

Tuesday, March 18, 2002, the day before the war at Border's Cafe with Bob Hall

BOB: ** into the Catalyst and I saw you sitting over at a table with your, what looked like love beads and a tie-dye shirt or something and I walked over and I said, "Hmm. You must be a student at UCSC." And you said to me, "No, I'm a professor of mathematics." And I did a double-take, like I did with my sister-in-law, Linda Berman, at that time, who attracted my attention and I met her before Charlie did, I think, my brother. And we got into a conversation which had to do with Taro or something wild, and come to find out later that Linda was a candidate for a Ph.D. at Princeton University, the first woman to get a musicology...and when she met my brother it just changed the chemistry of our whole family. My mom played the piano also and so there was a tie there and everybody appreciated the idea of having a Ph.D. and the Hall family was quite excited.

Ralph: Let's go back a little bit before that and just think about where you were when the Hip Pocket Bookstore opened up, and that was some earlier I think.

Yeah, it was about the time Santa Cruz was enjoying, or suffering, the fallout from the Haight Ashbury in San Francisco, when a lot of the communes and collectives were forming here in Santa Cruz, people getting away from the hard drugs that had entered the picture up there. Sometime in that general period Santa Cruz became a hotbed for hippies. Not the Beat generation, but real hardcore

flower children and love *

R: Who were the first hippies that you actually met, people that you knew?

You! [laughs]

R: No, before that.

You know, I don't know. I didn't think of them as hippies then. I just thought of them as flower children.

Peter: What can you tell us about the barn?

Oh, the old barn out in Scotts Valley? That was a fabulous place! I went out there only a few times, but the doctor who did the gold tooth for Ken Kesey--Doctor Smith--he was doing the slides for psychedelic light shows, and the guy that was operating the machine went to get a drink or something and left me in charge of doing the light show and I was going, "Wow! I can do it!" and I didn't know Dr. Smith that well but he was quite a character I guess. Did you know him? You must have.

P: Yeah, I actually had a tooth extracted by him.

Did you know him?

R: I did, yes.

I never got really acquainted with him, but I had fun that night. Everybody was high and everybody was having a wonderful time.

P: Well how would you say this stuff in the 60s started here in Santa Cruz? How

did it all begin?

Like I said, I kind of think of it in connection with the fallout of the Haight Ashbury. And I was going up there weekends and spending lots of time at the Kool-aid things that were going on in Golden Gate Park and just walking up and down the street, you know, a boy from small-town Santa Cruz, watching the crowds mill up and down Haight from the park to Ashbury Street, and, you know, wondering to myself, "What's going on here?" Going up into the coffee houses with a little place up above where people were smoking dope and finding a crash pad overnight so I could stay for a couple of days up in San Francisco leaving my family here in Santa Cruz to wonder where I was I suppose.

R: So the hip scene in Haight Ashbury was well established before anything got started in Santa Cruz.

To my recollection, yeah.

R: And at that time you had a family with two little children and--

Four. I decided to quit the real estate business and drop out in front of God and everybody here in Santa Cruz and it was a great wonderment to my friends that I had a ponytail and bell-bottom jeans and did the whole nine yards as it were.

R: So was this movement a factor in your dropping out from the real estate business?

No. That came later when my kids started picking up bad

habits at junior high school already, finding packets of this mysterious substance called marijuana in their travels around the campus.

P: Did they just find them here and there?

Well that was the excuse I heard from my daughter Robin. I went into her room that she shared with Holly one day and I saw this baggie on the bed and I said, "That smells like..." and I said to my daughter Robin, my middle daughter, "Why don't you roll one up and we'll see if it's any good." Their mother would have had a fit had she known. But I had smoked it and already done some psychedelics up with John Lingerian up on empire Grade, so I was, you know, I knew the kids would get into it sooner or later anyhow, those "hippie hall kids" the teachers used to call them.

P: I would think that anybody with any curiosity would be interested.

R: So how did this lead to your quitting the real estate business?

I got tired after twelve--no, I was married twelve years. I was in the real estate business about ten years and I--there was just too much family politics, both my mom and my wife, and my dad. My mom wasn't in the business but she * and I was like the knot in a rope in a tug of war between my mom and my wife, you know, I was being pulled apart.

R: So it had nothing to do with your discovering marijuana, psychedelics and so

on. It was just an internal matter of the family?

P: But it freed you up to observe this whole scene, right?

Yeah, it keyed me up and I got so bold I used to do LSD by going up the river to the Garden of Eden or up to the, you know, up the river, because I thought it required more of a contemplative frame of mind, and so I--but I got so bold that I would drop a tab of LSD and come downtown and sit at the old Cooper House and listen to the music. And a few people would come up to me and sit down maybe and say, look at me and get a contact high and say, well, you know, it's no big deal. Here we are on Pacific Avenue listening to Don McCaslin and his Warmth Band and I got rather blase about the whole thing.

R: Tell about the scene at the Lingerman Place--John Lingerman's Place, what was going on there.

Oh, John of the Mountain. He was a real interesting character. I forget how I met him. Maybe through a real estate friend of mine, he had an office on Mission Street where I had lived for a while after I left my family. They were friends, and I guess he came to visit her one day and she introduced me to him. Can't remember her name. And next thing I knew I was traveling up--where did he live up there? Pine Flat Road? You know, not on the main Empire Grade Road but off of it. Smith Grade. And found myself in this little cave covered with a tarp that he and his girlfriend had established their place out of. Very strange. You know, they

just--he had bulldozers because he was a well digger, and caved this place out of the sandstone and invited other people--other people, you know, Zoo and Tosh and Charlie Nothing and Dude and others to join him while his family lived at the bottom of the hill, his wife and two boys, who were partners in his business. So it was quite a scene.

I was sitting in the cave with him--I call it a cave--and we were talking about this and that and the other thing and he turned to his girlfriend. She was a teacher in Santa Cruz and she dropped out along with him. And Lingerman said, "I think Bob is ready." And of course my antennae went up, tweak tweak tweak. And I said, "Yeah, this is a good place, you know, a beautiful place with a view and interest. And so he gave me a tab and I stood by my car for a while, because I thought, "This is not working," you know, "I've got to get back to town, get myself straightened out." And then I got behind the eyeball thing and said, "Oh, I guess I better hang around a while. I can't drive down the hill." And in the meantime, he and his wife said, "Well, you know, we've got to go shopping today, and why don't you just wander around. There are people here and there you can talk to if you want to, or just hang out here." So I did. It was a very interesting day. And since that time I tell people to my own amazement that I never had a bad trip.

R: Yeah, me too.

Really? I mean I've had incidences that I've been able

to manage of paranoia
within the process, but I could always bring myself
down, even when driving a car,
bring myself down to, "Hey, Bob, slow down. Your four
tires are not supposed to be
off the ground. Ground yourself and get home!"

P: Did it give you a sense of excitement or anything
like that here in Santa Cruz
when the Hip Pocket Bookstore opened?

Oh well we were all excited about that. I belonged to
the ACLU and the first board
of directors, we met at Dr. [Hobert] -- the guy in the
wheelchair

R: Yeah, Doug Hobert

And I remember one time we passed around nude
photographs that had been in the Hip
Pocket Bookstore and caused some alarm among the local
evangelical gang, and that
was--we all found them interesting and nothing
exceptional. I mean they were very
artistic pictures, nothing pornographic about them at
all. So then Ron Boise came
through town, I guess he lived here for a while, and
was doing these--

P: My brother was the guy who sold his work stuff in
San Francisco and got busted.

Oh, I remember your brother. So anyway, the upshot of
the statue was that
everybody, you know, after the story in the paper about
this horrible pornographic
adventure in--what was it, steel?

R: Copper

It must have been about 15 feet tall, a big piece.

P: Up on top of the bookstore.

R: Above the entrance.

Right above the entrance to the bookstore. And, you know, first thing anybody would do would be to walk around and--

P: This is a couple, is that right?

Yes, a naked couple--and find out what it was that the Scotts Valley Evangelical people--what offended them was nothing, you know? You couldn't see anything. Here were these two large sculptures of a man and a woman sort of clinging to each other but in no suggestive--I don't remember any suggestion there.

R: Holding hands or something.

Yeah, very innocent thing. That's the story about that. And I used to just wander through the Hip Pocket Bookstore.

P: What happened as a result? This was brought up in court?

No, no, no. Never. They just presented them to our board of directors of the ACLU and we passed them around and that was the end of that. We went on to something else. It wasn't the subject of the meeting at all. But that statue, you know, later on, going to Oakland on the mud flats of the Oakland Estuary, I saw one of his other statues that had been put up there, but I didn't realize how many of them he had made. Do you know?

P: No. The ones my brother was busted for were actually real small. They were Kama Sutra things.

Oh, well I never saw any of those.

R: There are still some of them at the Bhopal Gallery...I saw them there just recently.

I don't remember ever meeting Ron Boise. I know he was around town, but I never had a chance to talk to him. I would have loved to.

R: What about the Odyssey Records and what was going on in there?

Odyssey Records?

R: The record store, it was next to the Hip Pocket Bookstore...Rich Bullock and there was Lou Fein had a booth in there where he delivered astrological readings between the books.

Oh, Lou Fein. He did a reading for me once in his special deck and I bought one of his decks. He was a marvelous guy. Lou Fein. He must have been a good friend of yours and my sister-in-law, because I think she was kind of into that. Huh. Lou was a fine astrologer, maybe one of the best I ever met.

R: Still is, I think. I've seen him recently. He hangs out in Boulder Creek, you know, it's far from here.

You know, I don't know what happened to the deck I bought. It's lost somewhere in storage. He designed it himself, did he? I believe he

did, or had something to do with itt.

P: I spent a winter one time in the end of Long Island with a guy, we would -- there was a lot of hash I remember and I was doing some speed or something. Anyway, he would draw these cards. Well anyway, he did this tarot deck in about a week. *** Maybe sometime I'll find it. I leave things various places.

R: So Bob, were there any other Santa Cruz native people who were involved in this scene like you were?

People going native, maybe, up at the Happy Dell Camp up in Ben Lomond--what was the name of the old camp? Right on the river where people lived at the old resort. The owner gave them the resort to live in. Paradise, that's right, it was. Not Paradise Park, the Masonic Park, but it was--and they went bathing nude in the San Lorenzo and apparently neighbors complained, and Locatelli was on the Board of Supervisors at that time, supervisor of San Lorenzo District, and they forced the owners to close down Camp Paradise. Was that the name?

P: I don't think that's quite right, but it's close.

I only spent a very short time there. I just went in and out, and then it became apparent that these kids were doing dope and swimming naked in the river, my God. Didn't we all swim naked in the San Lorenzo River when we were kids here in Santa Cruz? Well shoot me another question.

R: I'm out of questions. Peter?

And I'm out of answers.

R: No, you're not out of answers, we're just out of questions. We're at sea here.

P: Aside from the Hip Pocket Bookstore, what other sorts of things were--

I was fascinated browsing the shelves. Sometimes we would just take books from there into the Catalyst and read them. They must have lost a lot of books during that period. Peter Demma and Ron Bevert were in the Tom Wolfe story of the Koolaid Acid Test, characters not with their own names, but I knew all the people in that book by their real names here in Santa Cruz--many of them, not all of them. And so, where were we?

P: Yeah, well see they came down once, or something like that, to the bar, didn't they? Didn't they do a performance?

R: They came down to my house once. Parked the bus outside my house on California Street. The Pranksters.

The Pranksters, yeah. I saw them come through Pacific Avenue, right down the main street of Pacific Avenue going south, when they were fleeing the law and trying to get to the Mexican border, and by God with that psychedelic painted bus, onward, they were in and out of Santa Cruz like that. I just happened to be downtown at the time and saw this crazy bus. I don't even think I had read the book by that time but I was aware of the Merry Pranksters. And then they were gone. And they

made it all the way to the border in that bus with the loudspeaker on the front playing loud music. I mean I don't know how they did it. Do you have any idea how they made it to the border without--

P: *** what about music-wise in the 60s. What was going on here?

Well, of course my kids grew up with the Beatles and I wasn't terribly fascinated with them. I am devoted now. I would love to have met John and Yoko and -- but my kids were not old enough at that point to go to concerts or anything, but I -- and I loved the fact that down at the Poet and Patriot the bartender plays the Beatles songs all the time down there, and I'm just picking up on some of the words, you know, to those songs. About ordinary people, like Lovely Rita Meter Maid. Common people. Father Mahaney and Mother McCrary or whoever. You know. They had a common touch that only later began to appeal to me. I thought, well, you know, these are songs for the kids. I was into classical music. I loved Debussy and all the great jazz musicians, the two brothers, uh--you know who I mean, the classical jazz brothers, one did the music and one did the words. What were their names? Yeah, Gershwin.

P: Yeah, Ira, George.

R: So what about Max Hartstein? Did you ever go to his garage for perfect music?

Oh yes. Der Max. Yes. I loved Max. I used to visit his place up in Ben Lomond and hang out there sometimes. He had a musical group too,

didn't he?

R: Yeah. The 25th Century Ensemble. It still is far out in the future.

Well he was living in the present and the future somehow, managing the two very well. Wasn't he a teacher, a music teacher or something at one time?

R: Maybe, yeah, well the first I knew of him he was a professional jazz bass player in a club in San Francisco, one of those jazz clubs in North Beach. And he moved down here from there.

Charlie Nothing also, up at John Lingerma's place. And they played a few times on their musical instruments made of branches of trees and manzanita and strange instruments that they created, and I heard them a couple times in a little cellar bar down at (Keg?) in Capitola, playing there. But Charlie Nothing was also a fine jazz musician out of New York who came to Santa Cruz to drop out I guess. And they played wonderful music and when I was up at the ranch, you know, getting high on acid, I would hear this flute up on top of the hill. And would go up there and this was a real cave, you know, going laterally into the [hill] and I went to the end where there was a little light and a fire and this guy was frying something in a skillet. And I said, "What's cooking?" And he said, "Smoke." He was drying out some marijuana leaves. And that was Charlie Nothing, and I don't know his real name, but he was a fabulous character. And then, you know, he would, they'd make hand-made flutes and if things got boring in their cave

they'd come out and
there'd be this one voice, a flute voice, up on top of
the hill playing down to
another flute or instrument playing in one of the other
spots where they were
located. You know, they all had their own places but
they were separate, one on
top of the mountain and somebody down here close to the
**. One, Morley was his
name, a very fine artist, and I sat in his bus. He had
a converted bus for his
house. And we were sitting in there. He was in the
driver's seat and I was sitting
there, and he brought out one of his pictures. I wish
I'd bought

[end of side A]

My two daughters, Robin and Holly, worked for him
behind the counter and Eddie was
kind of the manager. And I don't think Alan Paddy had a
bar. I think it was
Randall Kane that opened the bar up and that made a big
difference in the
clientele. But they were still very open to people
coming down and playing open
mic style every Thursday I think it was that they set
aside for anybody who wanted
to sign up, literally. And so, you know, the old
Catalyst evolved when they moved
to Pacific Avenue and established their Taj Mahal down
the street here, and it was
fascinating, because my two daughters wanted to work
as--they told Black Eddie
that they wanted to be busboys. They didn't want to do
counter work anymore. And
Eddie said, "Well, okay if you're loose," whatever that
meant. They had a real
scene in there, with some of the looser barmaids, not
including my kids of course.
And then he fired them all. He'd hired so many people

expecting the thing to take off like a burst of light and it didn't. It didn't catch on right away, its new place you know. But he'd over-hired people and then he started firing them. So my two daughters eventually sired Randall because they formed a little local union, you know, it had nothing to do with the big union, but Randall couldn't stand that, so they took him to FEPC, Fair Employment Practices, State Administrative, and they won. Randall said, "This cannot stand," and took them to Federal Court where Randall Kane lost again. Because at the Federal level it becomes something else again, you know. He had to hire a Federal lawyer and probably spent a million dollars busting this handful of people who worked for him. Can you imagine?

R: No. I didn't know this story at all.

And some of us patrons got out in front and picketed. Especially me with my two kids working there, wanting to support the staff who were all decent, nice people. And it didn't take more than a year. I used to go back in the Catalyst, even after that, and one day the bouncer came up to me. He says, "You can't stay here." And an off-duty bartender had just brought me a beer, and I said, "Well you've got to explain this to me. I'm not going to take your word for it." And he went over and consulted with Randall, who was kind of lurking, you know, with his funny eye, like Quasimoto over in the corner, and the guy came back and he said, put his hand on my glass as if to take it away from me. I should have just dropped it. But I didn't want to embarrass my good friend, Roger

Applebee, wonderful friend, who was a bartender. And I left and I didn't go back from a long time. So I call him Citizen Kane. I really liked him at first, I thought he was this great liberal, until he got into union busting. This great liberal who had supported the first Peace & Freedom candidate, actually a democrat from Monterey County where he lived, that ran against Bert Calcott, our six-term Republican Congressman before Leon. Did you know Leon Panetta switched parties to run against Bert Calcott? He was working for the Nixon Administration in one of the Federal departments and opposed Nixon's Southern policies, and lo and behold, yeah, Panetta switched parties to run against Bert Calcott, who was a terrible hawk from Vietnam, you know. He used to brag about "my son the bombardier."

P: Was there much in the way of protests about the Vietnam war here in the 60s?

Oh my, yes.

R: I'm going to have to go now.

Hey, you guys, we'll have to do this again sometime.

R: Yeah, definitely.