we made it a more generic, love song. It was about a girl who was running around. And I said that I really shouldn't call this "Girl," should I? And he said, "No." He said that maybe I should change it to "Jane Doe: to protect the innocent, or guilty, as the case may be.

**1:29:27 Debra Schwartz:** So, that's how —

**1:29:29 David Freiberg:** That's how it got named, actually.

**1:29:35 Debra Schwartz:** Interesting.

**1:29:37 David Freiberg:** That was after the song was completely done.

**1:29:39 Debra Schwartz:** So, did you use to hang out?

**1:29:40 David Freiberg:** "Jane" does sing a little better than "Girl, girl, girl, girl." I don't know.

**1:29:45 Debra Schwartz:** I think it's perfect the way it's performed now.

**1:29:47 David Freiberg:** Yeah, I think Jane worked.

**1:29:49 Debra Schwartz:** Yes, it did. So you missed the onslaught of musicians that moved in later.

**1:30:03 David Freiberg:** Yeah, 'cause I was out of there by '68.

**1:30:07 Debra Schwartz:** And that's when others were entering, at that time.

**1:30:09 David Freiberg:** I think I moved over to some place in Tam Valley, back in the hills, back of Tam Valley, but which I don't remember the name of that street.

**1:30:19 Debra Schwartz:** Marin Avenue, up above?

**1:30:21 David Freiberg:** Yeah, up above. I don't know.

**1:30:25 Debra Schwartz:** Who were your friends in Mill Valley at that time, I mean people that you would have associated with?

**1:30:31 David Freiberg:** It was all the band.

**1:30:34 Debra Schwartz:** All music?

**1:30:35 David Freiberg:** The Cipollinas, yeah. Duncan lived there too. Dino was there. Quicksilver lived in Mill Valley, at the house down, just down the street there.

**1:31:01 Debra Schwartz:** Cascade?

**1:31:03 David Freiberg:** No, no, no. Practically right downtown. There's where all the shops end. And then there was a street that went back.

**1:31:19 Debra Schwartz:** Yeah, Ethel. Or not Ethel, but that one little short street.

**1:31:22 David Freiberg:** It's just a very short street, where then the steps started.

**1:31:27 Debra Schwartz:** Oh.

**1:31:27 David Freiberg:** You know what I'm —

**1:31:28 Debra Schwartz:** The Dipsea stairs?

**1:31:29 David Freiberg:** Yeah, the Dipsea stairs. Right at the end of the Dipsea stairs there was a house back there, behind what was kind of like a restaurant. I don't remember what the name of it was at that point.

**1:31:40 Debra Schwartz:** There was a restaurant up there, if you were going up the Dipsea stairs all three flights?

**1:31:43 David Freiberg:** It was at the bottom. It was on Foghorn, right after Foghorn.

**1:31:47 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, there was a restaurant. Oh, you mean the one that burned down eventually?

**1:31:52 David Freiberg:** It did, probably.

**1:31:53 Debra Schwartz:** There was a —

**1:31:53 David Freiberg:** There was an old house back there that Quicksilver lived in, and was impossible. The police were always there looking for runaways, and when we were trying to practice there, it was really ridiculous.

**1:32:05 Debra Schwartz:** So, the band's living there. And why are there runaways there?

**1:32:12 David Freiberg:** Well, one of them was Julia. [chuckles]

**1:32:16 Debra Schwartz:** The girl you married.

**1:32:19 David Freiberg:** I think I'd married her already, so she really wasn't a runaway. [chuckles]

**1:32:23 Debra Schwartz:** So was that a time when a young person could go hunt for their favorite band, and then go live with them, if they wanted? Was there something like that going on?

**1:32:37 David Freiberg:** More than if they wanted. Somebody else would have to want it too. [chuckles] I don't know, it was a little crazy and too public. You couldn't get away with living right there. Our manager said, "What do you want?" And I said, "Well we want to live on a farm with a barn we can practice in." And boom, he found a place in Olema. It was an old dairy farm where we could practice out in the barn where the milking room was.

[laughter]

**1:33:14 Debra Schwartz:** And away from downtown Mill Valley.

**1:33:19 David Freiberg:** Then we found out that that wouldn't work either. That was like '66, and by '67 we realized any time we had a gig we have to pile all the stuff in this Volkswagen bus and drive all the way to the city, and then drive all the way back out there again. And all our gigs were like at the Fillmore, Avalon —

**1:33:40 Debra Schwartz:** And gosh knows —

**1:33:42 David Freiberg:** So we had to move to the city for '67.

**1:33:45 Debra Schwartz:** For '67 you actually lived in the city.

**1:33:48 David Freiberg:** Yeah, 20th and Diamond for me and Gary Duncan. And Greg Elmore lived at 20th and Diamond. John and Jimmy had a place down at the bottom of the hill till Jimmy moved to Hawaii.

**1:34:02 Debra Schwartz:** Interesting.

**1:34:06 David Freiberg:** And then it was the Summer of Love and all of people looking for hippies moved in, and we had to get back out again. [laughs] So then we moved to Eldridge.

**1:34:17 Debra Schwartz:** I see.

**1:34:20 David Freiberg:** Julia and I moved to Eldridge and then something happened and she left, and I moved here. She went on one of her trips, with Jessica, my daughter, and I moved back to — where was that, Tam?

**1:34:46 Debra Schwartz:** Over in Tam Valley? That place you're talking about up in the hills?

**1:34:50 David Freiberg:** Yeah, over in Tam Valley. I think after that I moved out to San Geronimo.

**1:35:06 Debra Schwartz:** Now you live in Novato.

**1:35:08 David Freiberg:** Yeah. I moved there in 1970, that house.

**1:35:12 Debra Schwartz:** Well, at least you got that affordable —

**1:35:14 David Freiberg:** The price will kill you there, too: 36.5 for that house.

**1:35:21 Debra Schwartz:** Oh, I did wanna ask you about your time at the San Quintin Village. Who were your neighbors there?

**1:35:30 David Freiberg:** I have no idea.

**1:35:31 Debra Schwartz:** You never —

**1:35:32 David Freiberg:** I never talked to them.

**1:35:35 Debra Schwartz:** Did it bother you?

**1:35:35 David Freiberg:** I really wasn't there that long. It was probably four months before they came and arrested me.

**1:35:45 Debra Schwartz:** They came and set you up.

**1:35:46 David Freiberg:** Set me up.

[laughter]

**1:35:48 David Freiberg:** And then it was anybody's floor that was available for a while.

**1:35:53 Debra Schwartz:** Did you ever mind being a couch surfer?

**1:35:58 David Freiberg:** Eh, it wasn't the pleasantest thing. But it was okay.

**1:36:02 Debra Schwartz:** Okay, when you're younger, huh?

**1:36:05 David Freiberg:** I don't think I'd want it now. Sometimes it wasn't even a couch and I was a floor surfer. [chuckles]

**1:36:13 Debra Schwartz:** Do you remember Prune Music?

**1:36:15 David Freiberg:** Sure.

**1:36:15 Debra Schwartz:** In Mill Valley?

**1:36:16 David Freiberg:** Kinda, yeah.

**1:36:18 Debra Schwartz:** The music store? Before we close the Mill Valley chapter, is there anybody else that you can think of in town that will help us remember that era or something about the town that stood out to you?

**1:36:41 David Freiberg:** I remember just loving back when we first moved over there, that you could drive to the top of Mt. Tam and there'd be an open rest room.

[laughter]

**1:36:51 Debra Schwartz:** That is important.

**1:36:52 David Freiberg:** I mean we actually spent a lot of time just sitting up at Mt. Tam, all night. Before somebody ruined it, I don't know. So they had to close it.

**1:37:05 Debra Schwartz:** You mean, they closed the gate?

**1:37:08 David Freiberg:** Yeah.

**1:37:09 Debra Schwartz:** Back then you didn't have —

**1:37:09 David Freiberg:** It was just open.

**1:37:10 Debra Schwartz:** Really, there was no gate that closed at sunset?

**1:37:12 David Freiberg:** It didn't close at sunset, no. Why would they close it? What are people gonna do? People went and took LSD up there, that's what the people would do, and that's why they stopped it.

**1:37:26 Debra Schwartz:** I see.

**1:37:27 David Freiberg:** I think so, 'cause that's what we did, but we didn't cause any trouble.



**1:37:31 Debra Schwartz:** Interesting. I just interviewed Pat Williams who is the inn-keeper at the West Point Inn, but he was the lookout up there on Mt. Tam. He talked a little bit about that, the hippy kids moving in and doing LSD on the mountain.

**1:37:46 David Freiberg:** I guess we were the first.

**1:37:48 Debra Schwartz:** Was he talking about you?

**1:37:51 David Freiberg:** I don't think he would have noticed us. That was why we were living in Olema. I remember once when we drove up the back way, and it was really foggy and drizzly down there, as soon as we got up to the top of the mountain, it was clear and warm, and I think it was a full moon or something like that, it was a special one. We watched the sun go down back there, and then moon came up, and then we just sat there until it was reversed. It was gorgeous.

**1:38:24 Debra Schwartz:** Has nature ever inspired you in your writing or your work?

**1:38:28 David Freiberg:** Probably. I can't quite think of how. It's kind of like, "Can you hear it in the morning, sings the golden sun? Life's song is moving ever onward from and to the sound of one." I know that was Marin County that brought that out, although I wrote it in San Francisco.

**1:38:56 Debra Schwartz:** What song is that?

**1:38:57 David Freiberg:** "The Fool."

**1:38:58 Debra Schwartz:** "The Fool." Yeah. Well, maybe Mt. Tam did its magic in silent ways.

**1:39:06 David Freiberg:** I'm sure. It was an interesting night.

**1:39:11 Debra Schwartz:** Is there anything we haven't talked about in this interview that you'd like to say? Anything we've missed at all?

**1:39:23 David Freiberg:** There's a bunch of stuff, but I can't think of what it is.

**1:39:27 Debra Schwartz:** What would you say to somebody, a young musician trying to come up in the world, the world that we live in today? Any pearls of wisdom you can share with young musicians?

**1:39:43 David Freiberg:** I'd say enjoy it. Learn to enjoy practicing. If you can't learn to enjoy playing things over and over again 'til you get them right — it's gotta be fun to play, gotta be fun to play and practice. It's like, if you wanna be a really good guitar player, you have to live with that guitar. And to be a really great guitar player, you're

gonna have to want to live with your guitar. It's not a job. You have to love it, and all the really great guitarists I know are always playing. They can't be away from their guitar.

**1:40:25 Debra Schwartz:** Even if their only audience is the San Rafael-Richmond Bridge?

**1:40:30 David Freiberg:** True. Even if you don't have an amplifier and all you have is your electric guitar, you're still gonna be playing.

**1:40:42 Debra Schwartz:** Duly noted.

**1:40:45 David Freiberg:** I think that's it. If you're gonna be a singer, you gotta be singing.

**1:40:50 Debra Schwartz:** I think those are good words to live by.

**1:40:54 David Freiberg:** And you gotta love it or there's no point in it.

**1:41:00 Debra Schwartz:** Well, thank you so much for sharing your history with me, for sharing your passion, because obviously you have a great love of music and that's been a driving force for you. And thanks for sharing the memories of the amazing times you've had here in the Bay Area and beyond with such wonderful people, and great musicians and your lovely family as well.

**1:41:21 David Freiberg:** Thank you.

**1:41:23 Debra Schwartz:** I really appreciate you taking the time to come here into the rubber room of the Mill Valley Public Library.

**1:41:28 David Freiberg:** It's a nice rubber room.

**1:41:30 Debra Schwartz:** Thank you. We like it. And so, I think we can conclude this oral history.

**1:41:36 David Freiberg:** Well, thank you.

**1:41:37 Debra Schwartz:** On behalf of the Mill Valley Public Library and the Mill Valley Historical Society, I extend my hand in appreciation. Wonderful, David Freiberg. And that concludes our interview.

**1:41:52 David Freiberg:** Thank you.

**1:41:53 Debra Schwartz:** Thank you.