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East Bay Regional Park District Oral History Project

Ron Mueller:
East Bay Park District Parkland Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Shanna Farrell
in 2018

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Interview sponsored by the East Bay Regional Park District

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Ron Mueller, 2018
Photo by Shanna Farrell



Ron Mueller
Courtesy of the EBRPD

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The Parkland Oral History Project is funded by the Interpretive and Recreation Services Department of the East Bay Regional Park District, coordinated by Beverly R. Ortiz, Ph.D., EBRPD Cultural Services Coordinator, and supported by staff at all levels of the Park District.

Ron Mueller is an East Bay native and longtime East Bay Regional Park District employee. He grew up in Bollinger Canyon in the 1950s in a ranching community, and his family property was later sold to the district. In this interview, he discusses his early life, family and their history, service in the Navy after high school, returning to the Bay Area and getting hired by the district in 1973, working as a seasonal groundskeeper, becoming a ranger, transitioning to supervisor, specific projects and sites that he worked on throughout his career, sale of his family's property, relationship with other families who also sold their land, retiring in 2010, and reflects on his career with the district.

In 2008, the East Bay Regional Park District interviewed Ron in connection to the history of the Meyers Cottage and Gardens at Dry Creek/Pioneer Regional Parks. As park supervisor, Ron met and came to know two of the three daughters of Henry Meyers, Jeanette and Mildred Meyers (third daughter Edith Meyers had been deceased), who both lived at the Cottage. The three sisters were instrumental in saving their family's estate and land in Union City from freeway development in the 1960s and donated the land to the district. Surviving sisters Jeanette and Mildred lived at the Cottage until their deaths. The interview transcript that focuses on the Meyers family legacy is available through the EBRPD Archives.

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The East Bay Regional Park District Oral History Project

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) is a special regional district that stretches across both Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. First established in 1934 by Alameda County voters, the EBRPD slowly expanded to Contra Costa in 1964 and has continued to grow and preserve the East Bay's most scenic and historically significant parklands. The EBRPD's core mission is to acquire, develop, and maintain diverse and interconnected parklands in order to provide the public with usable natural spaces and to preserve the region's natural and cultural resources.

This oral history project—The East Bay Regional Park District Oral History Project—records and preserves the voices and experiences of formative, retired EBRPD field staff, individuals associated with land use of EBRPD parklands prior to district acquisition, and individuals who continue to use parklands for agriculture and ranching.

The Oral History Center (OHC) of The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley first engaged in conversations with the EBRPD in the fall of 2016 about the possibility of restarting an oral history project on the parklands. The OHC, previously the Regional Oral History Office, had conducted interviews with EBRPD board members, supervisors and individuals historically associated with the parklands throughout the 1970s and early 2000s. After the completion of a successful pilot project in late 2016, the EBRPD and OHC began a more robust partnership in early 2017 that will result in an expansive collection of interviews.

The interviews in this collection reflect the diverse yet interconnected ecology of individuals and places that have helped shape and define the East Bay Regional Park District and East Bay local history.

Cristina Kim, June 2017

Interview 1: August 1, 2018

01-00:00:01

Farrell: Okay, this is Shanna Farrell with Ron Mueller on Wednesday, August 1, 2018. This is an interview for the East Bay Regional Park District Park Lands Oral History Project. We are in San Ramon, California. Ron, can you start by telling me where and when you were born, and a little bit about your early life?

01-00:00:23

Mueller: I was born in Oakland, on December 31, 1950, so I was a New Year's baby. We lived in Hayward for about two years. My grandparents had a fairly large house there that they had bought, and there was an apartment upstairs, and so my mom and dad, when they got married, they lived in the apartment. Up until I was a little over two years old, that's where we lived. My grandfather and his brothers had purchased a lot of this property here in Bollinger Canyon in 1930, and then eventually they split it up into five separate ranches. My grandparents had four kids, two girls and two boys, and they eventually gave each of them about one to two acres of property to build a house on if they decided they'd like to live out here. It was around 1952 is when my mom and dad had this house built. My dad's cousin was a carpenter, and so he went and built it for him, and it was in 1953 that we moved from the house in Hayward out here into Bollinger Canyon.

01-00:01:41

Farrell: Were your grandparents—or your grandfather—was he from this part of California?

01-00:01:48

Mueller: No, he was originally from Germany.

01-00:01:50

Farrell: Do you have a sense of when he immigrated here?

01-00:01:53

Mueller: I've heard it was in 1912. His older brother and another one of his brothers were the first ones to come to the United States. Then it was around 1912, several months after the *Titanic* sank, him and his brother Otto's wife and their daughter Elsie came over. Then, a little bit after that, there was a fourth brother that came. The youngest brother, Richard, he was still in Germany when the First World War broke out, and so he was in the German Army. I heard he was captured in a POW camp. Then, after the war, he was the last to come to the United States.

01-00:02:37

Farrell: How did they end up in California?

01-00:02:40

Mueller: That I really don't know.

01-00:02:44

Farrell:

Do you have a sense of what their interests in buying the land out here in the 1930s was, or where it came from?

01-00:02:50

Mueller:

Yeah. Originally, this area out here belonged to a man named Robert Dollar. He was owner of the Dollar Steamship Company. I had heard that he wanted to build a house out here, but his wife said this was a little too remote an area for that, so he decided to go ahead and sell the property. My grandfather and his brothers, when they came to the United States, they started a butcher shop. My great-grandfather owned a butcher shop in Germany, and so they were very familiar with the work. I guess it must have been fairly successful, because they made enough money to where they decided it would be nice to buy a large piece of property of their own because back then, in Europe, it was mainly the wealthy and the privileged that owned the land, and not so much the common people. I guess they heard about this property that was for sale and negotiated with Robert Dollar to buy it, and they ended up buying—I think it was over 1,500 acres for about thirty dollars an acre.

01-00:04:00

Farrell:

That's definitely the realization of the American dream.

01-00:04:02

Mueller:

Exactly.

01-00:04:04

Farrell:

What were they using the land for?

01-00:04:06

Mueller:

Mainly it was cattle-grazing. At first, they ran it all together, but with five different brothers, with five different ideas, conflicts arose between what to do, and how to do this, and how to do that. So they eventually split it up into five separate parcels. I heard that they drew straws to decide who would get which parcel. It turned out that it was the exact order from the oldest to the youngest. Otto, who was the oldest, he picked the southernmost parcel. Then my grandfather, Hugo, picked the next parcel. Then Paul got the parcel next to the north of his, and then Kurt, and then Richard, the youngest brother, ended up with the parcel at the end of Bollinger Canyon Road. I don't know if they just happened to draw straws that way, or if there was some horse-trading that went on so that it worked out that way.

01-00:05:04

Farrell:

Were they all using those five parcels for cattle-grazing still, or did they diversify their use?

01-00:05:11

Mueller:

No. They kept grazing it for cattle.

01-00:05:17

Farrell:

Because they had backgrounds in being butchers, did they also still continue to do that, or have a slaughterhouse that they used or anything?

01-00:05:25

Mueller:

They would sell the cattle to the slaughterhouses. They still had the meat business. The business was located in Oakland, and eventually Kurt, Richard, and Paul, I guess, decided they wanted to do other things. My grandfather, Hugo, and Otto bought them out, and then they relocated the business to the Fruitvale district in Oakland. It was still called Muller Brothers back then, and I have some old photos showing the building. They had a fleet of old delivery trucks. They were fairly well-known at the time. This was in the forties and the fifties. Then in the early 1960s, my grandfather and his brother Otto decided it was time to retire, so then they sold the business to someone else. The thing that's kind of interesting is usually the sons follow the fathers into the business. In Germany, they worked for their father, and here in this country, when they had their own business, my dad and my uncle worked for them, along with some of their cousins, in that.

01-00:06:37

Farrell:

That's really interesting. This was also near the Army Nike missile site in the 1950s? Is that right?

01-00:06:47

Mueller:

Yeah, it was around 1955, is when the federal government set up a number of Nike missile sites around the Bay Area. One of the sites that was chosen was here in Bollinger Canyon. In order to make that happen, the Army bought about five to ten acres from my grandfather for officer housing. Right next to it, on Paul's property, they bought some land for the barracks and the mess hall, where the regular soldiers would live. That's now the Las Trampas service yard. Then, across to the north of that, across from Little Hills Ranch, is where the missiles were based at. I remember, as a kid, driving up the road here with my parents. Sometimes you'd see the missiles standing, ready to be fired. I guess after 1960, technology progressed to where the missile system became obsolete, and that's when the government closed most of them down. Up until the Army set up the missile base out here, Bollinger Canyon Road was basically just a one-lane gravel road, and that was from Crow Canyon all the way to the end. But with all the extra traffic and everything coming in and out of the canyon, the Army actually widened the road. If it wasn't for the Nike missile base being out here, this road would probably still be a gravel road, a lot like the Bollinger Canyon Road on the Moraga side is.

01-00:08:34

Farrell:

Do you have any memories of when you were young, of traffic flow changing, or this being more of a heavily trafficked road? Or even the road being built?

01-00:08:43

Mueller:

Well, I remember when the Army built this road. Before that, like I mentioned, it was just a single-lane gravel road, and so cars coming in

opposite directions, someone would have to pull off on the side to let the other car pass. After the Army built the Nike base out here, then there was a lot more traffic. I think it was around 1957 is when they started widening the road.

01-00:09:12

Farrell: Did that interrupt any aspect of the cattle-grazing business?

01-00:09:18

Mueller: No, not really. No.

01-00:09:20

Farrell: So that precipitated the first sale of the family property, is that right?

01-00:09:26

Mueller: Yeah, minor sale. After that—I guess it was later in the 1950s—Paul and his wife, Ella, were going to move back to Germany, because I guess her family owned some type of factory. Unfortunately, it was in East Germany, and then the Russians took it over. They had already sold their property, so they stayed here instead of going back to Germany.

01-00:09:55

Farrell: How old were you when your parents built this property?

01-00:09:59

Mueller: I was a little over two years old.

01-00:10:03

Farrell: What are your memories of growing up in this area, Bollinger Canyon?

01-00:10:06

Mueller: Spending a lot of time with my grandfather.

01-00:10:09

Farrell: Can you tell me about some of your memories of him?

01-00:10:11

Mueller: Yeah. When I was about four years old—and I don't have a real clear memory of this, but my mom told me about it, because they lived right next door, probably less than a quarter of a mile away—he would always come walking over to pick me up. Then I'd go with him and spend the day with him. We'd go out and chop thistles, trim the slash off of trees, because back then, we were trying to create more grazing land for the cattle. Where the trees were fairly dense, my dad and uncle would knock the trees down, and my grandfather would trim all the slash off of them and put it in big piles to burn up in the wintertime. My dad and uncle would cut the trees up into fireplace-length wood and sell it for firewood. A lot of times, I'd be working with him for a couple hours and I'd start getting tired, so I'd tell him, "I'm going to go to grandma's house and get a Coke, and then I'll come back." Well, I got to my grandmother's house and I wouldn't go back. [laughter] Which got him

really upset. I remember other times—because four of his brothers lived here in the canyon, and every once in a while, him and I would walk back to visit with one of his brothers, especially his brother Curt. That’s where Little Hills Ranch is now. The house that he lived in, that was torn down after the Park District bought it, but it was kind of like a two-story house. It had a big walk-in basement, and they lived on the upper floor. In the basement, he had a table there. He had a refrigerator. We’d go sit in the basement. He’d bring out the bottle of schnapps and a couple of beers, and they’d be talking. He had already opened up Little Hills Ranch back then, which basically was a picnic facility that companies could rent for company picnics. He’d give me the keys to the snack stand and tell me, “Why don’t you go over there and get yourself a Coke.” I’d walk over there and get a nice, cold Coke, and then come back and sit with them.

His brother Richard is the only one that didn’t live up here all year round. He kept his house in Oakland. A lot of times, on the weekends and in the summer, he’d be out here on the ranch, and sometimes we’d walk back there and visit with him. Even his brother, Otto, who lived just less than a quarter of a mile away, we would sometimes go and visit with them. The meat business they sold in the early 1960s, so usually on Mondays, they would go to see how things were down at the shop. We’d go into Oakland. We’d stop and visit with my Aunt Charlotte, otherwise known as Lottie. Then we’d go to the shop, and there was a little bar right next door. He’d go into the bar and have a shot, and maybe a beer. We’d go into the sausage kitchen. My dad and uncle were working there. There was a little store out front, and usually I’d get a bag of M&M’s. Then we’d go to his brother Richard’s house and meet with him, and my grandfather would have a couple more shots of schnapps. On the way home, there was a bar in Castro Valley called Cozy, and he always wanted to stop there and get a shot. Usually by the time we got back, he was feeling pretty good. It’s real nice memories.

01-00:14:01

Farrell:

Did your parents have anything to do with working on the land or with cattle-grazing?

01-00:14:07

Mueller:

Yeah, because we ran probably a herd of about fifty to seventy head of cattle. My dad and uncle would take care of the cattle, do the round-ups, and then in the wintertime, we’d supplemental-feed with hay. A lot of times, early in the mornings, especially around Christmas, my dad and uncle would have to go to work fairly early. This was after my grandfather had sold the shop. They went to work for a company called Saag’s. My mom would feed the cattle in the morning. Sometimes my grandfather would help her with that. There was always hauling hay. We’d usually do that in the summertime, from the Tassajara Blackhawk area. We’d start about four o’clock in the morning on a Saturday, and haul hay until about eight o’clock at night. It always seemed

like it was the hottest day of the year when we went and brought the hay in. We'd usually bring in maybe about fifty to sixty tons of hay every year.

01-00:15:28

Farrell: That's a lot of hay. Was that your parents' primary source of income?

01-00:15:34

Mueller: No, no. My dad, like I mentioned, him and my uncle worked for Saag's. They were sausage-makers.

01-00:15:41

Farrell: Okay. I was going to ask about that.

01-00:15:45

Mueller: The cattle, we made a little bit of money, and usually it was enough to pay for the hay, and to pay the property taxes, and that was pretty much about it.

01-00:15:53

Farrell: Okay. But your dad's full-time job was with Saag's?

01-00:15:56

Mueller: Yeah.

01-00:16:01

Farrell: Do you have any siblings?

01-00:16:03

Mueller: Yeah, I have a younger sister.

01-00:16:07

Farrell: Can you tell me what her name is?

01-00:16:08

Mueller: Theresa.

01-00:16:09

Farrell: Theresa. And some of your memories of her growing up?

01-00:16:14

Mueller: We fought a lot when we were younger, like most young kids do, but she was a lot of fun to grow up with.

01-00:16:22

Farrell: Was she involved in any of the ranch duties?

01-00:16:27

Mueller: Yeah, a little bit. When she got older, she had a horse. When we rounded up the cattle, she would ride her horse for that. My dad and I, we would ride in the jeep. We'd put a couple hay bales on back of the jeep, and we'd get the cattle trained to where we'd get on top of Rocky Ridge and start calling. The cattle would all gather around the jeep, and then we'd just drive real slow, dropping little bits of hay all the way down into the corral. Then my sister—

and my cousin, too, she had a horse. They would go ahead and bring up the rear to make sure, if there was any stragglers, to keep them kind of in the main herd.

01-00:17:11

Farrell:

What were some of the things that you did when you got a little bit older on the ranch? Instead of chopping thistle and doing kind of things when you were young, how did your responsibilities grow when you got older?

01-00:17:28

Mueller:

I would help repair and construct new fences, barbed wire fences, and that. If we had a water line break, I'd help with fixing the water line. Any carpentry-type projects that needed to be done, I'd go ahead and help with that. It was kind of like a mixture of everything.

01-00:17:58

Farrell:

You continued this work when you were in high school and everything, too?

01-00:18:00

Mueller:

Oh, yeah.

01-00:18:02

Farrell:

Did you have a job while you were in high school as well?

01-00:18:05

Mueller:

No.

01-00:18:05

Farrell:

Was this kind of considered the way that you pitched in and helped?

01-00:18:08

Mueller:

Yeah. Right.

01-00:18:13

Farrell:

When you were growing up, aside from being involved in the family business and ranch, what were some of the other things that you did for fun?

01-00:18:23

Mueller:

We used to do gold prospecting. Or actually, we owned a couple of claims up in the Big Oak Flat area on the way to Yosemite. Usually, every other weekend, we'd go up there and spend the day up there, looking for gold. Found a little bit, but never enough to pay off or anything.

01-00:18:46

Farrell:

What was that like for you?

01-00:18:47

Mueller:

Oh, it was fun. It was really fun.

01-00:18:49

Farrell:

Did you follow maps and things like that?

01-00:18:52

Mueller:

Not so much, because the claim was about twenty acres. It had been a working gold mine up until the Second World War, and then the government shut down all non-essential industries during the war, so they basically shut down. They had the quartz veins exposed, and the tunnels that went into the hillsides. There was a working mill there. That's where you would take the rock, say, five, six inches in diameter, and it would pulverize it down into sand, and then separate the gold from the sand. We were always looking for the next big bonanza.

01-00:19:39

Farrell:

Did that help you create an appreciation for this area and the history of it?

01-00:19:45

Mueller:

Yeah.

01-00:19:48

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about some of your neighbors? Or was it just mostly family that was up here?

01-00:19:54

Mueller:

This back part of the canyon was all family. Most of the neighbors, I didn't know really well, because there was only probably about five or six houses before ours back then. One of the families we did know good was the Fagundes. They were a Portuguese family. In fact, later on—because he was really involved with hay-growing and that, and it was basically through him that we used to contact the hay farmers out in Tassajara area to go ahead and get hay. Then there was another neighbor. His name was Carl Meyers. I don't know what he did for a living, but he was a real nice guy. After Meyers, it basically was all family. In fact, one time, someone told me they ought to rename this canyon Mueller Canyon.

01-00:21:02

Farrell:

You just described kind of what it was like, but I guess outside of that, do you have a sense if it was mostly a ranching community? Were there any farmers out here?

01-00:21:15

Mueller:

Oh, yeah. San Ramon Valley, when I started elementary school—I guess this was around 1957—there was only about five or six of us in the first-grade class. In San Ramon Valley, basically it was walnut orchards and hay fields between Danville and Dublin. Bishop Ranch, that's known for all the businesses and everything, that's located there now, back then, that was an actual working ranch. I know they had a huge pear orchard there that the pickers would come in and pick the pears, and then afterwards, they'd open it up for the public to come in and harvest what weren't considered commercially viable pears for canning and that. Blackhawk was another working ranch. That was mainly cattle and that, where now it's a fairly affluent community. In the fall, we'd always have the migrant kids that would

come in with their parents to harvest the walnuts in all the different walnut orchards that were scattered around the valley. Most people didn't even know where San Ramon was. I remember, for Halloween, my parents would take us into Hayward for trick-or-treating, because there wasn't anyone living out here. One woman asked us where we came from, because we didn't look familiar. We told her, well, we came from San Ramon. She said, "San Ramon? Where's that at?"

01-00:23:02

Farrell:

Oh, wow. The children that you went to school with, do you have a sense of what their—aside from the migrant workers, or the children of people who were migrant workers—do you have a sense of what their parents did for work? Then can you also tell me where you went to school?

01-00:23:30

Mueller:

The school I went to was called San Ramon Grammar School. It's not there anymore. It's a big Safeway shopping center now. It was located on Crow Canyon Road. The other families that the kids came from that went there, I think they just had regular jobs. I know a defense contractor called Aerojet General, they had a facility in San Ramon back then. Some of their parents worked for Aerojet, but the rest of them just had regular jobs.

01-00:24:07

Farrell:

At this point, when you were around that age, were you starting to see the area change at all?

01-00:24:15

Mueller:

Oh, yeah.

01-00:24:15

Farrell:

I mean, especially the Army is coming and everything. Can you tell me a little bit about how you started to see it change?

01-00:24:23

Mueller:

Started to notice the change around 1960. That's when they started building a lot of the subdivision homes in the valley. On the south side of Danville, they started building to the south. Then Dublin, they started building to the north. When they got to the Alameda-Contra Costa county line, then the development moved into Contra Costa County, which was within the boundaries of the school district that I went to. Once they started building those houses, then we noticed a lot more kids coming into school. I guess it was around 1962—because the school I went to only had three classrooms. It was first through third in one room, and then fourth through sixth in the second room. The third room was seventh through eighth. They ended up having to build two new classrooms, because there were a lot more kids. In fact, we even were on double sessions there for a while, until they got those two new classrooms built. When I graduated from that school in 1965, they were building a brand-new school further to the south, where all the development was occurring. In fact, when I graduated from that school in the

eighth grade, we were the last graduating class out of that school before they closed it down. I think there was something like about twenty of us, which nowadays, that's nothing. But back then, starting in a first-grade class with five kids, and graduating in an eighth-grade class of twenty kids, that was quite an increase.

01-00:26:16

Farrell:

Yeah, that's a lot of growth in a short amount of time.

01-00:26:18

Mueller:

Right, yeah. Eventually, as they kept developing, the Bishop Ranch was the last large open piece of property between the houses on the north and the houses on the south. They decided to go with businesses on Bishop Ranch instead of continuing to build houses.

01-00:26:38

Farrell:

Where did you go to high school?

01-00:26:40

Mueller:

San Ramon Valley High School.

01-00:26:42

Farrell:

Was it a big high school?

01-00:26:43

Mueller:

Yeah.

01-00:26:45

Farrell:

Do you remember how many people you graduated with?

01-00:26:47

Mueller:

Probably at least a couple hundred.

01-00:26:51

Farrell:

So a bigger pool of people.

01-00:26:54

Mueller:

Yeah. In fact, the year I started at San Ramon Valley—this was fall of 1965—they were building the second high school out in Alamo, called Monte Vista. It was supposed to open about three or four months after school started for that year, and so they had the students that were going to go to Monte Vista share some of the classrooms in San Ramon Valley until their school was ready.

01-00:27:27

Farrell:

Did you go to high school with any of the other families who owned property in the area, or were they different ages?

01-00:27:37

Mueller:

They were different ages. The ones that were probably closest in age to us were the Wiedemens, which was a fairly prominent family in the San Ramon area. They were a couple years ahead of us.

01-00:28:02

Farrell:

When you were in high school, was that when you started volunteering with the Park District, with roads and trails?

01-00:28:07

Mueller:

It was my senior year.

01-00:28:10

Farrell:

How did you get involved with that?

01-00:28:14

Mueller:

The Park District started buying land for Las Trampas. I think it was around 1965. They bought 300 acres on top of Las Trampas Ridge called the Nordstrom property. My grandfather's brother Richard's ranch shared a property line with that. The Park District started negotiating with him, and ended up buying his property, which was located right at the end of Bollinger Canyon Road. There, for a couple of years, they didn't do anything with it. It was basically sitting in this land bank, which meant the Park District owned it, but it wasn't officially open to the public. I guess it was around sometime in early 1969 is when they finally decided to build a parking lot and a picnic area at the end of Bollinger Canyon Road on Richard's property. One day, I decided to take a ride back there just to see what they had done and everything. I pulled into the parking lot, and when I pulled into the parking lot, I noticed an older man and woman standing there, talking to somebody. I didn't pay too much attention to them, and I parked my car. I got out of my car and I looked, and they were walking towards me. I thought, oh, it looks like they want to talk to me. What do they want to talk to me for? I just want to look around and take off.

He came over and introduced himself. His name was Walter Knight. He was actually the park supervisor out at Shadow Cliffs, but he also was responsible for Las Trampas, because Las Trampas didn't have an official budgeted supervisor. I introduced myself and told him my family owned all this land back here at one time, which really piqued his interest, because he didn't know a whole lot about the property, other than looking at it on a map. I started talking about where the property lines were and things like that. Then eventually, we started going out onto the property so I could actually point it out. From there, it developed to where we started scouting out potential paths for trails and things. That's how I got started on that. That's when I decided that's the type of work that I'd like to do growing up.

01-00:30:43

Farrell:

So you really helped shape the whole park layout, like the roads and trails, when the land was first acquired?

01-00:30:50

Mueller: A little bit, yeah. Yeah, a little bit.

01-00:30:53

Farrell: Were there any place names that you had when you were growing up for local roads or trails that may have changed after the district acquired or bought the land?

01-00:31:05

Mueller: I know there's—and I think it still is called that—there's the Trapline Trail. When my dad and uncle were teenagers, they used to set traps, to trap wild animals and that. One of the spots that the trail went by was one of the places where they had set one of their traps. I mentioned that to Walter, and he said, "That would be a great name for a trail, Trapline Trail."

01-00:31:36

Farrell: Do you remember where that trap was set along that trail?

01-00:31:39

Mueller: It was down towards the lower end.

01-00:31:44

Farrell: Any other?

01-00:31:47

Mueller: I mentioned a lot of different place names to Walter. Not all of them got on the map or had trails named after them. There's a group of trees on top of Rocky Ridge. It's called the Seven Trees. If you go up there, it's probably about fifty-plus trees, but if you look at them from down here, it looks like seven individual trees. On the west side of Rocky Ridge, it's actually the back end of Cull Canyon, that area is called Devil's Hole. Then, on Las Trampas Ridge, there's a spring where the water smells like sulphur. Call that Sulphur Spring. I think some of those names are on the map.

01-00:32:32

Farrell: Were there any that didn't make it?

01-00:32:38

Mueller: Nothing I can think of right now.

01-00:32:41

Farrell: That's fine. Thought I'd ask. You had mentioned that that was around the time that you decided that that was the work that you wanted to do. What about it did you like?

01-00:32:52

Mueller: It was pretty much similar to the type of work I grew up doing on the ranch. You know, trimming trees, mowing grass, carpentry, working with plumbing, all that outdoor-type of work. I just really couldn't see myself working inside someplace. I liked working outside.

01-00:33:14

Farrell: And then probably realizing, wow, this could be a job where you get paid for it was an option.

01-00:33:17

Mueller: Right, exactly, yeah.

01-00:33:21

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about maybe any of the values that your grandparents or your parents instilled in you when you were growing up that really you took with you and carried with you throughout your life and career?

01-00:33:33

Mueller: I'd say always be honest. Treat people the way you'd like to be treated. Treat everyone with respect. Those are the main ones.

01-00:33:49

Farrell: What were some of the things, aside from that, that you learned about their respect for the land, or community, and that kind of thing?

01-00:34:01

Mueller: A good example is when we sold the family ranch to the Park District, because I know both my dad and uncle always hoped that the Park District would buy the ranch. The district's main area of focus was along Las Trampas Ridge, because they had that regional trail, Calaveras Trail, that would go along the ridge and extend from Lafayette all the way down to Sunol. I know my dad and uncle really didn't want to see the ranch sold by someone who would end up cutting it up into five and ten-acre parcels, and selling it off for houses and stuff. I told him, "The district's main focus is Las Trampas Ridge. Probably the only way you're going to get them interested in this property is if you make them an offer they can't refuse." Bob Doyle and I were real good friends. We started out together, cutting down eucalyptus trees. He's general manager now. At that time, he was in charge of the land department. I sent him a letter with a proposal. You know, "If you'd like to come out and take a look at the ranch, we'd be interested in selling it." He did. He thought it might fit in really good, because the Park District was gradually expanding to the South. He turned it over to his people. They did an appraisal and other analysis, and then we didn't hear too much from him. I called them up one day. I forget who the person was I talked to. I just gave her a price, what we would take for it. It was below what we could get it if we sold it to a private person. She called back the next day and said, "Deal." So we were able to preserve it. That was our main focus. Now I can go out there, and I have memories of working with my grandfather, cutting trees here, and working with my dad doing other things. You can always go out there and relive those memories, versus someone else having a big house sitting there.

01-00:36:42

Farrell: Your family, broadly, ranched cattle until the 1970s. The park started buying some of the land starting in 1965, as we had talked about, but your family also

started leasing out some of the land. Can you tell me a little bit more about why they started doing that?

01-00:37:01

Mueller:

In 1975, we had that first big drought that lasted about two years. My dad and uncle were getting older. It was getting harder and harder to work a full-time job, and then handle the cattle, too. There was a cousin that was interested in leasing the property, and maybe even, eventually, buying it, too. We decided just get out of the cattle business, go ahead and let him lease it, so we can get enough money to pay the property taxes and things like that. That's when that started. He was a general contractor. Unfortunately, he ended up going out of business, because he expanded too fast, and then a recession came along, and he couldn't make the payments for his equipment anymore. One of the local ranchers down the canyon, Jim Fagundes, he started leasing it. He leased it right up until the time that the Park District bought it.

01-00:38:08

Farrell:

When did the Park District end up buying it?

01-00:38:10

Mueller:

It was 2003.

01-00:38:13

Farrell:

Okay, so it was that long. What are your memories of the creation of Las Trampas in the '70s?

01-00:38:25

Mueller:

I remember when this area was first proposed as a potential regional park. I think it was between here and another area in the northern part of the county called Las Juntas. I guess the Park District board decided to go with Las Juntas instead. I remember, not long afterwards, the local paper, the *Valley Pioneer*, had a cartoon showing a couple of deer standing up on a hill, with a bunch of houses below them. The caption said something about, "Too bad the Park District didn't decide to turn this area into a park." For some reason, the board changed their mind and decided to go with Las Trampas instead of Las Juntas. Like I mentioned, the first parcel was the Nordstrom property. Then my grandfather's brother, Richard, his property. They started buying some more land up on Las Trampas Ridge. They bought a big parcel on the Danville-Alamo side called Corduroy Hills Ranch. That also included the Eugene O'Neill Historic Site. I think it was in 1975, '76 they bought my grandfather's brother Curt's property, which includes Little Hills Ranch. Over the years, they kept buying property along the upper part of Las Trampas Ridge, which included Otto's property. Then, at one time, up until about the mid-1960s, we owned this land across the street. There was 210 acres there. Then we sold it—I think it was '63, '64—and then it went through several different owners. It actually extended over the top of Las Trampas Ridge, partway down to Danville. The district bought the upper part of that. Then, like I mentioned, 2003 is when we sold the rest of the family ranch to the Park

District. Just a couple of years ago, they bought another small parcel, just on the south side of our old ranch.

01-00:40:59

Farrell: Do you have a sense of how your family felt about a park buying this land?

01-00:41:05

Mueller: Some people were in favor of it, and some weren't.

01-00:41:08

Farrell: Why were the ones who were in favor of it in favor of it?

01-00:41:13

Mueller: They were glad to see this area preserved. The ones that weren't, they were looking at the potential development money that could come from it. I think the zoning out here is five-acre minimum for building a house. You buy the property, and then you cut it up into five-acre parcels, assuming you can find water on it and get it to pass the septic tests and stuff like that.

01-00:41:44

Farrell: Did you see the landscape change after the Park District started buying the land?

01-00:41:51

Mueller: It seemed like there was less development pressure back here. The piece we used to own across the street here, the last guy that owned it before the Park District bought the rest of the property, he had subdivided, I think, about three or four parcels, and so there's three or four houses. You can't see them from down here, but if you go back a little bit, you can see them up on the hills up there. If the district hadn't bought that property, there probably would be even a few more houses up there. I think the connections the Park District has with the county, I think the county kind of sees this area more as ranching and open space, rather than potential development. That's pretty much slowed down the pressure to do any development out here.

01-00:42:57

Farrell: Did anyone else in your family go to work for the Park District?

01-00:43:02

Mueller: No.

01-00:43:05

Farrell: I kind of want to move into that a little bit, unless there's anything from your family's connection with this area that you either haven't previously shared before, or that we're missing, or you want to talk about.

01-00:43:15

Mueller: Nothing I can think of right now.

01-00:43:16

Farrell: Okay. If it comes up, let me know. When you had graduated from high school, you ended up joining the Navy. Is that correct?

01-00:43:24

Mueller: Mm-hmm.

01-00:43:25

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about your decision to join the Navy?

01-00:43:28

Mueller: Yeah. When I graduated, the military draft still existed. Vietnam was going hot and heavy. After twelve years of school, I was ready for a break, but if I didn't stay in school, I was probably going to get drafted and sent to Vietnam. I looked into student deferment, and you needed twelve-and-a-half units for student deferment, so I decided to go to Diablo Valley College. I started there, and I got to know different people. A lot of the people there were veterans. I started thinking, boy, it would sure be nice to have that out of the way. I was kind of waiting for the other shoe to drop. Like I mentioned, I was ready for a break. My grades weren't all that good. I started looking around. I checked out the Air National Guard, but they had something like about a six-month waiting list. Then I noticed the Navy had a reserve program, too. I went out to the Concord Naval Weapons Station and talked to a person out there. The Navy program, the first year was two weeks bootcamp, and two weeks training on a ship, and then one weekend a month reserve duty. Back then, the regular Navy was going thirteen weeks bootcamp. Thirteen weeks versus two weeks sounded pretty good. Then the second and third years were active duty, and then the fourth and fifth years would be one weekend a month, plus two weeks a year, reserve duty, and then the sixth year, basically you were just on-call. I thought about it, and I said, well, that sounds pretty good, because it didn't look like the draft was going to go away anytime soon. So I ended up joining up. After I joined up, it was like a big weight being lifted off my head. I didn't have to worry about it anymore.

01-00:45:44

Farrell: Was this around 1968?

01-00:45:46

Mueller: It was 1969.

01-00:45:50

Farrell: So you were seeing people getting drafted around you as well?

01-00:45:56

Mueller: Oh, yeah. My cousin actually went to the induction center, because he was going to get drafted. He ended up signing up at the last minute in the Army. Because then you have a choice. If you get drafted, you go wherever they tell you you're going to go.

01-00:46:14

Farrell: You felt like you had a little bit more control being part of the Navy Reserve?

01-00:46:18

Mueller: Right. Yeah, because when I started going to the reserve drills, then you could pick what kind of occupation you would like to do in the military. In the Second World War, my dad had been a cook. He'd tell stories about they'd have beans and franks for the regular soldiers, and then when it came time for the cooks to eat, they'd break out the steaks. I'd think, well, that sounds pretty good to me, so I decided to be a cook.

01-00:46:50

Farrell: I specialize in food history. Can you tell me a little bit more about what your experience was working as a cook?

01-00:46:57

Mueller: It was interesting. When I finally started my active duty—that was July 1, 1971—they sent me down to San Diego, and I went through cooking school for three months. They teach you about sanitation and hygiene and everything else, and then you actually get to do some practice cooking. When I graduated from that, I got my orders onto a destroyer based in Long Beach. I took two weeks leave after I graduated, then reported to the destroyer, and it turned out that they were just going into a one-year overhaul in the shipyards, dry docks. I cooked on there a little bit. There was probably a crew of about 250, 300 people on there. I did a little bit of cooking there, but then when it went into the dry docks, they sent me to the base galley to cook. That's kind of where I learned a lot of the fundamentals, you know, cooking for large groups like that. Thanksgiving, you start cooking the turkeys the night before, and then keeping them warm, because you're feeding maybe up to a thousand people, something like that.

01-00:48:16

Farrell: When you went to cooking school, aside from sanitation, what were some of the things they were teaching you?

01-00:48:22

Mueller: They had recipe cards for everything. The recipe cards were all one hundred portions. They taught us how to read the recipe cards, and if you're going to cook, say, fifty portions, how to break them down so it's basically half of what the card calls for.

01-00:48:42

Farrell: Then, conversely, too, doubling it if it's 200 people, that kind of thing?

01-00:48:45

Mueller: Yeah. Right, yeah.

01-00:48:47

Farrell: Were they teaching you technique at all?

01-00:48:51

Mueller:

They taught us what the rules were, but they told us, “When you get out in the fleet, you’re going to find out it’s totally different than what the rules are.”

01-00:49:00

Farrell:

Did you find that to be true?

01-00:49:01

Mueller:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

01-00:49:02

Farrell:

What was different about it?

01-00:49:09

Mueller:

When you’re out in the fleet, there’s a lot of different shortcuts you can take. I don’t remember what they were now, but it was just totally different. If you were taking a test for advancement, on the test, you had to mark it exactly how it was supposed to be, but you get out and there and cook, and—the destroyer was kind of interesting, because on my second year on the destroyer, they sent us over to the Western Pacific, to Vietnam. Being in the Navy, two miles off the coast, is a lot different than being on the mainland. When we first got over there, the ocean was smooth as glass. It was really easy to cook. Then we gradually got into typhoon season, where it’s up and down, and back and forth. Usually when I did breakfast, I fried all the eggs. I had a two-foot-by-three-foot griddle, and I’d fry probably about thirty dozen eggs for breakfast. I’d start out cracking eggs and loading up the griddle on the front, working my way towards the back. When I got my last egg cracked, the eggs up front were ready to be turned over. I’d flip those over. By the time I got to the back, they were ready to be served. Sometimes, if it was really rough, you’d put your egg on there, and *whoosh, whoosh, whoosh* We’d have hard and soft-boiled eggs. [laughter]

01-00:50:59

Farrell:

Where would you typically get your food supplies?

01-00:51:05

Mueller:

When we were in port, we’d get it straight from the warehouse. At sea, they had the supply ships. What we would do is we’d pull up alongside the supply ship. There would maybe be about a hundred-foot gap between the supply ship and the destroyer I was on. You’re cruising real slow, and they’ll send a couple of lines across between the ships, and then they’ll send whatever we needed on these ropes. We’d have a line of sailors there that would just pass the stores down into the storeroom.

01-00:51:50

Farrell:

Were you responsible for ordering?

01-00:51:52

Mueller:

No. No, that was one of the petty officers, chief petty officer.

01-00:51:58

Farrell:

Were there any meals that were your favorite to cook or to serve?

01-00:52:01

Mueller:

Steaks were always nice. Lobster once in a while. Sometimes, like on a Sunday, we'd kind of do a little barbecue thing. They'd have a little barbecue grill. They'd set it up on the main deck of the ship, and we'd barbecue hamburgers and things like that.

01-00:52:21

Farrell:

Did you enjoy cooking when you were growing up?

01-00:52:24

Mueller:

Didn't have much experience. I liked it. The duty was good. When we were out at sea, it was one day on, one day off. My day off, if I wanted to lay in my bunk all day long, I could. I'd just put a little tag on there, "Late sleeper," and executive officer would come walking through, doing his inspection. He wouldn't say anything. When we were in port, it was five and two. One week, out of the seven days, I'd work five days, and the next week, only two days, so that was pretty nice.

01-00:53:03

Farrell:

Did you start to cook more when you came back?

01-00:53:09

Mueller:

When we were going over there, a friend of mine was writing to a woman, and she sent him the name and address of a friend of hers. The friend didn't know that she had sent her address. This friend of mine says, "Oh, here's the address of some girl my girlfriend sent me. She wanted to know if there's anyone that would like to write." I wasn't writing anybody. I didn't have a girlfriend. I said, what the hell? I started writing to her. All the sudden, she got this letter from some guy in the mail. She didn't know who it was. We started writing back and forth. Then, after we got back—this was in February of 1973—we met each other. It turned out when we were on our way back is when they signed the ceasefire, and so I ended up getting out four months earlier than what I was supposed to. We saw each other a couple times, and then I came home, but we had a long-distance relationship, and eventually we got married.

01-00:54:33

Farrell:

Oh, wow.

01-00:54:36

Mueller:

It was just a couple days after I had interviewed for a full-time position with the Park District. So basically, we got married, but I didn't have a job or anything. It just worked out that way. She was a real good cook, so she did most of the cooking. She passed away about five years ago, so I do all my own cooking now. It's pretty easy, because I have all that experience and everything.

01-00:55:08

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about, when you came back, your decision to apply for the job with the district?

01-00:55:15

Mueller:

Like I mentioned, when I did the volunteer work, I decided that's the type of work I'd like to do. The winter that I was over there—this was in 1972, '73—there was a real bad cold snap here in the Bay Area, where a lot of the eucalyptus trees in the Oakland Berkeley Hills died off. It became kind of like an emergency situation in the parks, because you had these picnic areas with all these trees that looked dead there, and they were worried about the trees falling on people. Walter Knight, who I had done the volunteer work for, was put in charge of the cutting program in Tilden Park. I got out of the Navy on March 2, 1973, and he called me up a couple days later and asked me if I'd like to go to work cutting down eucalyptus trees as a seasonal groundsman, they called them back then. I said sure. That's how I got my start with the Park District. We did that for about seven months, and then we got laid off at the end of that summer, so I put in an application for a permanent position.

During that time, one of my days off, the human resources manager at the Park District happened to come up to get firewood, because we were getting rid of a lot of the trees we cut down. We were letting the public have the wood for burning in their fireplaces. They could either bring their own chainsaws, or we'd cut the wood up for them, and they could just load it up and haul it away. They just needed to get a permit from the Park District. The human resources manager came up to get some wood, and Walter really talked me up to him. I had put in my application for permanent ranger, but I didn't get an interview, and that was right about the time that affirmative action started becoming really a focal point of things. I guess the Park District hadn't sent out any interview notices to women that applied for the ranger position, and so there were some protests and stuff. I guess the Park District decided just to go ahead and interview everybody that had put in an application, so I ended up getting an interview. When I did my interview, the human resources manager remembered what Walter Knight had said about me, and I guess he was impressed how I interviewed. After that, I never had any problems getting a seasonal job with the Park District. That first year, I worked as a six-month groundsman, cutting down eucalyptus trees. The second year, I got a six-month position working at Del Valle Regional Park in Livermore. Then, the third year, I got a six-month position working at Shadow Cliffs, before I finally got hired permanently at Sunol.

01-00:58:45

Farrell:

What was it like, when you're working these seasonal jobs at Del Valle, and then Shadow Cliffs, getting to know the Park District in this way, versus how you had known them growing up?

01-00:58:58

Mueller:

I got to know more of the managers and the supervisors. In fact, when I worked at Del Valle, the supervisor at Sunol had worked there for one day, and so I worked for him, and I got to know him. That was really instrumental in him deciding that he wanted me to come work for him permanently at Sunol.

01-00:59:29

Farrell:

What was it like for you to work with him?

01-00:59:32

Mueller:

He was a real nice guy. He was really into plants. His name was Gene Lagel. He was always looking for world-record plants. He had a number of them, he found out, at Sunol. Manzanita bushes and things like that. I worked for him maybe for a year or less, and then the Park District did a reorganization, and he got transferred to Garin Regional Park. I was sad to see him go, because he was a real good guy.

01-01:00:12

Farrell:

How about Walter Knight? What were some of your impressions from working with him?

01-01:00:15

Mueller:

He was great. He really opened my eyes to botany. Before he became supervisor, he had worked at the Tilden Botanic Garden, and he was a fairly well-known botanist, self-taught, with him and his wife. I remember when I used to walk around here at Las Trampas, we'd be walking, and all the sudden he'd get all excited—"Oh, look at this, look at this." He'd pull this little tiny weed out of the ground. It had a little flower on it you could barely see, and he'd get his magnifying glass out. "Now you see that?" He'd really go into it. Even a lot of the different shrubs and things located in the chaparral areas, before I knew him well, it was all brush. But then he pointed—"Well, there's manzanita. There's chemise." All kinds of different stuff.

01-01:01:11

Farrell:

How did he help you understand the land out here in a new way?

01-01:01:21

Mueller:

Basically, it was just the botany. Like I mentioned, to me, before I knew him, everything—well, that's a bay tree, that's an oak tree. But he would really talk about them and open my eyes up to them.

01-01:01:39

Farrell:

What was it like for you to get hired full-time?

01-01:01:43

Mueller:

Oh, I was happy.

01-01:01:44

Farrell:

That was in 1975, right?

01-01:01:46

Mueller:

Yeah. I was really happy, because like I mentioned, when I got married, I didn't have a job. Everyone told me, "You better postpone it." "I'm not postponing it." In fact, the day I interviewed for permanent ranger was the day before I got married. I interviewed for that job in Oakland, up at Skyline, then I went and picked up my best friend, because he was going to be my best man. We went to Oakland Airport and flew down to Los Angeles. I got married the next day, and then that night, my wife and I and him flew back. The next day, which was a Sunday, my wife and I left for our honeymoon. We were supposed to go to Tahoe, but the weather was really bad and I didn't have much experience driving in the snow. I said, "Well, what do you think about going to Monterey instead?" She said, "Yeah, that sounds fine." We went to Monterey and spent a couple days down there.

Then I got back and I called the human resources department to find out how I placed on the hiring pool. She said, "You made the second hiring pool," and my heart dropped. But she said, "That's not so bad, because there's only one person in the first hiring pool, and there's about four or five open positions." I guess it was about three or four days later, I got a call from Gene Lagel about the Sunol job. I also got a call from Tony Smith, who was the supervisor out at Del Valle, who I had worked for in 1974. He had an opening. He wanted me to come out for an interview. When I was on the eucalyptus crew, the guy that was my supervisor, Bob Lucas—actually, my mom said he stopped and came down to see if I was here, because he was in charge of the honey buckets, pumping the—he wanted me to come work for him. The unit manager, who was in charge of Las Trampas, had me come in for an interview, because he wanted to hire me for Las Trampas, but then he found out that it was a supervisor opening and not a ranger. Anyhow, out of all those openings, I ended up getting the one out at Sunol.

01-01:04:19

Farrell:

How did you decide on Sunol over the others that were open and supervisors that wanted you?

01-01:04:24

Mueller:

I really liked the park. Del Valle had the campground and had the lake. A lot more public activity in that, where Sunol is more like Las Trampas. You had the picnic area, and the rest of it was all open space.

01-01:04:39

Farrell:

Yeah, so it felt more familiar?

01-01:04:40

Mueller:

Yeah, right. Plus there was a naturalist out there, and you could learn a lot from them.

01-01:04:51

Farrell:

Can you tell me what your wife's name was?

- 01-01:04:53
Mueller: Pamela.
- 01-01:04:55
Farrell: Did she live in LA?
- 01-01:04:56
Mueller: Yeah.
- 01-01:04:56
Farrell: Okay, and so she moved up here?
- 01-01:04:58
Mueller: She moved up here.
- 01-01:04:58
Farrell: But that's why you got married there?
- 01-01:04:59
Mueller: Right, yeah.
- 01-01:05:01
Farrell: That was probably a great wedding gift, getting the job, too.
- 01-01:05:04
Mueller: Oh, yeah. I was cloud nine.
- 01-01:05:09
Farrell: When you started working at Sunol, what were some of your duties as a ranger?
- 01-01:05:17
Mueller: They had a fairly large picnic area there, so it was taking care of garbage and litter and stuff like that, and a lot of work, working on trails, cutting up trees that fell across the fire roads, doing erosion control work. A little bit of everything.
- 01-01:05:35
Farrell: Were there any special projects that you worked on while you were there?
- 01-01:05:44
Mueller: Nothing I can think of right now, but that was over forty years ago.
- 01-01:05:51
Farrell: Who were the people that would come use the park and the picnic area?
- 01-01:05:56
Mueller: That was really interesting, because back then, that park was a big hangout for the Hells Angels. Every weekend, there was always problems out there. People would get drunk and they'd get into fights. The district finally decided to declare that park no alcohol. No beer or wine, no nothing. The hardest job I had to do was, on Sundays, they gave me a bunch of flyers explaining why it

was going to become a dry park—because that was the first dry park in the Park District. I had to go around, handing these flyers out to all these Hells Angel biker-types, and some of them were a little angry about it.

01-01:06:54

Farrell: How did you handle that?

01-01:06:57

Mueller: I just would be very nice to them. I wouldn't get obnoxious or anything. It worked. I never got threatened or anything, because they knew it wasn't my fault. I was just doing my job. Up until then, Sundays, Park District police department, they'd have a van parked out behind the shop, and they'd have plainclothes officers going through the park, arresting people, and they would just shuttle between the park and Santa Rita all day long.

01-01:07:30

Farrell: So they really enforced the dry park?

01-01:07:32

Mueller: Yeah.

01-01:07:33

Farrell: Oh, wow.

01-01:07:35

Mueller: After they got all those people out of Sunol, there was a Pleasanton city park out near the town of Sunol called—I can't remember the name of it anymore, but anyhow, a lot of those people started hanging out there. Pleasanton leased it from San Francisco Water Company land and it became so much of a problem that they gave up the lease and just closed the park.

01-01:07:59

Farrell: Wow. Wow. Who were some of the other people that you worked with at Sunol?

01-01:08:08

Mueller: Naturalist, it was Dick Angel. He was the supervising naturalist, and Joanne Dean, Alice Ann Cantelow, Alan Kaplan. The rangers was Steve Diers and Ellie Heitman. Like I mentioned, when I first went there, I worked for Gene Lagel. He was the maintenance supervisor. Then Dick Angel was the naturalist supervisor. The Park District did a reorganization where they pulled the maintenance supervisor out of the interpretive parks and let the supervising naturalists also go ahead and supervise the field people. In some cases that worked, and in some cases it didn't. Because Dick Angel, his heart was really into interpretation, and not so much maintenance. We kept the park looking good and everything, but we didn't get a whole lot of direction as far as a lot of the maintenance projects that needed to be done.

01-01:09:19

Farrell:

You had also mentioned the park re-org. Can you tell me a little bit about that, and maybe how that affected you, if it did?

01-01:09:26

Mueller:

Mainly, it really didn't too much. What the Park District had done is they had had a company do a study. It was called the Arthur Young study. Prior to that, the district was organized into zones. It was basically geographical. In our zone, it was Del Valle, Shadow Cliffs, Sunol, and maybe one or two others. The parks were all different, different type of focus and that. What they did is they wanted to combine all similar parks into units. The interpretative parks, it would be Sunol, Tilden Nature Area, Black Diamond Mines, Coyote Hills. Any of the parks that basically were interpretive, had large natural and open space areas. Then they had the lake parks, all the parks that had lakes. They were all assigned in groups. The zone managers, their classification became known as unit managers, and they increased the number of unit managers so that each unit would have a manager overseeing that unit. That's when they came up with more AGMs, like I had mentioned to you before. Jerry Kent, at that time, was the AGM. It was Dick Trudeau and then Jerry. What they did is they made a lot of the department heads assistant general managers, too.

01-01:11:22

Farrell:

You worked at Sunol for about three or four years?

01-01:11:24

Mueller:

About four years.

01-01:11:25

Farrell:

Four years, okay. Then you went back to Shadow Cliffs?

01-01:11:31

Mueller:

Right.

01-01:11:31

Farrell:

Can you tell me about what it was like to go back to Shadow Cliffs?

01-01:11:37

Mueller:

How that came about was, back at that time, Shadow Cliffs just had a supervisor, a twelve-month ranger, and a nine-month ranger. The nine-month ranger worked February through October. When that person was off, there was only a supervisor and ranger there, which is kind of a small staff for a park like that, where Sunol, we had three full-time rangers, twelve-month rangers, there, plus a naturalist. Our unit manager, or zone manager at that time, Tony Smith—he got promoted from supervisor to zone manager—decided that he wanted to temporarily transfer a ranger from Sunol to Shadow Cliffs to cover those three months so they'd have a big enough staff there. The first year, one of the other rangers did it, and then the second year, I was living in Livermore, and Shadow Cliffs was a lot closer to home than Sunol was, so I volunteered to go over there. When I went over there, it was like starting a whole new job. Different type of park. It was a lake park. They had

swimming, they had fishing, where Sunol was basically just hiking, and people could bring their own horses and stuff like that. I had mentioned to Tony, when it was getting time for me to go back to Sunol, that eventually when he got an opening at Shadow Cliffs, I'd be real interested in transferring there. What Tony did, without telling the supervising naturalists out at Sunol, is he just went and transferred the nine-month Shadow Cliffs position to Sunol, and transferred my twelve-month position to Shadow Cliffs.

01-01:13:38

Farrell: Oh, okay.

01-01:13:41

Mueller: I was happy with that. Sunol wasn't, but. [laughter]

01-01:13:47

Farrell: From there, you also applied for a supervisor position, is that right?

01-01:13:51

Mueller: Right.

01-01:13:52

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about what made you want to grow in that way, and what you were kind of thinking for your career at that point?

01-01:14:02

Mueller: Like I had mentioned at Sunol, once Gene Lagel was taken out and Dick Angel was in charge, and Dick wasn't as focused on maintenance as he was interpretation, since I was the senior ranger, I kind of became the straw boss of the maintenance and operations unit. I liked being able to say, "Well, maybe we'll go do this today, and do that today." When I was working at Shadow Cliffs, there I had a supervisor, but he would let me go ahead and initiate a lot of my own projects and stuff, and I really liked that. That's when I decided, well, eventually I'd like to become a supervisor. My ultimate goal was be a unit manager. They were taking applications for supervisors, so I figured, well, I'll go ahead and put my application in, and I actually got an interview. I made the first hiring pool, and it was within a week or two before the list was going to expire I got called in for an interview for supervisor of the Lafayette-Moraga Trail. I went and interviewed for that, and actually got picked for that. That's when that job kind of got expanded, too. Before, it was just the Lafayette-Moraga Trail, but they were creating other regional trails in Contra Costa County, so it was retitled Contra Costa Trails supervisor. It included the Lafayette-Moraga Trail, the Briones-Diablo Trail, Contra Costa Canal Trail, and part of the Iron Horse Trail.

01-01:16:12

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about your transition to that position, and some of the things that you worked on?

01-01:16:23

Mueller:

When I got promoted, we didn't have a corporation yard of our own. The Park District leased a small piece of property in Moraga from a guy who had a little shed on it that was maybe ten-feet-by-ten-feet. That was kind of like our shop, and where we kept our tools and stuff like that. I would take all my phone calls and get route mail through Briones. I'd go over to Briones once a day to make phone calls or see if there were any calls for me, and if there was any mail. My boss, when he wanted to meet with me, he'd get me on the radio, or sometimes he'd call me at home the night before and say, "Hey, why don't we meet at Jack in the Box?" You know, in Moraga or someplace like that. We'd go ahead and meet up, and then talk business and stuff like that. That first year, they were talking about getting us a little service yard location in Walnut Creek, I think out at—it might have been Larkey Park. I'm not sure. They were going to get us some equipment, too, because we had a couple of trucks, but they were basically surplus, trucks that were going to be auctioned off eventually. I was pushing, trying to get that service yard going, plus getting our trucks and equipment and everything like that. It was interesting doing that.

01-01:18:07

Farrell:

Did you enjoy your time there?

01-01:18:09

Mueller:

Oh, yeah. In fact, I was there for one year, and then the chief of operations decided he wanted to shake things up a little bit, so he wanted to move supervisors around to different parks. I thought I was safe. But he called me into his office one day and offered me my choice of seven different parks. I told him I was really happy where I was. He said, "Well, we'll see. I can't make any guarantees or anything." My boss, the unit manager, he was going to be getting a new assignment, too, and he wanted to keep me in his unit, wherever he went to. Then, eventually, I guess the decision was made they needed—they had a supervisor who was having some problems and they wanted to put him into my slot, because it wasn't as difficult a park to supervise. I was offered my choice of three different parks, and I ended up picking Garin.

01-01:19:23

Farrell:

Who was your boss who was moving?

01-01:19:27

Mueller:

His name was Bud Hurbach.

01-01:19:32

Farrell:

Why did you end up choosing Garin?

01-01:19:36

Mueller:

I had been to Garin one time. It might have been when I worked at Sunol or Shadow Cliffs. We went on a field trip out to Garin. I really liked the park, plus I was living in Livermore, and my other two choices were—it's Martin

Luther King now, and Crown Beach, which would have been a longer commute with a lot more traffic, so I decided on Garin.

01-01:20:04

Farrell: How did your role change when you moved from being the Contra Costa trail supervisor to the supervisor at Garin?

01-01:20:13

Mueller: Totally different. It's basically a trail. It's eight to ten feet wide, going through neighborhoods with backyard fences, behind people's houses, and it's stretched out so far. Where, in a park, everything is all kind of in one area. A park is so much better than being in charge of a regional trail. I know I really liked it.

01-01:20:45

Farrell: What were some of the projects that you worked on while you were there?

01-01:20:49

Mueller: At Garin?

01-01:20:50

Farrell: At Garin, yeah.

01-01:20:51

Mueller: When I got there, the park had opened probably about three or four years earlier, and so there was a lot of things that still needed to be done. They were working on expanding the picnic and lawn area, so that was one thing I helped out with. Putting in trails, some new trails. Maintaining the trails that were there. Also, there's an old hay barn there, and the Park District had gotten a grant from Mervyn's to develop that into an interpretive center. The expiration date to spend that money was coming up really fast, and so I worked with—back then it was Dave Collins. He had developed an interpretive master plan for the park and the visitor's center, and so I was working with him on trying to get that to happen.

01-01:22:00

Farrell: Do you remember what some of the things were in that master plan that you were trying to do?

01-01:22:06

Mueller: Yeah. It was to create a blacksmith shop in the barn, which we did, and there were a lot of different exhibits depicting ranching history in the East Bay Hills. Barbed wire exhibit. Exhibit depicting some of the tools that were used on round-ups, like branding irons and things like that. Turning the Dry Creek Trail into self-guiding nature trail. There was a man whose hobby it was to graft antique apple trees, and he had approached the Park District, and so they sent him out to Garin. We planted a small orchard in front of the visitor's center. His whole backyard was full of potted trees that he wanted to get planted, and so we ended up establishing the Garin antique apple orchard.

01-01:23:10

Farrell: It sounds like you were successful with getting a lot of the things that you had developed in the master plan off the ground. What did it mean for you, or to you, to see all that come to fruition?

01-01:23:19

Mueller: Oh, it was great. Here you have this goal that you're trying to achieve, and it finally happens.

01-01:23:26

Farrell: How long were you at Garin for in total?

01-01:23:28

Mueller: Thirty years.

01-01:23:30

Farrell: What year did you start?

01-01:23:33

Mueller: At Garin?

01-01:23:33

Farrell: Yeah.

01-01:23:34

Mueller: It was around 1981, I think.

01-01:23:42

Farrell: Over the course of your thirty years there, what were some of the biggest, maybe, successes that you saw?

01-01:23:51

Mueller: We finally got our own shop and service yard. When I first came there, my office, which was a little bit smaller than this, was our shop. I had my desk there, and there were all these bolts and nails and tools and stuff stored in there. The bigger equipment was kept down in the barn. Up on the hill above my shop, there was an old horse shed that was there when the district bought that piece of property. The thinking was is that would be a nice building for a shop. I worked with the maintenance department and we got the building moved down the hill to the park entrance. That was totally redone as a shop, with a storeroom and tool room and restroom and stuff like that. We also got a nice wooden fence around the whole facility, too, so we could park our equipment there and keep it safe.

01-01:24:59

Farrell: Was there anything particularly challenging about your work there, or some projects that were more difficult than others?

01-01:25:09

Mueller: I'd say probably the hardest thing is dealing with the neighbors.

01-01:25:13

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

01-01:25:17

Mueller:

These real wet winters, the homes along the base of the ridge in the park, on the western edge of the park, you'd start getting water seeping out of hillsides into people's backyards. They'd call me up and say, "Hey, what are you going to do about your water coming out of the park down here?" and having to explain to them that's part of nature. Then, on the eastern end of the park, you have houses that border the park, where there's some deep canyons, and the canyons are owned by the city of Hayward. Having to go up, take a look at it, and explain to them, "Well, I'd really like to help you, but it's not our property."

01-01:26:07

Farrell:

Aside from the shed and the blacksmith—the things that you've mentioned already—was there any infrastructure that you helped create or maintain at Garin?

01-01:26:24

Mueller:

Well, the trails. The irrigation system in the lawns. At first, the water for the park was provided by a couple of wells. They had done a study and said there was a virtual lake underneath the park. Well, it turned out there wasn't. We had these nice, green lawns, and then we'd get a dry winter and we'd start running out of water, and we had to let the lawns turn brown, which was really frustrating. Other employees that didn't know much about the water system say, "Hey, how come you're letting your lawns get all brown?" Where a park that actually has city water, they go ahead and keep them green. Eventually, that was taken care of when the city built a water tank next to the park, and then the Park District hooked into that water system.

01-01:27:20

Farrell:

For things like that or other projects, did you have to work with the local government agencies to work on some of those things?

01-01:27:31

Mueller:

Yeah, but it was mainly different departments up at Peralta Oaks, like planning and that. But I'd go to a lot of the meetings with them.

01-01:27:43

Farrell:

Was it pretty easy to work with them?

01-01:27:45

Mueller:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, we had a real good working relationship. Land department I worked a lot with, too.

01-01:27:51

Farrell:

How was that?

01-01:27:54

Mueller:

There were two big housing developments proposed on the eastern side of the park. Stonebrae Country Club was one of them, and Bailey Ranch. Those were vigorously opposed by the local environmental community. In fact, I guess the planning for those two projects probably took about ten years, something like that, and even a couple of different ballot initiatives, too. We were always coordinating things with them to try and work it out so the Park District and the environmentalists would be happy, plus the developer would be happy, too.

01-01:28:35

Farrell:

What was the argument from the environmentalists against that development?

01-01:28:38

Mueller:

They saw it as sprawl. It was called Hayward 1900 originally, because they were going to build about 1,900 homes up on top of Walpert Ridge, and they would have been on the ridge all the way along our eastern property line to the southern end of the park. They started pushing back on it after about ten years of battles. I think they settled on something like about 400 homes up there, and the Park District ended up getting about 1,100 acres of land. Bailey Ranch was pretty much the same. They were going to build a lot more houses on that property than what they ended up building, and the Park District got about 300 acres of that land, too.

01-01:29:30

Farrell:

With Garin—I guess we didn't talk about this, but can you tell me a little bit about who used that park?

01-01:29:38

Mueller:

It's mainly a lot of picnickers, at least when I was there. It's been six years, and demographics have kind of changed a lot. But a lot of picnickers, because the picnic area is probably about six, seven acres. A lot of tables. Normally green grass, if you don't have water problems. We get some pretty big crowds out there. Then you get the hikers. But it's not unusual to have a couple thousand people out there, and you go out on the trails and maybe only see about a dozen people out there.

01-01:30:13

Farrell:

Who were some of the other people that you worked with at Garin? Maybe anybody that was particularly significant or that you learned the most from.

01-01:30:23

Mueller:

I'd say one of my bosses, Laura Comstock. She was really good. I've had several different unit managers over the years. When I first came there, there was Dave Lewten, who I had worked with out at Sunol. He was a naturalist back then. Then Mel Thompson, who was a supervising naturalist out at Sunol. Let's see. There's been so many people, it's hard to remember.

01-01:30:57

Farrell: You have such a deep knowledge of both the district and the land, and I'm wondering how you shared this with your employees.

01-01:31:15

Mueller: We'd always have staff meetings once a week, usually on Wednesdays when the full crew was there. Any new policies or procedures or things that came down, I'd always pass that onto them. If I heard of anything that was going to be happening, I'd let them know about it, too.

01-01:31:38

Farrell: Did a lot of your employees care about the land as much as you?

01-01:31:42

Mueller: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

01-01:31:45

Farrell: So it was easy to get them interested?

01-01:31:46

Mueller: Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

01-01:31:56

Farrell: You're there for thirty years, and then you moved over to Dry Creek Ranch, is that right?

01-01:32:01

Mueller: Actually, that's all part of Garin.

01-01:32:03

Farrell: That's all part of Garin? Okay. Can you tell me, I guess, what Garin includes?

01-01:32:14

Mueller: The southern end of Garin is where the main staging area is at the end of Garin Avenue. That includes Jordan Pond. Then it extends north all the way to Cal State East Bay.

01-01:32:27

Farrell: Oh, okay. That's a big land.

01-01:32:31

Mueller: Then to the east, it would include the Bailey Ranch property that I had mentioned, and then the Stonebrae Country Club open space area, and then extends north all the way to—oh, I forget the name of that other open space. Anyhow, it extends north, too.

01-01:32:58

Farrell: Is that the park that you retired?

01-01:33:00

Mueller: Mm-hmm, right.

01-01:33:02

Farrell:

Before we get there, I also did want to ask a little bit about the Meyer sisters. Can you tell me a little bit about who they are and their history with the district?

01-01:33:13

Mueller:

Sure. They were three sisters. Their father was a fairly well-known architect in the early part of the last century. The main family home was in Alameda. The Dry Creek Garden and Cottage was kind of like the weekend summer retreat for the family. The property also included the 1,200-acre Dry Creek Ranch, and that's the Dry Creek Pioneer Regional Park. It was kept separate, because that was one of the conditions of the gift to the Park District, was that it be kept separate from Garin. How the Park District got involved with them is, back in the 1960s, there was a freeway where that was proposed, from Interstate 580 in Castro Valley, that would have run through the Hayward Union City and Fremont Hills to connect up with Interstate 680 down around Mission San Jose. The freeway would have run through the western part of Garin, and also the western part of the Dry Creek Ranch that the sisters owned. They were totally opposed to that, and so they got together with the Park District to try and stop the freeway. I guess, with the Park District's connections in Sacramento and that, they finally got Caltrans to abandon that proposed route, and then they proposed another route through the flatlands of Hayward and Union City. The people that lived there were opposed to it, too. Eventually, the freeway was never built, because by the late 1960s, freeways weren't as much in favor as they were in the late fifties and early '60s.

None of the sisters had ever married. They didn't have any really close relatives or anything. They didn't really want to see any development on the family ranch. They decided, being that the district was so helpful in getting them to abandon the freeway, that they decided to give the property to the Park District after all three sisters had passed. The oldest sister, Edith, was the first sister to pass away, and so the two surviving sisters, Jeanette and Mildred—excuse me. [speaker phone in background] Sorry about that.

01-01:36:10

Farrell:

No, no problem.

01-01:36:11

Mueller:

That's my sister. Anyway, after Edith had passed away, Mildred and Jeanette decided to give the ranch to the Park District early instead of waiting until the last sister passed away. When I transferred to Garin, I was told by the powers that be, when I had a chance to go down and introduce myself to the sisters, and if they had any problems or concerns, to go ahead and take care of that right away. Because back then, they had given the ranch to the Park District, but the sixty acres that included the house and the cottage and the gardens, they had still kept, because they weren't sure if they were going to give that to the district or maybe to the church. One day, I happened to be down in that area, and the gates were open. I saw a car come pulling out, and then it

stopped. An older lady got out to close the gate, so I went over, introduced myself, and it turned out to be Jeanette Meyers, the youngest of the sisters. Her sister Mildred was in the car, but she had had a stroke, and so it was kind of hard to communicate with her. Jeanette told me, "I'm usually out here on Wednesdays and Saturdays, so if you see the gates open, it means I'm home and come on in." Shortly after that, Mildred passed away. I went and checked on a Wednesday to see if the gates were open. Sure enough, they were, so I went in and introduced myself to Jeanette. She was a very, very, very nice lady. She told me about when her and her sisters were young and growing up, going out on the ranch, and all kinds of history about the place. We became really good friends.

01-01:38:02
Farrell:

Around what year did you first meet Jeanette?

01-01:38:05
Mueller:

That was probably around 1982, I think.

01-01:38:11
Farrell:

Oh, so this was early into your time at Garin.

01-01:38:13
Mueller:

Yeah, right.

01-01:38:15
Farrell:

The park had really expressed interest in taking care of them and building a good relationship with them. Can you tell me a little bit about the friendship that you formed with Jeanette, and getting to know her over time?

01-01:38:27
Mueller:

When I would go down there, we'd sit on the front porch of the house. Like I mentioned, she'd talk about her and her sisters and family and everything. I guess when the sisters were thinking about giving the ranch to the Park District, her sister Edith had an old white station wagon, and she'd have all these park officials pile into the car, and they'd go bouncing around the fire roads on the ranch and everything. One day, I asked her if she'd be interested in my taking her around on the ranch in the park truck, and she really liked that. It brought back a lot of memories for her. Then she remembered one time going with her father to the Patterson House in Ardenwood. My boss, Dave Lewten, was living in the house with his family at the time, so I asked him if it would be okay if I brought her over there to see it. He said, "Oh, yeah, sure." I took her over there and we had tea and everything. It was really nice.

01-01:39:33
Farrell:

What was that like for her to go visit?

01-01:39:34
Mueller:

Oh, she loved it. Yeah, she loved it. I guess after a while, she was really happy with how the Park District was taking care of the ranch, and then she decided

to amend her will so that after she passed away, then the Park District would get the cottage and the land surrounding it, too, along with the garden.

01-01:39:56

Farrell: Have they preserved that, the garden and the house?

01-01:39:58

Mueller: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

01-01:40:01

Farrell: What has it meant to you that the Park District has kept that and honored her memory?

01-01:40:06

Mueller: I'm really happy. I know when I was still supervisor there, I wanted to make her proud that she decided to give it to the Park District.

01-01:40:16

Farrell: Did you feel some sense of responsibility to see her wishes through in that way?

01-01:40:20

Mueller: Yeah.

01-01:40:22

Farrell: Was it easy to convince the Park District to keep that alive, in the garden and the house?

01-01:40:28

Mueller: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. In fact, that's always been the plan.

01-01:40:36

Farrell: When you would be on the porch and having your conversations with her, could you relate with her because your family has such a history with land that eventually it was bought by the Park District?

01-01:40:52

Mueller: Yeah, because I remember she mentioned that, when they decided to give the ranch to the Park District, there were a lot of people that thought that was terrible. Why would they want to do that instead of selling it off for development? When we sold our ranch to the Park District—because as I mentioned, we sold it for less than what it was appraised at—there were some people that thought, why are you doing that? Why don't you keep a five-acre parcel and sell that off separately and get more money for it? It wasn't what we wanted to do.

01-01:41:31

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about her personality or what she was like as a person?

01-01:41:37

Mueller:

She was very formal. She was born in 1906, and her and her sisters were very involved in charitable causes. Her sister Edith, she actually was a pediatrician at Children's Hospital in Oakland, and I guess they gave a sizable donation to the hospital for a facility over there. They were involved with a women's group in Alameda that did a lot of charitable events. In the past, for a number of years, they would hold a special garden event at the garden at Dry Creek for this women's group to raise money for different charities. I remember when I first met her, I was talking to her and I addressed her by her first name, Jeanette. I saw her, she kind of cringed a little bit. I thought, oops. After that, it was always Ms. Meyers. That's how she liked to be addressed, was Ms. Meyers.

01-01:42:47

Farrell:

Did she talk about her sisters much, and I guess what they were like as people?

01-01:42:54

Mueller:

She did, but I really don't remember much about that.

01-01:43:01

Farrell:

I guess did you get a sense from the local community about what her and her sisters' contribution had meant to them, or how it had shaped the community with the charitable good and that kind of thing?

01-01:43:16

Mueller:

Most of their charitable giving was through the women's group in Alameda, so I really don't know how much that affected the Union City area and that.

01-01:43:28

Farrell:

That makes sense. How do you see their story being symbolic of the changes to the East Bay and the ranching community in this area?

01-01:43:38

Mueller:

I'd say them wanting to preserve the ranch for future generations to enjoy, much as they did when they were growing up. Because if they hadn't done that, and sold it to a developer instead, all those nice, open hills you see driving along Mission Boulevard in Union City would be kind of like Oakland. It would all be developed.

01-01:44:06

Farrell:

So you decided to retire around 2011?

01-01:44:10

Mueller:

Yeah, it was 2012.

01-01:44:19

Farrell:

Why did you decide to retire?

01-01:44:21

Mueller:

Well, after thirty-seven years giving it 100 percent, I finally got burned out. I'd wake up in the morning, and—"Yeah, I'm ready to go to work," and then it finally got to be, "Oh, man. I want to stay in bed." It was time. It definitely was time. As it turned out, it worked out good anyway, because my wife, she had diabetes for a long time, along with the different ailments and stuff that go with that. Right about the time I retired, her health started to go downhill. That last year that she was alive, I was there to be there for her and take her to doctors appointments and that. If I had kept working, I probably would have had to use a lot of sick leave or taken a leave of absence. The timing was just right.

01-01:45:22

Farrell:

What did it mean to you to finally retire after thirty-seven years with the district?

01-01:45:28

Mueller:

Love it. No regrets.

01-01:45:30

Farrell:

That's good.

01-01:45:21

Mueller:

That's how I wanted it. I didn't want to retire and have a couple months go by—"Oh, man, I made a mistake. I should have kept working." When I finally decided to hang it up, I wanted it to end good, which it certainly did.

01-01:45:51

Farrell:

What are some of the things that you're most proud of from your time with the district?

01-01:45:55

Mueller:

I'd say just seeing the development of Garin and Dry Creek from—like I mentioned, it had only been open about three or four years when I got there—to see it develop from being a fairly new, young park to a mature park with a good reputation, and a place where people want to come and enjoy having a picnic or go out for a hike, things like that.

01-01:46:27

Farrell:

How do you think that your connection and history with Bollinger Canyon had benefited you in your career?

01-01:46:43

Mueller:

Like I said, the work I did when I was working was basically the same type of work that I did growing up. I know I wouldn't have liked it very much working inside a building. If I hadn't gotten hired with the Park District, I probably would have gone into the same line of work that my dad and uncle did, working in a wurst house, making sausage. That wouldn't have been very fun. Like I had mentioned earlier, my ultimate goal was to become a unit manager, but after I made supervisor, I was totally happy, because I had the

best of both worlds. I could work in the office. When I got tired of doing that, I could go out in the field and dig a hole or pick up litter or something like that, where the next step up, it's a lot of being in the office and making policy and things like that.

01-01:47:44

Farrell:

How do you think that your grandparents' influence stayed with you during your time with the district?

01-01:47:51

Mueller:

I know my grandfather, having started his own business, he was the boss. In fact, my dad and uncle always called him boss. I remember, when I was really young, I was walking around with my hands in my pockets, and he told me, "Get your hands out of your pockets." It's just that work ethic. Because he had lost his [arm]—I think it was his left arm—in an accident when he was making sausage. That didn't stop him. He worked hard right up until his later years. I really admired that.

01-01:48:42

Farrell:

What do you see as the importance of parklands in people's lives, whether they have some connection to the land, or they're just general public, people who come to the park?

01-01:48:53

Mueller:

I think having a place to get away from the rat race. Especially now, they're talking about denser and denser development. People need a place where they can get out and have some open space around them, to get out to really get into nature again. I know when we were first married, we lived in a little cabin just down the road here, and then from there we moved to an apartment in Pleasanton. I hated living in that apartment. It was a two-story building. We lived on the ground floor. The people upstairs were heavy walkers. You'd be sitting in the living room, and you'd hear the—you know, it would drive us crazy. Everyone needs a chance to get out and have that openness around them to kind of get focused again.

01-01:49:59

Farrell:

What do you want people to remember about your family's connection with this area?

01-01:50:06

Mueller:

That we were once part of it, kind of like the Bollingers. Bollinger Canyon is named after the Bollinger family. Back in the fifties, like I mentioned, this whole back half of the canyon was all Muellers. Just so that people know part of the history of the area.

01-01:50:32

Farrell:

What are your hopes for the future of this area and the district?

01-01:50:37

Mueller:

This area, see it stay like it is. That seems to be happening for this part of the canyon, anyway. The Park District owns most of the land from here back. To the east, there are still a couple of fairly large ranches to the south that would be nice to see eventually brought into the Park District. I know one of the owners of one of the larger parcels, they want to keep it like it is. As long as they keep passing it on in the family and they all feel the same way, then it probably will. It's kind of sad to see, right near Crow Canyon, they have that new development going in. There's going to be about 700 homes there. That will change that area a lot from how it has been all these years that we've been out here.

01-01:51:38

Farrell:

I think that might be all the questions I have for you, but is there anything else that you want to add?

01-01:51:43

Mueller:

Not that I can think of.

01-01:51:45

Farrell:

Thank you so much. I really appreciate your time. This was great.

01-01:51:47

Mueller:

Yeah, I enjoyed it.

[End of Interview]