

Egon Pedersen

Egon Pedersen: The Beginnings of Save Mount Diablo

Save Mount Diablo Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Amanda Tewes
in 2021

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Egon Pedersen (center), Steve C. Kemiji (left) of the State Historical Resources Commission, and Mary Bowerman (right) at the Mount Diablo historical plaque on April 23, 1978.
Photograph by Chris Pedersen.

JUNE 26, 1974



INGER AND EGON PEDERSEN OF SAVE MOUNT DIABLO

Love of adopted country encompasses Mt. Diablo

By BARBARA SULLIVAN

There's a story that Egon Pedersen likes to tell. He was up on Mount Diablo one day, hiking around in the general area where the old hotel on the mountain once stood, and he was wishing he could find something — anything — from that once-grand landmark of the Bay Area. And with that wish, he happened to look down, and right at his feet, mixed in with the stones and dirt and everything else, lay a small piece of whiteness. Looking like marble, and a little larger than a fifty-cent piece, the artifact had a portion of a raised figure in its center. A broken remnant from the sort of elegant fixtures once boasted by the hotels of another era — and obviously, believes Egon Pedersen, one last leftover from the mountain hotel that, set its end in fire. Pedersen is the new president of Save Mount Diablo, and his conversation is full of stories about the mountain — just as his home is sprinkled with relics, rocks and pictures from and of the mountain.

Save Mount Diablo is the group begun on Pearl Harbor Day of 1941 by a group of people who want to do just what the name of their organization says — save Mount Diablo, in its entirety, from all development. To this end, the group has been primarily a fund-raising one. Some \$25,000 has been raised so far, and negotiations are underway to buy several pieces of property and add them to the state park. (The Mount Diablo State Park comprises only about one-third of the mountain.) The group also serves in a consciousness-raising capacity — increasing the sensitivity of the public about this beautiful piece of real estate in its backyard, and about the ever-encroaching threat of development. As the new president of Save Mount Diablo, Egon Pedersen is out in the forefront as the spokesperson of keeping the mountain in open space. And his salesmanship comes across in a voice still rich with the Scandinavian accent of his native Denmark.

The path from citizen of Denmark to advocate of a California mountain is hardly an ordinary one.

Egon and his blonde wife, Inger, came to the United States 18 years ago, with plans to stay for two years and visit relatives who had emigrated.

They have lived here ever since.

They settled in the Bay Area for two reasons — Inger's uncle, who sponsored them, lived in Oakland, and the topographical maps of this area had convinced them that this was the place to live.

"We saw this big beautiful bay on the map, and of course, we thought you could swim in it... and being from Denmark, with the ocean, that just appealed so much to us," remember the Pedersens.

They soon found they couldn't swim in the bay, but the outdoors life offered by California and the west proved, and is still proving, an unending source of enjoyment.

They took off in a 1950 Plymouth back in 1957 (the year after arriving) and toured the west from the Glacier National Park in Montana to Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons in Wyoming — "it was almost as bad as Europe in 14 days, you know, today is Tuesday, so

we've got to be at Yellowstone." Even the fact that Inger was suffering from the morning sickness of carrying their first child ("morning!" it was more like all day. "I didn't prevent them from appreciating the sights and relishing the experience.")

That first big jaunt around the western part of the United States confirmed them as lovers of the outdoors — a romance that has continued as their family has increased.

Vivika, 16, Sandra, 13, and Chris, 11, had hiking shoes on their feet and packs on their backs not long after they were out of their oddies' clothes, and vacations for the Pedersens have consistently meant quiet camp sites in peaceful places.

Mount Diablo came to the forefront of their attention when they were building their home in Diablo a couple of years ago.

"We had gone on many picnics on the mountain, and we got interested in the history. The more we learned, the more interested we got."

"And one day, Inger, she was reading the paper, and she said 'look here, there's a group that wants to buy Mount Diablo.'"

"We made a donation right away, and then I went to a meeting and made some suggestions about posters, and that was how it began," says Pedersen.

The Save Mount Diablo Committee — Peg Kovar, Art Bonnell, Mary Bowerman, and all the others who want the backbone of the group as it got started — asked Pedersen to become vice president and to make talks to various groups about the mountain.

At first this was a hard chore for the soft-spoken man.

"I told them, 'I can't stand up and talk like that, all I want to do is help,' and they told me, 'well, this is the way you can help.' " So he began making the rounds, talking about the mountain, its history, its beauty — and its future.

"Standing up and making himself heard is no longer the formidable task it once was."

He speaks with equal assurance and ease before such diverse groups as the friendly San Ramon Valley Historical Society and the not-always-so-friendly Contra Costa County Planning Commission.

"Don't let the mountain — any part of the mountain — go to development, he says."

"Save the mountain now, before it's too late."

"It's not hard, talking, anymore," he says.

"I think that when you really have something in your heart, you don't have these problems in getting up to speak."

The Pedersens have had — and still have — their moments of missing their native Denmark and all the family they left behind. Their large redwood home, which they designed themselves, flies the American flag on holidays, but reflects their heritage in the cool and uncluttered Danish decor.

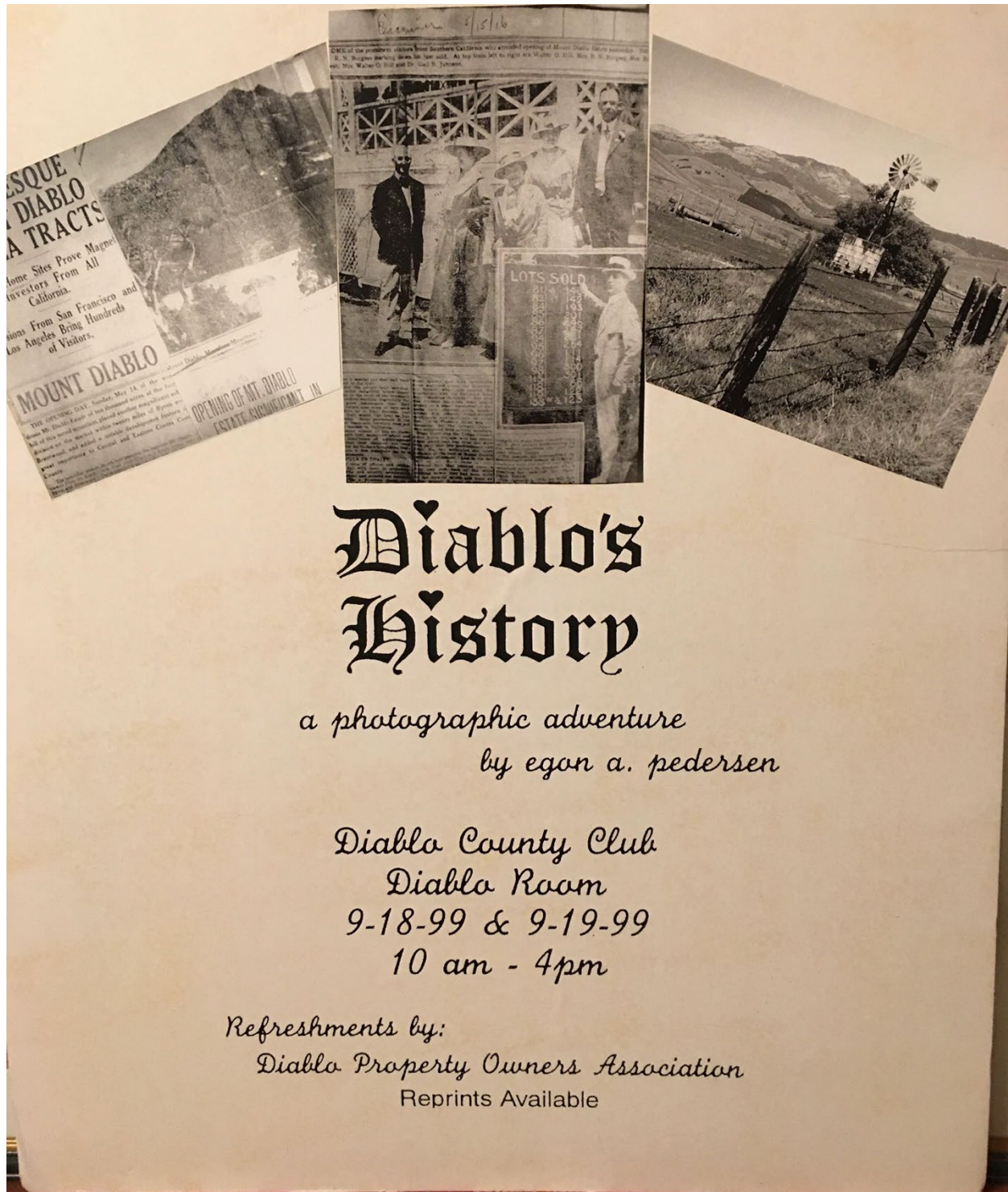
Blending with that decor, however, are framed pictures of Mount Diablo, shelves containing rocks picked up from the different levels of the mountain — and, of course, the little white chunk that symbolizes some of the history of the mountain.

The mountain is for everyone, says the new president of Save Mount Diablo. And he's out to help preserve it for tomorrow's generations.

"Love of adopted country encompasses Mt. Diablo," by Barbara Sullivan, June 26, 1974, *Tri-Valley Times*. Article featuring Inger and Egon Pedersen.



Egon Pedersen at the dedication ceremony for the Mount Diablo historical plaque on April 23, 1978. Photograph by Chris Pedersen.



Diablo's History

a photographic adventure

by egon a. pedersen

Diablo County Club

Diablo Room

9-18-99 & 9-19-99

10 am - 4pm

Refreshments by:

Diablo Property Owners Association

Reprints Available

Program for a presentation of Egon Pedersen's historical photograph collection to the Diablo Property Owners Association, "Diablo's History: A Photographic Adventure," at the Diablo Country Club, September 18–19, 1999.



Egon Pedersen (right) and State Park Peace Officer Scott Poole at the Mount Diablo historical plaque on the fortieth anniversary of its placement on April 23, 2018.

Photograph by Cheri Easterley.

Abstract

Egon Pedersen is a retired mechanical engineer and longtime supporter of Save Mount Diablo (SMD), serving as vice president from 1972 to 1974 and president from 1974 to 1977. Pedersen was born in Henne, Denmark, in 1928. He attended college in Denmark before he and his wife, Inger, emigrated to California in the 1950s. Pedersen joined SMD in 1972 and was an important part of the organization's early leadership. In this interview, Pedersen discusses growing up in Denmark, including his interactions with nature and German occupation during World War II; meeting and marrying his wife, Inger; emigrating to the Bay Area and exploring California's natural landscapes; living and working in the Bay Area, eventually purchasing a home in Diablo, California; his family's early interactions with Mount Diablo, including hiking and horseback riding; the early years of SMD, including founders and participants, mission, meeting locations, allies like California State Senator John Nejedly, partners like East Bay Regional Park District, interactions with developers, fundraising efforts, land acquisition, and public outreach like April on the Mountain hikes starting in 1974; his personal leadership in SMD, including corresponding with Governor Ronald Reagan, working with other politicians, giving public talks about the history of Mount Diablo and the work of SMD, and advocating for a California Historical Landmark plaque on Mount Diablo; the current work of SMD; the fortieth anniversary of the placement of the California Historical Landmark plaque; changes in the Bay Area; and meeting his current partner, Cheri Easterly.

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Project History

By the early 1970s, the Bay Area was in the midst of great social and cultural change. With plans for the extension of BART into the East Bay, and suburban sprawl threatening Mount Diablo and other open spaces, Save Mount Diablo (SMD) answered a call to action. SMD was founded by Dr. Mary Bowerman and Arthur Bonwell in 1971. It became a nationally accredited land trust based in the San Francisco Bay Area comprised of biologists, conservationists, hikers, cyclists, equestrians, bird watchers, artists, and people who just loved to look at and enjoy the mountain. SMD has been preserving lands on and around Mount Diablo and educating the public to the mountain's natural values since its founding. However, the organization's focus on educational programs and protecting Mount Diablo's connection to its sustaining Diablo Range has grown substantially over the last few years due in part to new leadership and the growing severity of the climate crisis. As an organization, Save Mount Diablo is both an exceptional example of local land conservation efforts, as well as representative of national and international environmental activism that extends beyond the Bay Area. This oral history project began in 2021 as SMD approached its fiftieth anniversary. Most of the interviews were conducted remotely due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Interview 1: August 06, 2021

01-00:00:00

Tewes: This is an interview with Egon Pedersen for the Save Mount Diablo Oral History Project, in association with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. The interview is being conducted by Amanda Tewes on August 6, 2021. Mr. Pedersen joins me in this remote interview from Danville, California, and I am in Walnut Creek, California. So thanks so much for joining me today. I really appreciate it.

01-00:00:22

Pedersen: I'm happy to be here.

01-00:00:26

Tewes: Let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

01-00:00:31

Pedersen: Oh, I'd be glad to tell you. I was born July 18, 1928, out on a little farm that my grandparents owned, in a little town called Henne. It's on the west side of Jutland, and Jutland is a peninsula, the main part of Denmark. Denmark consists of this peninsula and two major islands and 400 small islands.

01-00:01:04

Like I said, I was born July 18, and it was actually eleven days after my mother was twenty-one, so she got pregnant very, very early in her life. Later on, I figured out how there must have been a love story, because she was actually working for my dad's mother, of course, and of course they fell in love with each other. And then lo and behold, she found out she got pregnant, and it wasn't planned at all.

01-00:01:47

The funny thing was then they had to hurry up and get married, because in those days, it wasn't a good thing to have children without being married. They were so short of time that my father, he said he had to have a new suit made, so he told the tailor, "You know what? If you could get my suit ready for the wedding, I'll name my kid after you." And that's why I'm called Egon Antoni, and I have nothing to do with Italy or anything. So everybody's always asking me, "Why are you called Antoni? You're coming from Denmark, and you have all the Danish heritage." It was just because my dad's tailor's name was Antoni. So I think that was a cute story. And there are so many Pedersens in Denmark. I actually at one time was thinking about, I'm going to change my last name to Antoni, because I thought it sounded very exciting. [Cheri Easterley laughs in the background] So—

01-00:03:01

Tewes: That's a funny story.

01-00:03:03

Pedersen: What I found out was, I didn't stay too long out in the country, because my mom and dad got a little apartment in Esbjerg. It's a shipping port on the west

coast of Denmark. And also, my dad was a marine engineer, and because he was, at that time, sailing with ships of—that were going out from Esbjerg, so it was convenient for him.

01-00:03:40

So then in my very early life, I had a very, very bad, a very bad start in my life. When I was eleven years old in 1940, and my dad was a marine engineer, and he was sailing between Esbjerg, Denmark, and Britain—England. He was sailing dairy products over there and bringing coal back to Denmark. This was in January 1940, and lo and behold, the Germans came in and bombed the ship. At that time, we even had—they had a big neutral flag on top of the ship. But even so, they probably knew that they were going to invade Denmark on April 9 of 1940, so they thought, The heck with that, and they were going to start the war. So I had a very hard time at that time. On top of that, then my uncle, my mother's sister's husband, he was a captain on a tugboat. And so one day the Germans came to his house and said—the Germans were putting mines out in the water between Denmark and England, and one of the mine ships had gotten [grounded], so they came and said that, "We need you to go out and tow that boat out of there." My uncle said, "No way I'm going to do that, because you've filled all this water up with mines." But they said, "Well, it's either you go or we'll kill you right now." Yeah, so there were no ifs and [or] buts about that. Sure enough, they got on a mine, of course, because the water was so full of mines. This was really a tough time for my life in the beginning.

01-00:06:23

And then the strange thing after that, was a couple of months after, my aunt, she found out she was pregnant, and she didn't even know that. So she has lost her husband, but, in a way, it was kind of a blessing. She got something from her husband she didn't expect.

01-00:06:53

But during the occupation in the 1940s, it was a very, very hard time. You know, a lot of times the Germans would put a quarantine on, and we couldn't get out all day and night. And it got even worse sometimes. They cut off the water, they cut off the electricity, so it was really tough, tough times. Yeah. So thank God I have a lot of uncles that were farmers. I still remember one night it was very quiet and dark, and we had to have dark screens on the windows so the British wouldn't come and bomb the cities. And then one of my uncles, he came with a quarter pig that—because we couldn't buy food in the stores. The Germans were getting it all. But lo and behold, one of my uncles brought a quarter pig, so my mother was basically all night cutting this pig up and boiling it in water and putting it in cans. So yeah, these were hard times during the German occupation. It was quite [hard].

01-00:08:16

Tewes: Yeah. Thank you for telling me that. Yeah, that's very challenging. Well, you've mentioned that your uncles were farmers. Were you able to visit the farms during the war?

01-00:08:31

Pedersen: Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, we could do that. Yeah, we could do that. A lot of times we would bike out there.

01-00:08:38

Tewes: Yeah, tell me about biking around Denmark.

01-00:08:41

Pedersen: Yeah well, this was one of the favorite things we did for exercise and coming out and seeing nature. I was playing soccer, and I was belonging to a handball club, so this was one of the favorite things, was to—going on our bikes all over Denmark, and we stayed at the youth hostels there. In Denmark they have beautiful bike trails right next to the roads, so they are separate with quite a distance, so it's very safe to ride bikes in Denmark. So that was a beautiful thing, and like we talked about before, Denmark is very flat.

01-00:09:29

But we do have a prized piece of land in Denmark that's called Bornholm, and it's an island of rocks. It's a very rocky island and it's in the southern part of Sweden, and I never, ever could understand why it belonged to Denmark, because it was so far away from Denmark. [laughs] But it is a beautiful island, and that was one of our favorite things, to go to that island to climb all these rocks. And the beautiful thing about whoever did it, the rulers or the government of the island, they made a trail all the way [around] the whole island right out by the water. It was just incredible how they had preserved all that nature for all these very, very exclusive places. And so we did that: several times we went over to that island and walked the trail around the island. So that's one of my fond memories of hiking and biking in Denmark.

01-00:10:48

Tewes: It sounds like this was a nice escape for you. Would you say that?

01-00:10:52

Pedersen: Oh, that was very, very nice. Yeah, it really was. [laughs] When I met my wife, she wanted to go to Bornholm, too, and then we showed all the pictures to her best friend, and the friend said, "Oh, I want to go with you two next year." [laughs] So the next year we were going with my wife's friend, too, so it was kind of cute. Yeah.

01-00:11:18

Tewes: Well yeah, you've mentioned your [wife, Inger].

01-00:11:25

Pedersen: Oh, when did I meet my wife?

01-00:11:27

Tewes: Yeah, tell me about her.

01-00:11:29

Pedersen: That was in '52, 1952. Yeah, she was a kindergarten teacher, and of course they were all females, and they were graduating. I was going to university to become a mechanical engineer. Mechanical engineers, in Denmark, they have to have four years' apprenticeship in a machine shop, where they have to work with the lathes, the drills, and honers and everything—dusty and dirty and filthy, so there was no females that wanted to get into that—not at that time, no. So it was all males at the engineering school I went to.

01-00:12:15

So some of these girls have a graduation for their kindergarten school, and ten of the girls didn't have a date or anything. So one of them knew one of my friends and said, "Hey, we have ten girls that would like to have a blind date. So are you interested in going?" I said, "Of course I'd like to go, because it sounds like a nice party." All these women, you know? So we each got a number. [laughs] And of course, there was all my friends from class. We were about ten guys, so one of the parents invited us to a party and a good dinner, a dinner before the party, so we were—we got kind of loaded and we go to the party. Because they were kindergarten teachers, it was held in an old kindergarten school. I still remember when I went to the bathroom, I thought, Holy Moses, you really had too much, Egon. [laughs] Because I went into those tiny, bitty potties, you know?

01-00:13:43

But anyway, it didn't take very long before I found this beautiful woman and start dancing with her and telling her about my life and all my travels and all the things that—at that time, I had been out at sea as a marine engineer, and I'd been all over Europe. I'd been visiting all these countries that—she was just dying to go traveling, so she got very interested in my travel stories and whatever, talking. So needless to say, we became very good friends that night. The amazing thing is, so I said to her at the end, "So what was your number?" Because I never found the matching number that I had. So I was curious what number she had, and she said, "You know, Egon, I actually came with a date. I was not one who needed a date." But anyway, I don't know what happened to him, and I didn't really care, because we were doing very well together.

01-00:15:00

And so of course, I said, "How about going to a movie the next day?" And she said, sure, she'd like to go to a movie. And so that day, I swear, that this was the first movie made in color at that time. And you know, the movie was *Rose Marie* with Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald. I'll never forget. And lo and behold, our most favorite place here in the United States to go camping was over to Emerald Bay at Lake Tahoe. There was a little grocery store there. It had cabins, had nine cabins, and there was a big sign up there saying that at Cabin 7, this is where Jeanette MacDonald was singing in *Rose Marie*, in

Rose Marie, the movie. And of course, we always wanted to stay in Cabin 7, but we never got the money to do that. So but anyway, it was kind of cute that—so after that, I wanted to find that movie in color, but there was no way I could find it. [laughs] But I did borrow the movie from Hollywood. I got this huge, big reel, and I was showing it for friends and family, and I didn't realize the take-up didn't work, so I had film all over the living room. But anyway, it was—[laughs]

01-00:16:54

Tewes: That's pretty funny.

01-00:16:57

Pedersen: It was kind of a cute story that our favorite place here in the United States was that first movie we ever saw together.

01-00:17:04

Tewes: Yeah, that's a great connection.

01-00:17:06

Pedersen: It was just amazing, yeah. So anyway, we kept on testing each other, and she got an offer to go to a job in Copenhagen, and she said, "Should I go there or should I stay here in town?" And I was still going to school, so I thought it would be better if she went over there so I could concentrate on my studies, but that was a dumb thing to do. That was very bad, because, of course, she found another guy over there she liked. But anyway, so it was up and down for a while, yeah.

01-00:17:43

And then I finally talked her into coming back when I graduated in '53 from school, and then we didn't quite know what to do, and we'd started looking for apartments. We each had a room at that time, separate rooms, but so we started looking for apartments. Lo and behold, we found the most darling—it was a three-story building, and the top apartments had these big ceilings and two little balconies out [front]: one from the bedroom and one from the living room. It was just absolutely adorable. So she [said], "Oh boy, I wish I could get one of these apartments, but I only want the top one. That's all I want." [laughs] So we put in an application to get this apartment, and we said, "We are only interested in the top one, otherwise forget it." And lo and behold, we got it, of course. So then he said, "So are you married?" "No, no. No, we are not married." "Oh. Well, that's too bad, because we only accept married couples, because this is a brand-new building, brand-new complex, and we only want married couples here. No singles at all. No." So my wife said, "Well, I guess I have to marry the guy." [laughs] So I don't know if I liked that or not, but she had to marry me because she could get her favorite apartment. But anyway, it worked out. We got the apartment, and we loved it.

01-00:19:48

And then of course, she had a lot of family in the United States, and her mother was—had nine siblings, and seven of them actually emigrated to the

United States. So of course, she was very curious [about] what they were doing, because they kept on sending letters and pictures. And now she's got an engineer, so maybe there's a chance we could go over there and try to visit the family, she had a good man that could get a job. And so we decided okay. Fortunately, her uncle was willing to sponsor us. At that time, you needed a sponsor, and he had to put down money in his bank account and sign a document that if we couldn't make it, then he would pay for our trip back home to Denmark. So that was very nice of him. And we decided we'd better go as immigrants, because then I could get a job. At that time, there was a waiting list, because the United States only accepted so many from Denmark or from Europe, I don't know, but it took us two years [before] we finally got permission to go. So we were very happy to come to the United States, and we had promised the family that most people stay for two years, but it turned out a lot different.

01-00:21:53

Tewes:

Yes, it did. Can you tell me what you liked about California, in particular? What did it look like when you came?

01-00:22:02

Pedersen:

That was one thing, also: my wife wanted to go to California, because she had read about Yosemite. That was a big thing in her—and she said, "I want to go and visit the family and Yosemite. That's the first place I want to go." Because she had seen and heard all about Yosemite. We never could understand when we came that some of our friends and family, they had never been to Yosemite, and yet this was our biggest thing to visit. But no, we were very impressed with all the beautiful state and national parks that California has, all the open space and all the beautiful things. We were a little disappointed with San Francisco Bay, because we looked at the map in Denmark and we saw this beautiful bay, and we just [en]visioned, Here's this gorgeous bay with all these sandy beaches and all the umbrellas and people sitting by the beach all around the bay. That's the way we had it visualized, but—and the water would be nice and warm and toasty, and there'd be nice snack bars all the way around. But that, I must say, that's about the only thing that disappointed.

01-00:23:29

Then, of course, we found out, oh, you can go to Stinson Beach, then you're right on the water. And of course, we did and, you know, it almost killed us, because we were not used to those kind of waves. They knocked us completely upside down. We didn't know what the wave—we were upside down—we never, ever experienced that. Because in Denmark, the waves are coming in very soft. So it was a brand-new experience for us, I'm telling you. Now, afterwards you read about all the horror stories about undertow and all. Thank God that turned out the way it did, that it was just a big surprise, yeah.

01-00:24:15

Tewes:

It sounds like it! [laughs] So—

01-00:24:18
Pedersen:

We loved the area, and every weekend we were on a—going someplace, and we could see this beautiful mountain out in the distance. It was one of the very, very first places we went to, was Mount Diablo, because we could see it sticking up wherever we were, and everything. And we bought a little tent and took the family camping, because that's the only thing we could afford. So we bought this little, bitty tent, and we were—Inger and I were on one side of the pole—it was just a little nine by nine—and the two girls on the one side, the other side; and then my son down at the feet of all of us, and he was always complaining he had to sleep by the feet. But so yeah, we just loved the outdoors, and we liked going on picnics on Mount Diablo and hiking all the trails there.

01-00:25:29

And then one of the first weekends, the big weekends we had, we wanted to go to Yosemite, but then one of my good friends at work, he said, "Oh no"—this was probably Labor Day or Memorial Day—"Oh no, no, no. This is the worst day to go to Yosemite. It'll be so packed. It'll be so mobbed, and you'll be—we are going down to Sequoia National Park, so you can go with us," which is south of Yosemite. So of course, we couldn't say no to that, so we went with our good friends. And they became our good camping friends all our lives, when we could. So we had some people that we could always go camping with, and they loved to go hiking, too, so it was a beautiful time. And then the next big weekend then, of course, we had to go to Yosemite. We did a lot of backpacking and we hiked up to Half Dome about three or four times. We took all three kids up to the very top of Yosemite Falls, and I'm telling you, that's quite a hike.

01-00:26:56
Tewes:

Yeah, that's not easy [even] for an adult.

01-00:26:58
Pedersen:

No, and I had to carry my son. And my youngest daughter, she was so scared of the mist from the waterfall. It was quite a hike, I'm telling you. [laughs]

01-00:27:12
Tewes:

Well, all the more impressive.

01-00:27:14
Pedersen:

Yeah, yeah.

01-00:27:15
Tewes:

Well, I want to go back to Mount Diablo, and the fact that you could see this mountain in the distance, and you were really interested in it. What did it look like up close? What were the trails like? Where did you go on the mountain?

01-00:27:29
Pedersen:

Well you know, we went on a lot of picnics up there, and then we went on trails out from the picnic areas, because they're crisscrossing all the way on top—all the way up and down the mountain, the trails are connecting, and

there are side trails going out. So we loved doing that. It's funny, one time in the very beginning, we got up there, and then I said to my wife, "You know what? I don't think I have thirty-five cents." This is what it cost to get in. "So how much do you have?" And it turned out neither of us had enough money to go into the entrance, so we had to picnic outside the entrance of the park. But no, after that we would make sure we had enough money to go in every time we got up there. And then later on, as time went on, we also joined the [California] State Parks Association, and had an annual pass so we could go there every day without paying, so we had to show them our [pass].

01-00:28:46

Tewes: That's smart.

01-00:28:47

Pedersen: That was a wonderful thing to have, and you could do that to all of the state parks, you could go in for day use, and we loved doing that. Yeah.

01-00:28:58

Tewes: Yeah, so when you first moved to California, where were you living? Oakland?

01-00:29:05

Pedersen: The very, very beginning, yeah. Of course, the first few days we lived with [Inger's] uncle. He had a nice room for us. And then he helped—he knew somebody at the Friden Calculating [Machine] Company—thank God! He said, "Can you use a good mechanical engineer from Denmark?" And the guy said, "I'm sure we can, so you just come and talk to the personnel director." And I got a job right away there, so that was a beautiful start for me.

01-00:29:42

And then of course, then we could start looking for an apartment. But I'm telling you, it was a far cry from that apartment we had under the roof in Denmark. It was kind of cute, because some of my mother-in-law's sisters, they came on a visit before we emigrated, and they saw our little, cozy apartment. And they said, "Why in the world would you move to the United States? Look at that gorgeous place you're living in. A brand-new home; it's a cozy, little apartment with the little balconies. Why in the world would you leave that?" [laughs] But anyway, we got a furnished apartment on Capp St. in East Oakland, and I'm telling you, it was a far cry from what we had in Denmark.

01-00:30:44

But nevertheless, we were in the United States, and we were trying something new. We were determined to see as much as we could, so every weekend we were out exploring someplace. Like I said, we loved the national parks and the state parks and everything. Yeah.

01-00:31:07

Tewes: Yeah. Okay, so you start off in Oakland.

01-00:31:11
Pedersen:

Yeah, we started out in Oakland, and then I had a good job, and my wife could not get a job as a kindergarten teacher, because nobody would accept her credentials here. And she wasn't too, too eager about the job anyway, so she said, "I want to try something different." So she actually went to school to become a secretary, so it was very ambitious. And then lo and behold, I don't know how she got it or anything, but anyway, she ended up being secretary for the patent director where I worked. So that was a very, very beautiful job she had, and she got her own office with a view to the Bay and everything. So we were really living a good style. And then, boom, all of a sudden, ta-da, she got pregnant. Yeah, and that was not planned at all. No, it was not planned at all. As a matter of fact, she was kind of upset. She said it was not planned. Here she'd just gotten this gorgeous job with the patent director, and she loved going out for lunch with him and all his buddies, so that was just the life that suited her. [laughs]

01-00:32:45

But anyway, so I said, "Oh my goodness. What are we going to do now?" The one thing we needed, we needed some help, because we didn't—and her uncle and aunt, they couldn't help. They were seniors at that time, of course, and we didn't have any friends or anybody. So I wrote to my mother. I said, "Dear Mother, we definitely—we really need some help, because now we're having a baby, and we don't have any money. We don't have a house. We don't have anything." And so, thank God, my mother agreed to come for six months, because she had to help my brother, too. My brother was sometimes not doing so well and needed help, so she had to show consideration for him. But she would come for six months, she said.

01-00:33:53

And then, thank God, we found another apartment that had two bedrooms, and it had a nice, little balcony. It was also in East Oakland, but at that time it was a beautiful area. It was a very, very nice, cozy area, very quiet and peaceful. My mother came and we went shopping. We told her what we'd want to eat, and she had the dinner ready when we got home. Of course, we put all of Inger's salary in the bank, and that was the whole idea, that was the idea. As a matter of fact, my mother got to like it very much, because we took her camping, too, so that was something new for her. She liked the family over here, because they came visiting quite often. Inger had a big family, and they were helpful.

01-00:34:50
Tewes:

Yeah.

01-00:34:51
Pedersen:

Then later on, we figured—and Inger said, "I'd really like to have a house." And now we had saved enough money, so we got a nice, new house in Pinole. Pinole, it was a nice place. It was way out of the city. It was rolling hills. And the climate out there was really great. The fog never seemed to come out

there, and it was still close enough to the Bay [that] it was fairly cool. It was a beautiful home we had there. Then when the six months was up, I said to my mother, "You know what, Mother? If you'll stay another six months, then you can take Vibeke, your granddaughter, to Denmark to show off." So I was trying to make a bargain with her. And of course, she couldn't resist that offer, so I talked her into staying another six months. And if it hadn't been for Mother, you know, I wouldn't be doing as well as I'm doing today, because that gave us money to get our first home.

01-00:36:22

Tewes: That's good to hear. So you lived in Pinole for a while, and you bought a house—or some property first, and then built a house in Diablo, California?

01-00:36:33

Pedersen: That was much later.

01-00:36:35

Tewes: Exactly, exactly.

01-00:36:37

Pedersen: That's much later.

01-00:36:38

Tewes: Right.

01-00:36:39

Pedersen: Because after Pinole, we moved to Pleasanton.

01-00:36:43

Tewes: Oh okay.

01-00:36:45

Pedersen: Yeah, and it was actually in Pleasanton when we could really enjoy Mount Diablo, because that was the view from our bedroom. Yeah, here was Mount Diablo right outside our bedroom window, and we went on a lot of picnics there. My older daughter got a friend that was very much into horses, and she said, "Oh, Dad, can't we move someplace where we can have horses?" And I said, "Well, maybe that's a possibility." Because when we bought the house, there was supposed to be a park behind the house. They never built the park, but they built two schools behind the house. And then all the schoolkids had those little mini-bikes, and they were driving these mini-bikes behind our fence all day long when they're off of school, and it was so noisy. We couldn't even sit out in our backyard. I'm telling you, it was horrible. And for somebody who loves peace and nature and everything, that was not a good thing. So I said, "Well, maybe it's a good idea to find a place."

01-00:38:00

So we went to Danville, to a realtor, and she said, "Okay, I have just the property for you." So of course, she took us to Diablo, and she said, "Here's a property where you can have two horses." My wife has always said, "You

know what, Egon, if we could live next to a golf course, it would be so nice, because it's always green, just like Denmark." And lo and behold, this lot was right next to a golf course. Oh yeah, this was just our dream place. So of course, we gave an offer, but we had a beautiful home in Pleasanton—two stories; we each had our own room; I had my own office; a balcony all the way across. It looked like an old estate from the old days. So there was a contingency—the sale of our home there—that we bought the lot. We just couldn't sell our home. It was just too bad, just couldn't. And then I tried to sell it myself, and it didn't work. We kept going out to this lot out in Diablo and sat there and prayed to God, "Oh, God, please, someday can this be ours? Can we come and live here?"

01-00:39:39

And I'm telling you, it's just amazing: that lot kept on sitting there. And one good thing was at that time they were all on septic tanks. The original owner of all the acreage there, that had subdivided it, he was living a little bit above the property we were looking at, and they are letting all excess water, except sewer water—all other waters were running down, from the laundry, from the kitchen. It was running right across the property. And thank God, the property is a long property, but anybody looking at that lot, they were not going to traipse out over that smelly, yucky, gray stream of muddy slime and things to really come out to the end and enjoy the greenery by the end of the lot. Thank God for us.

01-00:40:41

So we kept on trying to sell our house, and the lot kept on sitting there, and thank God the original owner there, they knew we were very interested. So one night she called me up and says, "Egon, your lot is going to be on foreclosure, and it's going to be auctioned off tomorrow in Martinez at the Martinez courthouse." And I thought, Oh my God, I don't have any money. But God told me, "Egon, you have to go there. You just have to go and see what it's all about." Because I had asked Inger's uncle, I had asked him if he would lend us the money to buy the lot. He actually came out and looked at it and he said, "So how much is the lot?" And I said, "It's eighteen." And he said, "Oh, I think \$1,800 is too much." But it was not \$1,800, [it was \$18,000]. So I figured, No sense asking him any questions about that. But anyway, I went out to Martinez. And here was Wells Fargo, they had the loan on the property, and he said, "Okay, it's that property there," and described the property. Here was all these investors and real estate people and everything around. And he said, "We have to give the first bid on the loan. This is what the loan is today. It's \$13,000. We have to give the first bid." And so, "Who has the next bid?" And I'm telling you, I was standing there just praying to God. "Oh, you all keep quiet now. You don't say a word. Please, don't say anything, any of you." And he said, "I can't believe it. It's a beautiful property. It's right next to the golf course, one acre, you can have horses. But there is a sewer bond, because we are going to have new sewers put in." Thank God for that, because maybe some people were a little [leery] on that one. Anyway, I

kept on praying. So he kept on looking, and no offers, no offers. So he said, "Well, that's too bad. We'll just have to take in the property ourselves."

01-00:43:17

I went up to the real estate [representative for] Wells Fargo and I said, "You know what? I've offered on this property, and I love the property. I really like it, but I don't have any money. I tried to sell my house." I was being honest with him. And he said, "You know what, Mr. Pedersen? You come to my office tomorrow in San Francisco, and we'll lend you the money so you can buy it." Because normally, you could not borrow money to buy land in those days. So he said, "And then you have time to sell your house." So this is how God has helped me again to get the property. Then we eventually sold the house, we moved into an apartment, and we went back to the drawing board to design our dream house. And anyway, three plans before—for my house—I was satisfied with what I had. And then I could see, this is perfect. This is just the perfect home. Because I wanted all the rooms to be toward the view, and everybody said, "No way you can do that." But I did. Yeah, so—

01-00:44:41

Tewes:

How great. You mentioned horses were a big reason for looking at property out that area. Can you tell me what it was like, what it looked like with horses around when you moved in?

01-00:44:53

Pedersen:

It was beautiful, because it was completely open country, and everybody had two or three or four or more horses. Some had even five or six horses. It was all open, and the only thing that was fenced in was the horses. There was no fences around the property. And between all of the properties there were kind of little trails. You could just ride your horses in between everything. There was no personal gates. There was just the horses that were fenced in. Yeah, so it was a beautiful time, and it was even so open that the kids were riding the rough side of the golf course, too, and they really wanted to get into it. They just had a rickety fence that was no problem for the horses to get over that. But it was a beautiful time, and some of the people had a lot of barbecues. One guy had—he had a huge, big horse barn where he could keep all the horses from all the neighbors and everybody from the outside. He had a horse ring where they could train their horses and ride around [on] the horses. It didn't take very long before my son, he got a job up there taking care of all the horses and cleaning out the stalls, so that was his job, so that was a good thing.

01-00:46:27

Tewes:

What was the name of that horse center again?

01-00:46:33

Pedersen:

The horse—

01-00:46:32

Tewes:

The place where your son got a job. What was the name of that?

01-00:46:38

Pedersen: Oh, that was Farfetched Farm.

01-00:46:43

Tewes: Wow!

01-00:46:42

Pedersen: Farfetched Farm. It was Steve Jones that owned the—Steve Jones, he owned that whole hillside at Diablo. He probably owned about, I don't know, ten, fifteen acres there, and he had a beautiful home there and he had a training horse arena and everything. He was a big horseman then. He was the first one to come and welcome us to Diablo. And later on he said, "I need you to be part of the homeowner association, [Diablo Property Owners Association]." He was president for the homeowner association. So he said, "I want you to get in there, too." Of course, that was when I was fighting for Save Mount Diablo and everything else. Because we didn't have a pool at that time, so they invited us up to swim—he had two daughters, so he invited us up to join, swim in the pool and cool off.

01-00:47:46

Tewes: That sounds nice. That's a good connection to have.

01-00:47:48

Pedersen: It was nice.

01-00:47:49

Tewes: Yeah, so you mentioned before about hiking up and taking the horses up to Barbecue Terrace.

01-00:47:56

Pedersen: Yeah.

01-00:47:57

Tewes: Can you tell me more about that experience?

01-00:47:59

Pedersen: Of course, by the time we finally could afford horses, my older daughter was not interested anymore. She was really the one who got us to move out there, but after a while, she got other interests. But anyway, my younger daughter and my wife, they just loved the horses.

01-00:48:26

Unfortunately, my younger daughter, she got the first horse, and we advertised for a horse. It had to be an old, gentle horse, so we don't want any problems with it or anything. And I'm telling you, we got the wildest, the meanest horse. The people who owned it, they really cheated us, they really did. And the horse was also called Rojo Diablo, the Red Devil, and he was a devil, I'm telling you. Then we got another horse later on and called her Cinnamon. She was much more gentle. But sometimes that Rojo—one time he even knocked my daughter over, and she got really bruised all over. It was just horrible. And

every time they were riding him, he would try to brush them off on trees and stuff. And every time they were climbing the trails on Mount Diablo, he'd try to go out so far that he wanted them to tell him to turn around. But, "Oh no," they said, "you just keep on going." [laughs]

01-00:49:43

But anyway, the kids were riding up to Barbecue Terrace, and we would drive up and go with a nice picnic for them. So that was good with the horses. At that time, they even had a horse arena over by Monte Vista High School, and they had horse shows over there quite often. And lo and behold, my daughter and her best friend, they took their horses over there for a horse show. And of course, she didn't win any big prizes, but she was just proud to be there.

01-00:50:24

Tewes:

Well, now is a good time to start thinking about Save Mount Diablo, and how you heard about this new organization. Tell me a little bit about that.

01-00:50:35

Pedersen:

There was just one day my wife said, "Hey, I see here in the paper there's a group called Save Mount Diablo. They want to save the mountain." And I said, "No, how could that be?" Whenever we drove into Diablo, down on the stone poles at the road it said, "Mount Diablo State Park." Yeah, it's right here. It said, "Mount Diablo State Park." Of course, I didn't read the sign, because it says, "South Gate entrance, four miles." I didn't read that. I just saw "Mount Diablo State Park." [laughs] But anyway, so in my mind, I thought the whole mountain was a state park. And every time we went on a picnic, there was a house there and a new house there.

01-00:51:40

So but anyway, we said, "We want to help these people." Because like I said, we had gone through so much to be so fortunate to live so close to the mountain, and we just loved the area. And so I said, "I'll do anything I possibly can to help these people." So I went to their meeting. And after a while, Mary Bowerman told me, the cofounder of Save Mount Diablo, she said, "Egon, we need a vice president." And I said, "Well, I just want to help. I don't think I'm—because I'm kind of a shy guy, and I don't think I can live up to vice president." She said, "Oh no, but that's what we need, so if you want to help, this is it." So I said, "I can tell you one thing. I'll do my very, very best."

01-00:52:49

And it's just amazing. I've found out when you have something in your heart, you can stand up and you can speak to anybody about anything, and it's no problem whatsoever. And all of a sudden, if it's something you really believe in, it's something you love—and what could be better than to expand a beautiful place like that, with such a beautiful nature and flowers, and history? So it's 400 different plants and animals up there, 400 different trees and flowers, and 7 of them are even endemic to Mount Diablo. And all the wildlife that are there, and not to talk about a recreational place for people, you know,

where people can go and get out to nature and see it for themselves. And how could it be more beautiful, like expanding an area like that? So—

01-00:54:06

Tewes:

One second, Egon. Let's pause for a second. [break in audio] Okay, we are back from a break. I'm so sorry to interrupt. You were talking about why it was so important for you to join Save Mount Diablo and what you loved about the mountain. I'm curious about some of these early people you were meeting through Save Mount Diablo. You mentioned Mary Bowerman. Who else was there at these early meetings?

01-00:54:32

Pedersen:

Art Bonwell was there, too. Mary Bowerman and Art Bonwell were the two—they were two people that decided to form Save Mount Diablo. They had a meeting, and they decided to form an organization and fight for Mount Diablo. Bob Doyle was at that meeting, also. The other people, I can't remember who was there. Peg Kovar was probably there, too, because she was the first president of Save Mount Diablo. Mary Bowerman, she never wanted to become president. She wanted to be on the Land Acquisition Committee, and she was good at that, because she was fighting tooth and nail for land acquisitions all the time. She was writing letters to whoever she thought could help us get more land and everything. She wrote the most beautiful letters to everybody.

01-00:55:40

And of course, her best friend was [California State] Sen. [John] Nejedly, and she talked him into pushing a bill through for \$1 million for land for Mount Diablo. So this was the first big sum of money we got for the mountain. And later on, we started fundraising the best we could with bumper stickers and postcards. One of the biggest things was the walkathons, and we made between \$2,000 and \$3,000 every time we had a walkathon, so at that time, that was pretty good. I just looked through some of my old papers. At one meeting there was a recycling company that came with a check for \$2,000 at a meeting we had. It was a recycling company. So a lot of people came in with money to [give] us. What's her name, Angel Kerley, she had the Diablo Ranch on Diablo, and she donated 1,600 acres to Save Mount Diablo. So a lot of people were supporting us.

01-00:57:22

Tewes:

Wow. Can you tell me what you would say to people to try to convince them to give money or support the group? What was it that was really compelling for other people?

01-00:57:35

Pedersen:

Well, I was trying to tell them about how important it was for all the animals and all the wildlife and the plants, and also for recreational purposes. And also, I thought there was so much history involved, too. I would say the beauty and the history is the most wonderful combination on Mount Diablo,

and I was trying to tell everybody about that. And like I said, then I thought the best way to promote it was I had—I gave a lot of slideshows, and I started thinking that's the best way. I was very much into the history, and I belonged to all the historical societies. Every time I was at a meeting at these historical societies, I was always asking people, "Do you have anything I can borrow and copy?" And I added it to my collection, and I would show all of the people.

01-00:59:05

Tewes:

Oh, sorry, Egon, let's pause. I'm sorry. [break in audio] Okay, we are back from a break. I'm sorry. You were speaking about how you got into these historical slide shows. What made you think of that idea?

01-00:59:18

Pedersen:

Well, I'm not too sure how I got the idea, but I figured that there has to be a way to convey to people what I believe in, and I figured the only way I can do it [is] to offer something for them. I can't just go and knock on doors and everything. I called all the libraries, for one thing, and asked if they'd like a talk on Mount Diablo. And of course, all the libraries wanted that. And then after that, it got to be a lot of word of mouth. There was always somebody in the—one of the viewers that said, "Hey, can you come and talk in my school? Can you come talk to my class?" A lot of ladies would say, "Can you come and talk to the garden society? Can you talk to the women's club in Berkeley?" And the word got around all the time, so it always—I always got questions about, "Can you come and give a talk about Mount Diablo?" And of course, I loved to do that. So I thought it was a good way to spread the word. And plus, I was very much personally interested in the history, so I spent—as a matter of fact, I spent five years out at DVC [Diablo Valley College] in a darkroom to enhance all these pictures, plus all the work for Diablo.

01-01:00:56

Then in 1974 we started April on the Mountain. We thought April on the Mountain was a good slogan, and it was a good advertisement for people to [become] aware of the beauty and the wildflowers in April, because so many wildflowers are blooming in April.

01-01:01:23

Tewes:

Yeah, okay, so you brought up a good—a few great things here I want to follow up on, one being the slide shows. You were talking to all these groups you were speaking to. What was the audience response? What did they think about the show and about Mount Diablo?

01-01:01:41

Pedersen:

Oh, they loved the show. At least that's what they told me. [laughs] Yeah, they came up and really appreciated for me telling them all about these things. And of course, I always said that this is really for Save Mount Diablo, and we need all the support we can [get], and if there's any way you can—if you want to support moneywise or support—I had brochures from Save Mount Diablo. I

gave them out. A lot of times people would actually come up and give me a check after the talk, so it was very encouraging. But I think the main thing was that the word spread pretty quick that: here's a guy out there that would talk about the mountain, and he has some interesting pictures. As my collection grew, it became bigger and bigger, so I probably have the biggest collection of historical pictures, so anybody writing a book about history of the area or anything, they always come and borrow all of my pictures.

01-01:02:54

So then I thought, Well, everybody's talking about Mount Diablo, not only for the beauty, but also for the history, and talking about historical landmarks. So I always said, "I wonder where that landmark, where that plaque is, that California [Historical] Landmark plaque. Where is it on Mount Diablo?" I finally thought, Well, you have to buy a book about California landmarks and see where it is. And lo and behold, there was no landmark on Mount Diablo. So I figured, Hey, I just got to be on the board of directors of San Ramon Valley Historical Society. What could be better than make that your big goal, to put that landmark on top of Mount Diablo? So this was one of my proud things. I thought this would really put the people's attention to the mountain. That's very important for history. And of course, the beauty comes by itself, because that comes automatically. When you go up there, the beauty is right there, and all the views and everything.

01-01:04:17

I found out what to do to get an application in to the state, and I had to go through all the local historical authorities to get their approval, and then I had to go to the [Contra Costa County] Board of Supervisors, and then finally to a state official. I think it took me about two years before it finally got up to the [California] State Park [and Recreation] Commission to make a decision. I gave a big presentation for them up in Benicia, up at the old courthouse in Benicia that used to be the old—I think it used to be the old California county seat or state capital or something, the old capitol building way in Benicia. Yeah, so it was a very proud day when—I'm telling you how important it was to issue this plaque on Mount Diablo. And it was so funny that I made a talk in the morning, and then they had lunch before they made a decision. And I met one of the ladies on the street, and she said, "You know, Egon, we'll make this do. We'll make it for you." So that was very encouraging, and she went off. After lunch, they told me officially that it was approved, and we go on from there.

01-01:05:49

I arranged some plans for the big party, a celebration, and what time and what date. And I thought, Boy, let's go to Diablo Country Club to celebrate, because that's another old historical place. So all the people who had helped me, and all the governors and senators and everything—they were probably invited, of course—but all the others that want to come had to pay on their own, of course. But anyway, so we had a real nice celebration at the club, and so it was a big day for me. Yeah, and I don't know how I ever got this big—

they had this big Navy band or Marine band playing at the celebration. I don't know how I ever got them talked into that, or maybe somebody I knew suggested that they might be able to come and play, so we had this big band playing on top of the mountain, too.

01-01:07:11

Tewes: That's pretty amazing. And this, again, was April 23, 1978?

01-01:07:16

Pedersen: Right.

01-01:07:17

Tewes: Right. And how long did it take you to get this work done?

01-01:07:23

Pedersen: It took over two years to get all that done, yeah. It took a long time and a lot of work, I'm telling you. Yeah.

01-01:07:32

Tewes: For a guy who said he was shy, that's a lot of work and a lot of people work you were doing, too. [laughs]

01-01:07:40

Pedersen: Well, like I say, when you have something in your heart that you really want to fight for, and that's the way—that's what I've always said. This has always been my saying in my whole life, is, "you can always try." You can always try, and sometimes you're lucky. And for me, every time I tried, I was lucky.

01-01:08:08

Tewes: Yeah, you gave it a good shot.

01-01:08:10

Pedersen: Yeah.

01-01:08:11

Tewes: So we said that that was the state historical landmark in 1978. In 1982, Mount Diablo became a National Natural Landmark.

01-01:08:23

Pedersen: Yeah, I just found out this was actually done by the secretary of state. No, the interior secretary. He was actually the one who suggested that there's so much beauty on the mountain, that it should be a natural landmark, and he got some scientists to study all the natural part of the mountain. You know, there was no problem about realizing how beautiful it was, because just look at Mary Bowerman's book, [*The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Mount Diablo, California*], with 400 different flowers and trees, and all the endemic plants and everything else. It's so beautiful, natural, that it couldn't be any better. I was very honored, because I was actually asked to be a guest speaker at that ceremony. Yeah, it was in '83, '82 or '83. And I said to them, "It's so nice to be

on top of the mountain again. It's so nice to be on top of the world again."
[laughs]

01-01:09:51

Tewes: That's too funny.

01-01:09:52

Pedersen: So it was beautiful. And of course, my wife started to say, "I think you've spent enough time. Now you have to work around the house." [laughs] And so Bob Doyle was eager to take over, and you couldn't get a better man to take over the job, because he's been doing an excellent job all the way through, and he's going to get a big award now in December—no, what is this—[Moonlight] on the Mountain. Yeah, he's going to get the big award.

01-01:10:33

Tewes: Yeah, that's great! Well deserved.

01-01:10:37

Pedersen: Yeah, so it's beautiful. Yeah, he deserves it.

01-01:10:42

Tewes: Before we move on—or move backwards, really—you'd mentioned to me previously that you took a good luck charm with you to all of your slide shows.

01-01:10:52

Pedersen: Oh yeah, yeah.

01-01:10:54

Tewes: Could you tell me about that?

01-01:10:56

Pedersen: Do you want to see it again? You know, with all this history and everything, I got a lot of pictures that I borrowed, and one of my very best friends was Louis Stein. Louis Stein, he was director of Contra Costa County Historical Society for many, many years. He was mainly a train fan, because he had a caboose sitting in his backyard. But also, he was a man that had the most historical pictures of anything. And thank God, somebody told me about him, and I got to become good friends with him, and he was actually willing to lend all his stuff. He was very generous, and he had an old glass plate [negative], a glass picture of a map of the Oakwood Stock Farm. Oakwood Stock Farm was 10,000 acres. They went all the way up to the top of the mountain of Mount Diablo, and it showed the crossing of the base lines, the base and the meridian lines on top of Mount Diablo, and it also showed a little hotel, [The Mountain House], on the map. And of course, after the map, I could easily see it was right where South and North Gate Rds. were crossing a little bit north of there.

01-01:12:30

So my wife and I went up and we found a little cement of the foundation, and I said, "This must be where it was," because there were descriptions that there

were trees they had to cut down because of the powerlines or whatever. And we found a tree stump, too. So I said to my wife, "You know what? Wouldn't that be interesting, if we could find a little something, just—I don't know what—just a little something that'll tell you hello from when this hotel was here?" Oh, well I guess it was built in 1860, so it was 150 years later or so that we were up there. And she said, "Oh, you're crazy. There's no way you could find anything here. This is just dirt and weeds and everything." [laughs]

01-01:13:37

But lo and behold, I looked down, and it was right after the rain, so I guess the rain washed it a little bit away, and this little, white thing I saw down there, and I dug it up. It took me a long time to clean it up, because there was a lot of mud. When I brought it in and I finally got it home and scrubbed it [with] soap and everything, and then lo and behold, it was this beautiful piece with a face on it. Yeah, so it had a little face on it, and I could see from the angle here, I could figure out it used to have eight sides, so I figured it probably was a little soup bowl or something from that time. I figured, Boy, this is another good luck charm I have. But this is something I—another thing I was wishing for, a little hello from that time, where people just—this was the thing in those days. You just have to stay in the hotel on Mount Diablo, otherwise you have not been to California. That was a good advertisement at that time.

01-01:14:56

Tewes:

[laughs] I like it! I want to back up for a second. You told me that you used to go on hikes with Mary Bowerman to survey some land. Can you tell me about those?

01-01:15:10

Pedersen:

Oh yes, we did that a lot of times, a lot of times, because there was always new areas we were looking at to purchase. There was new areas where the developer wanted to build, and so Mary Bowerman always wanted to go and see these places by herself, and she wanted to take the whole group along. We didn't have anything against that, because we all loved to hike, and a lot of times I took the kids along. But that was one thing Mary Bowerman said, "You can only look at the flowers. You cannot pick any of the flowers up, no way. These are all mothers to the new flowers next year, so don't touch them, just look at them and enjoy them."

01-01:15:58

Tewes:

I bet that was hard for kids to hear, though.

01-01:16:02

Pedersen:

Well, thank God my kids were pretty sensible, because they were out hiking to all the walkathons, and they walked all the way to the top of the mountain. And for money, they went around to all the neighbors to ask for donations, because they got so much money per mile they walked. So they were actually good kids and very sensible, thank God. I'm very proud of them, yeah.

01-01:16:25

Tewes: Oh, that's great to hear. You mentioned that one of the ways that Mary Bowerman said you could help was by being vice president of Save Mount Diablo from 1972 to 1974. What did that mean? What kind of work were you doing as vice president?

01-01:16:44

Pedersen: Well, every time there was talk about land acquisitions or donations to Mount Diablo, we always had to go and present it to the Board of Supervisors. And also, whenever [Sen.] Nejedly has some of his meetings up there about land acquisitions and some of the bond issues, there was a lot of bond issues and park issues, and we always had to go out and talk to the Board of Supervisors to present our meaning about things. And when Blackhawk [Corporation] started coming out, we had to go out and tell the Board of Supervisors our opinion about Blackhawk and development, so there was a lot of reasons to be out talking for Save Mount Diablo.

01-01:17:35

Tewes: What were you hearing from the Board of Supervisors? Were they supportive?

01-01:17:40

Pedersen: Not all the time, no. No, they were not.

01-01:17:45

Tewes: And what would you say to them to convince them that you didn't want [this new development]?

01-01:17:49

Pedersen: Well, we were trying to tell them how important it was that we keep our open space, and we need the recreational area, and there needs to be a buffer between development and recreational areas. You cannot build all these homes on the slopes of Mount Diablo; just keep them down below.

01-01:18:14

Tewes: And as you mentioned, you later became president. You were the third president of the organization.

01-01:18:19

Pedersen: Yeah.

01-01:18:19

Tewes: So that was from 1974 to 1977.

01-01:18:22

Pedersen: Right.

01-01:18:23

Tewes: What changed when you became president? What kind of work did you need to do for that?

01-01:18:27

Pedersen:

Well, I did the same work, really. [laughs] I mean, this was a time when I was just fighting for the mountain and giving slideshows and working on my historic plaque on the mountain. This was all the time when I was doing all of these things, yeah.

01-01:18:50

Tewes:

So much of the work stayed the same?

01-01:18:53

Pedersen:

Yeah, it was really the same kind of the work. It didn't make any difference whether you were vice president or—of course, vice president, I was just doing it on the side. I was writing letters to [Ronald] Reagan, and that was Governor Reagan in that time. I was writing a lot of things to the papers, to all the papers. Every time I wanted to comment on a bond issue or whatever there was coming up, I was writing letters to whoever I could.

01-01:19:26

Tewes:

Yeah, can you tell me about this letter you wrote to Governor Reagan?

01-01:19:31

Pedersen:

Well, I just wrote him that Mount Diablo was a very important recreational area, and I said if he could consider some land, buying some land around [the mountain], that I really, really, really would appreciate it. And lo and behold, a couple of months after, he actually allocated money for buying land around Mount Diablo. Yeah, he wrote me a nice letter and said he really appreciated [that] I was telling him about how important it was to expand the land in such a popular area with such a big population. It was important to have a place for recreation that people could go and enjoy their life; and also for the wildlife on the mountain, it needed more space so it could survive.

01-01:20:34

Tewes:

That's amazing that you had a part in this. You got him to add some money to the budget for this. That's great.

01-01:20:43

Pedersen:

Yeah. Well, yeah.

01-01:20:45

Tewes:

You know, I'm thinking that when you got involved with Save Mount Diablo in the 1970s, this was a decade when there was a lot of environmental activism. How aware were you of what was going on elsewhere in terms of activism?

01-01:21:01

Pedersen:

Oh, there was a lot going on. There was a lot. East Bay Regional Park [District], I'd always admired them, because this was the biggest—I think the biggest park system in all the United States. It was the one that had the most land. I'd always admired East Bay Regional Park [District] and what they were doing. During all my work, I became very good friends with Mr. Mott,

[William] "Bill" Mott. He was director of East Bay Regional Park [District] at that time, and then later he actually became to be director of the State Park System [California Park Service], and then later on he became director of the National Park System [National Park Service]. So he was quite a guy, yeah. Fortunately, we had some friends and they were good friends with them. They lived right next to them. So one time he invited me for dinner over at his home, so that was quite an honor. Yeah, Mr. Mott.

01-01:22:11

Tewes: That's a great point, though. What kind of relationship did Save Mount Diablo have, in those early days, with other organizations or parks doing this work?

01-01:22:22

Pedersen: Well, there was really no connection with anybody, except the ones we generated, because every organization was very, very much agreeing to what we were doing, and they just loved what we were doing. So it didn't take very long before you get friends from all these people—the Sierra Club. That's another place where they invited me to give talks, the Sierra Club. And being a nature lover, my uncle and aunt, they always said, "Oh, oh, Egon, you need to join the Sierra Club." And that was in 1956, you know? So we became members of the Sierra Club already then, and been ever since, because of the love of nature. It was just so nice. So that was a logical one, and then what is it, the wildlife museum, what's it called?

01-01:23:29

Tewes: The Lindsay Wildlife [Museum].

01-01:23:31

Pedersen: Lindsay, yeah. We became good friends with a guy there, too. I can't remember his name now. And then that was another organization for open space, too. Actually, there turned out to be several groups, and we all joined together, and they were all very helpful to each other. As a matter of fact, I think we actually got money from several of these places, also.

01-01:24:05

Tewes: Before we move on, you did say that one of the ways you promoted the mountain was doing the walkathons. You mentioned wine tastings. But also, I'm curious about the bumper stickers and postcards. Whose idea was that?

01-01:24:20

Pedersen: Yeah, who designed them? Who designed [the bumper stickers] that people put on their cars?

01-01:24:26

Tewes: Yeah, whose idea was that?

01-01:24:29

Pedersen: Oh, that was in the early seventies. I should have brought them. I still have two of them; I should have brought them to show you. Because one of them said, "I Have Helped Save Mount Diablo." That's what one of them said. And

we said, "You have to buy one of these to show you have supported." I can't remember how much we charged for the bumper sticker, but that was another fundraiser. Actually, the early days, we actually went around to stores and left a collection box, a little collection can in stores. We asked the store, "Can we put them [on the counter]?" so people could put money in for Save Mount Diablo. I don't think you could do that today, but we did anything in those days. We were just desperate to earn some money somehow, any way we could.

01-01:25:22

Tewes: And which stores were these? Like grocery stores?

01-01:25:26

Pedersen: Well, no big grocery stores. They were more smaller retail stores, yeah. You go to your favorite dry cleaner, you go to your favorite so-and-so, stationery store or whatever, people who kind of knew you a little bit and stuff. So, "Oh sure, we'll be glad to have the can there."

01-01:25:46

Tewes: That's great.

01-01:25:47

Pedersen: We were trying anything we possibly could.

01-01:25:50

Tewes: And how much money did you think you needed? What was your goal?

01-01:25:55

Pedersen: You know what, that's really funny. Mary Bowerman thought \$10 million would do. That's what she thought. She thought \$10 million would do at that time, and this is when I was vice president. Then I asked the library if I could make a historical display to advertise Mount Diablo, also. Yeah.

01-01:26:28

Tewes: So her goal was \$10 million, but what were you actually raising?

01-01:26:33

Pedersen: Maybe you could have, at that time, if you had the opportunity. But now, it takes a lot more. Yeah, but the new group are doing very well with their fundraising. They know how to fundraise, and they do it big time, big time. They have professional fundraisers now, so they're doing a tremendous job, a beautiful job.

01-01:27:06

Tewes: Yeah. I also want to speak more about your relationship with State Senator John Nejedly.

01-01:27:13

Pedersen: Okay.

01-01:27:15

Tewes:

What kind of support was he offering? How would he help you?

01-01:27:21

Pedersen:

Well, he was pushing this bill for \$1 million, and that was such a big thing for us at that time. A million dollars, that was only one-tenth of what we needed at that time, and he did push the bill through. There was another bond later on he was trying to push through for the State, and he was planning on giving us another \$2 million to \$3 million. I just can't remember if it passed or not. But in all these negotiations, we had to go up and present our case in Sacramento with Sen. Nejedly, so we went up there several times.

01-01:28:01

Tewes:

What was that experience like, speaking to the State Senate?

01-01:28:06

Pedersen:

Oh, that was great. He was a wonderful man. He was very easy to get along with and everything, and he had Mount Diablo in his heart just like the rest of us. It was just amazing. That was his big concern.

01-01:28:23

Tewes:

And this bond for a million, was that the Z'berg-Collier Park [Bond Act]?

01-01:28:28

Pedersen:

No, I don't—I think it was a separate bill. Yeah.

01-01:28:32

Tewes:

Okay. You also told me a story about Sen. Nejedly acting as a mediator between some developers and Save Mount Diablo.

01-01:28:44

Pedersen:

He invited the developer Blackhawk and Save Mount Diablo to his home, and served a nice dinner for us all, and tried to get us all together under friendly terms to speak as human beings to each other. He was trying to really calm the waters, because there was just like this—at that time it was very tough, and Blackhawk would try to do anything to disturb our love for the mountain. But the main thing is it turned out very good in the end, all our negotiations and Sen. Nejedly's and everything. We finally got an agreement with Blackhawk. They donated over one-third of their 4,800 acres, so it was the biggest contribution of developer land ever to Mount Diablo. So you know, it pays to negotiate.

01-01:29:56

This is what Save Mount Diablo is doing today. They have beautiful negotiators negotiating with the landowners, and the landowners are very interested in talking to Save Mount Diablo, because a lot of these landowners have the same love for the mountain as you and I and they don't want to sell it to developers. And therefore, they're very willing to negotiate. Some we may give you a better price than a developer would. Like Angel Kerley, she had the Diablo Ranch. She gave the whole 1,600 acres to Save Mount Diablo. The

same with the horse trail people [Concord Mt. Diablo Trail Ride Association]. They have given Save Mount Diablo an easement, so all their land—so it would never, ever be developed. So it helps to negotiate and be on good terms and talk about it in a sensible way.

01-01:31:03

Look how wonderful they have done today, and all the collaboration with East Bay Regional Park [District], too. East Bay Regional Park [District] buying land right next to the State Park, and thereby expanding the open space. And now, they're even talking about Diablo Range, and now they're going 150 miles south, so how wonderful is that? [laughs]

01-01:31:31

Tewes: Yeah! That's wonderful change.

01-01:31:35

Pedersen: Yeah.

01-01:31:36

Tewes: You know what's interesting, I think, about the history of the organization, is that in recent years, Save Mount Diablo has become a steward for the land it has purchased.

01-01:31:45

Pedersen: Exactly.

01-01:31:45

Tewes: But in your years, you were just buying the land and trying to give it away.

01-01:31:50

Pedersen: We were just trying to be a little, peaceful group saving—getting money from contributions, buy a piece of land. And we bought the first piece of land in what was—I thought I had it here [reads papers]—that was the first piece of land we bought, and it was 117 acres. That was the first land we bought with the first money we earned. Yeah.

01-01:32:26

Tewes: That's okay. We can fill it in later if we forgot. [laughs]

01-01:32:35

Pedersen: But anyway, it was a proud moment when we bought that—yeah, the first piece of land, it was in 1976. It was on a corner of Marsh Creek and Morgan Territory, [the "Corner Piece"]. We bought it from our own money we had saved. We bought that piece of land. So it was quite something.

01-01:32:54

Tewes: Do you remember why that piece was so important?

01-01:32:58

Pedersen: That's a good question. I think it was right on the corner of two streets, and we were worried about [the fact] that it was a very development-[prone] piece of

property. I think it was for sale and a developer wanted to buy it. But we had the option of doing it, also, and we felt it was more important we bought it. Plus, it gave access from the street to the mountain, also. Yeah.

01-01:33:30

Tewes: Yeah, that sounds strategic, very much so. [laughs]

01-01:33:33

Pedersen: Well, at that time, we felt it was an important piece of land, so—and we were very proud to buy the first piece that was possible to buy.

01-01:33:46

Tewes: Yeah, a big moment in '76 for you guys.

01-01:33:49

Pedersen: That was a big moment, because that's what we really were trying to do, get as much money, so we could say, "Here. Here's another piece of land for the Park."

01-01:33:59

Tewes: And you were president at that time?

01-01:34:01

Pedersen: Yeah, in '74, yeah—in '76. Yeah, I was, yeah.

01-01:34:10

Tewes: Still during your time, yeah. [laughs] You had a few years in there. I want to think about some overall significant events in the history of the organization, and especially that you experienced with it. You've mentioned the April on the Mountain hikes, and that started in '74. Can you tell me what that was about, what that involved?

01-01:34:35

Pedersen: Well, it was mainly to advertise the mountain and the beauty in the springtime. And Save Mount Diablo, we offered a lot of hikes for the public. It was advertised in the paper to join Save Mount Diablo on hikes on the mountain. And of course, that's why I had my historical landmark in April on the mountain. That was an April thing, too, so it was another thing.

01-01:35:11

Tewes: So were you getting people from the public who didn't know about the mountain—or sorry, who didn't know about Save Mount Diablo, but were interested in a hike?

01-01:35:17

Pedersen: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. A lot of people signed up for it, oh yes. A lot of people signed up outside. One year, I actually got hold of a professor in Berkeley that was into fossils, because there's a fossil grave or fossil area where there's a lot of fossils from prehistoric animals on a slope of Mount Diablo. I was very fascinated by that, saber-toothed tigers and mastodons and all that stuff, and I

got hold of a professor in Berkeley that did a lot of studies in that area. I think I talked him into having a tour for the public up there, so that's another thing I arranged to advertise. There was a lot of people coming from the outside of Save Mount Diablo. A lot of the public came and, of course, I was telling them all about Save Mount Diablo on top of that. Yeah. So I tried to do whatever I felt I could and what was possible.

01-01:36:47

Tewes: Yeah, certainly very creative ways to get people engaged and educate them about the place.

01-01:36:54

Pedersen: Well, that's what we tried to do, to get the word out to people and—

01-01:37:04

Tewes: You'd also mentioned to me that there were annual meetings for Save Mount Diablo.

01-01:37:07

Pedersen: Oh yeah, at Heather Farm.

01-01:37:11

Tewes: Heather Farm!

01-01:37:11

Pedersen: Heather Farm Garden Center. Yeah, they have a beautiful, little house down there by the lake, and we always had our meetings there, annual meetings. The regular meetings we had in a room at Pleasant Hill Recreation Center. But later on they wouldn't have us anymore, so we had meetings at the treasurer's kitchen, that's where we had the meetings. So that's how it was when I was involved.

01-01:37:48

Tewes: I'm sorry, whose kitchen?

01-01:37:50

Pedersen: The treasurer, Bill and Genevieve Sattler. Bill Sattler was the treasurer, and Genevieve, she was our secretary. She always had coffee and cookies, too, so that was nice.

01-01:38:08

Tewes: A good host, too. That helps!

01-01:38:11

Pedersen: Oh, the best host. They were the loveliest people. I wish you had only met them. Just beautiful. And that's one thing I really, really liked about what I was doing, was all these wonderful, wonderful people I met, because they had the same heart as I had: a heart for peace and quiet and nature and flowers and wildlife. And that's what I really liked, because you met all these wonderful, wonderful people.

01-01:38:46
Tewes: That's great. I like that.

01-01:38:49
Pedersen: Yeah.

01-01:38:51
Tewes: So we've mentioned that you've been so active with history work, and you've been involved with the San Ramon Valley Historical Society over the years. I believe you were president for a while?

01-01:39:04
Pedersen: I was on the board of directors for San Ramon Valley Historical Society.

01-01:39:08
Tewes: Okay. How did you get involved with them?

01-01:39:11
Pedersen: I got along fine with all the people, oh yeah.

01-01:39:17
Tewes: I meant, how did you get connected to them? How did you—

01-01:39:20
Pedersen: I just joined. I joined all the historical societies. I just joined them all and went to all their meetings. And of course, at every meeting they always asked if somebody wanted to say something. I always stood up and said who I was, and I was the chairman for historical collections for Save Mount Diablo, and if anybody could help me. I said that at all the meetings, and the word got around real quick. "That's a guy who really wants to—" so that's why they invited me to become on the board of directors, too. The same with the homeowner association [Diablo Property Owners Association]. They wanted me to be director on there, too. So the word got around real quick, and then everybody wanted me to come and talk for them, and show my pictures, and want to come and borrow my pictures, and so it goes on and on.

01-01:40:17
Tewes: Yeah, you had quite an operation there. You mentioned that you were on the Historical Committee for Save Mount Diablo. Who else was on that? It was just you?

01-01:40:33
Pedersen: I made myself the Historical Committee. I thought it sounded better than "Egon Pedersen." I was chairman of the Historical Committee for Save Mount Diablo, and for the State Park Monument. I was chairman of the Committee, all right? [laughs] And I was the Committee, too. But you know, when you do it yourself, you know it gets done.

01-01:41:07
Tewes: That's really clever, though, I like that.

01-01:41:09

Pedersen: Yeah, you know, it's amazing. Every time I have somebody do anything for me, I'm never satisfied, because I always say, "I could have done this much better myself." But that's a problem. Then you have to pay for getting help, and then you're not satisfied with it.

01-01:41:31

Tewes: Well, it just shows how dedicated you were.

01-01:41:33

Pedersen: Well, at least you know it got done.

01-01:41:38

Tewes: Yes. Well, as we're starting to wrap up today, Egon, I want to ask you how—[about] the big changes you've seen in the East Bay since you moved here in the fifties.

01-01:41:53

Pedersen: Yeah, very big changes. That's for sure. Mainly in traffic. [laughs] The traffic is the worst part. Another real bad thing is all the homeless people. I feel real, real sad about the homeless people. I really do. And all the pollution and all the crime that's going on. At that time, you know, East Oakland was the most peaceful, little community you ever saw. My uncle had his nice, little vegetable garden out in the front yard, and he was out there treating this, and picking up the berries and whatever and all the veggies and everything. And look at that area now, and what's happening in this area is just horrible. Yeah, so I'm very sad to see all these things going on. All this criminality, all these wild things that's going on. People seem to be getting more and more off being normal. Well, all the drugs, that's the worst thing. The drug situation is horrible, and that's just what all the gangs are fighting about. The drugs, this is where people—all of a sudden, they need all these drugs to exist, and all the desperation to get these and get money for it. And all the wildfires, because of poor maintenance and maybe arson. I'm sorry to say, it's really getting very sad the way things are developing, in my opinion, and [Cheri] will agree.

01-01:43:58

Tewes: You've mentioned the wildfires. How have you seen that impact the lands around Diablo?

01-01:44:04

Pedersen: Well, I only had one big fire in Diablo. But this is actually several years back now, but that was on the east side. That was on the other side of the mountain. We could still see the flames from our house and the smoke, of course, but it was—thank God, as far as I remember, it didn't burn any residences or anything.

01-01:44:33

Tewes: Yeah, I think that was 1977.

01-01:44:35
Pedersen: Okay.

01-01:44:38
Tewes: [laughs] For reference. Yeah, it was a few years ago.

01-01:44:38
Pedersen: That's okay. Yeah.

01-01:44:44
Tewes: Well, we've mentioned you were really active in this organization for about ten years in the beginning.

01-01:44:51
Pedersen: Well, I tried doing my best, like I promised Mary Bowerman. Yeah, that's right.

01-01:44:56
Tewes: I'm curious: what makes you want to continue to give to them and to continue to support this work? Why is that still important to you?

01-01:45:04
Pedersen: I could never stop doing that. Cheri says no. I could never stop helping them any way I can. I'm helping them the way I can and supporting them any way I can. They actually came and borrowed my historical pictures, too, to give slideshows. Yeah. Seth Adams came to my home and said, "I want to borrow some of your slides." Oh yeah.

01-01:45:32
Tewes: Your work there has been important this whole time.

01-01:45:37
Pedersen: Yeah, of course.

01-01:45:39
Tewes: Yeah. What are the big changes you've seen in the organization over the years?

01-01:45:47
Pedersen: Oh, that's changed a lot. That has changed a lot, yeah. What should I say, it's become very, very professional. They've got their own office now, and they have paid employees. I think it's wonderful that they carry on Mary Bowerman's goal to preserve the mountain and expand open space. And I really admire them expanding beyond Mount Diablo, also, because this is just as important. This is also open space for wildlife, so the more wildlife areas you can connect together, the more beautiful chance we have for survival of all the wildlife—plants and animals. So I think that's beautiful, what they are doing. I'm sure Save Mount Diablo is going to keep on doing that, because it keeps them all active, and they are all doing something they love to do, too.

01-01:47:04

Tewes: What do you hope for the future of the organization? You've been involved for fifty years now. What do you hope for the next fifty and more?

01-01:47:11

Pedersen: Well, I must say, I don't have any doubt they're going to have a beautiful future. I don't think I have to hope for that. I'm so confident. Ted [Clement] is a most wonderful leader, and they're all very hard-working people. I have no doubt they are going to succeed from now on. I'm very sure they will. No doubt.

01-01:47:34

Tewes: I love that.

01-01:47:35

Pedersen: Yeah.

01-01:47:38

Tewes: I also want to say that you are still celebrating every year, the [April] anniversary of the [California Historical Landmark] plaque.

01-01:47:46

Pedersen: Yeah, we go up. We bring pizza up there for everybody who wants to have a piece.

01-01:47:51

Tewes: Why is that important for you to continue to celebrate that date?

01-01:47:55

Pedersen: Oh, I must admit that's one of my big days in my life. The day I had there the band was playing, and I was unveiling the plaque, and I wanted to make darn sure I got the Bear Flag that was covering my plaque. Then I lent it to the Danville Museum, so it's hanging down there now. But it was a very proud day. But you're right, it actually took me a long time before it dawned on me, and I must admit, I think every ten or twenty [years] or whatever, every big year I say, "You really should go up there and celebrate."

01-01:48:40

And then finally, forty years came along, so that must have been in [20]18. I said, "This has to be it now. Now it's forty years, Egon." I mean, we've been up on Mount Diablo a million times since, but we didn't always make it to the very top, you know, because we always were driving up, and then we were hiking out sideways. But forty, I said, "This, you're having." And we bought five pizzas, so we had forty pieces, one for each year.

01-01:49:11

I talked to Mount Diablo Interpretive Association, and I'm a member of them, too. I became good friends with them, and I said, "I'd like to put my historical display up there in the museum." And they said they have a guest room open space up by the kiosk up there, not in the museum, but by the kiosk. So I took

all of my—some of my most important historical things and had a nice display up there at the fortieth anniversary, and invited people to come in and see my historical collection and tell them about Save Mount Diablo. I got to be friends with Bruce [Erickson]. Bruce is the caretaker of the kiosk, and he's my hearty friend up there on top of the mountain. He works up there in the kiosk, and he's just a darling man, and he just loves all the female bikers that go to the top every day, I'm telling you. And it's just so adorable. He's really a beautiful character. Maybe I'm going to have a fifty-year celebration, and maybe you can meet him there.

01-01:50:40

Tewes: Fifty years. That's so wild. It's wonderful.

01-01:50:43

Pedersen: I have been in Diablo fifty years next year, so maybe you'll get a chance to meet him there.

01-01:50:49

Tewes: That would be great. My last question for you, Egon, is what do you hope you have personally contributed to Save Mount Diablo?

01-01:50:58

Pedersen: Well, I hope I've gotten the word around to as many people as possible, really. And I hope—well, I know—I *know* that I started something good, for sure.

01-01:51:15

Yeah. Cheri's telling me about when I moved to Diablo, there was a big swamp at the corner of my property. All winter and all spring there was a big swamp. And of course, there was water coming from Mount Diablo. I always felt it was such a shame that all this water was just oozing through, and it's a big, swampy area, so my big dream was to do something about that. And so when I finally retired and I got a new neighbor, he was going to make another horse arena over on his property, so he leveled the ground and put in a beautiful drainpipe from the street, because he was just below the street, and all the water comes running down over my property, but he put a nice drainpipe in. And I thought, Hey, this drainpipe looks high enough that it's much higher than the back corner of my property, where the water runs out to the neighbor. And I said, "That's enough height difference that maybe if I grade away the land under the pipe, about six feet away, that's still enough slope down on my property, so I could build a waterfall there." So I started buying a huge, big, flat rock every year, and put it under this drainpipe. So after five years, I had enough rock up to the drainpipe, and then I put rocks around it.

01-01:53:01

So now, every winter and spring, I have the most beautiful waterfall running through my property and a little creek running through my property, so this is my nature park. Animals come there all the time to enjoy my nature park—all the greenery, the trees, the water, and everything. And today, they're even so

desperate they came in and they start drinking off my little pond I have outside the kitchen. Yeah, they were so thirsty, because my waterfall is not running now, of course, because it's dry. So it's kind of cute. They came this morning—a mother and her two babies, they came. I have some little pond outside the kitchen.

01-01:54:04

Tewes: Is that a deer in the picture?

01-01:54:07

Pedersen: Yeah, that's a deer and the two babies.

01-01:54:09

Tewes: Wow! Yeah, you get a lot of wildlife up there.

01-01:54:14

Pedersen: Oh, I get a lot of wildlife, and that's what we love about it. Turkeys come and raccoons and, yeah, all kinds of—so, so beautiful.

01-01:54:22

Tewes: Which just proves why you love the mountain. It keeps showing itself to you.

01-01:54:25

Pedersen: Exactly, exactly. And then you know, we are so lucky. We just drive to the end of our street, and that's where the trail is from Las Trampas hill to the top of the mountain, right there at the end of our street. It's just beautiful.

01-01:54:42

Easterley: The falcons.

01-01:54:43

Pedersen: But we don't tell anybody about it, because they don't like too many cars parked over there. But it's really a beautiful place to start your hike, because it's right there where the State Park starts.

01-01:54:56

Tewes: Yeah, that's wonderful.

01-01:54:59

Pedersen: We're very blessed.

01-01:54:59

Tewes: Is there anything you'd like to add about Save Mount Diablo or your life or any of the other work that you've done over the years?

01-01:55:07

Pedersen: I don't know. I think we've pretty well covered a lot.

01-01:55:23

Tewes: Yeah, we talked a lot. You have so much to say. But I really appreciate your time, Egon. I think you've done a wonderful job here. Oh, we've got a note.

- 01-01:55:34
Pedersen: Protection of the falcons. Yeah. Well, that's what Save Mount Diablo is doing, too, the falcons.
- 01-01:55:40
Tewes: The prairie falcons and peregrine falcons?
- 01-01:55:43
Pedersen: I think the falcons—yeah, they actually have a nest for them and everything. So they're doing a beautiful job.
- 01-01:55:57
Tewes: That's all I have for you, so thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it. Here, let me stop here.
- 01-01:56:04
Pedersen: Well, it was nice talking to you.
- 01-01:56:07
Tewes: [break in audio] Okay, we are just adding an addendum here. Egon, you wanted to talk about your new partner. Tell me about her.
- 01-01:56:14
Pedersen: I like to talk about my new partner, because I've been lucky in all the other things I have done, and I've been trying so hard and praying to God for so many things here in my life. And when my wife passed away nine years ago [in 2012], I said to myself, "Egon, you cannot be by yourself. You are not that type of a person. You need another female partner to help you in your life, and help to be with, and talk to and enjoy life, and enjoy trips and enjoy hikes on the mountain with, and everything."
- 01-01:56:58
I prayed so hard to God for three years, and I went to the senior center in Pleasant Hill. I went there when they opened up several years after—right after my wife died, they opened it up. It was brand new. They have redone the Pleasant Hill Senior Center, and I love going there, because they had a lot of trips. They had mystery trips, they had trips all over, and they did a lot of things, and I went on most of the trips. Of course, I talked to all the women there, if they'd like to go dancing with me at Round Hill Country Club, because my wife and I used to go dinner dancing at Round Hill. And some of them, they still had excuses or whatever, but I was desperately looking for a nice partner.
- 01-01:58:00
And then at the sixtieth anniversary party at the center, they had a nice band playing, and I was wiggling to the music and walking across looking for a place to sit. And then this nice lady—this nice lady [brings Cheri into view]—she pops right up in front of me.

01-01:58:27
Easterley:

Pops right up.

01-01:58:29
Pedersen:

She pops right out in front of me. She pops out right in front of me and she says, "Oh, so you like to dance?" And I said, "I sure do." So we danced, and so I said, "Well, do you think you'd like to go to Round Hill for a dinner dance next month? Because they have it every month." And she said "Well, that's a possibility." But then I found out later on she had to ask her friend, "Is this a good place to go, to Round Hill Country Club? Is that a decent place?" I guess her friend said, "Yeah, this is a pretty nice place to go to, so it should be okay." And so she thought, Here comes this guy. He goes swirling to the music. He doesn't have a cane or a wheelchair or anything, so maybe that's the guy for me. And fortunately, we were both looking for a partner at that time, so it has really been—we've almost had our fifth—sixth-year anniversary almost. So this is another beautiful story of mine. This is the best thing that happened, really.

01-01:59:52
Tewes:

Another love story in your life.

01-01:59:54
Pedersen:

The best thing that happened to me ever, yes.

01-01:59:58
Tewes:

Well, why don't you introduce her, so we have her name for the record?

01-02:00:04
Pedersen:

Cheri Easterley. The funny part, she's Cheri Marie, and my wife was Inger Marie. And you know what? They have the same birthday, and they like and dislike the same things. It's just amazing.

01-02:00:24
Tewes:

What a wonderful connection.

01-02:00:26
Pedersen:

But she doesn't nag me about doing something around the house, so—[laughs]

01-02:00:31
Tewes:

I think age spares you a little bit these days.

01-02:00:33
Pedersen:

I think that spares me, yeah. At least she's very sensible.

01-02:00:42
Tewes:

Well, thank you both for that addendum. I appreciate it.

01-02:00:47
Pedersen:

Well, thank you for taking that in.

[End of Interview]