

Jeanne Thomas

Jeanne Thomas: Supporting Save Mount Diablo

Save Mount Diablo Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Amanda Tewes
in 2021

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Jeanne Thomas on Mount Diablo, c. 2018. Photo by Karen Wetherell.

Abstract

Jeanne Thomas is a retired employee of Kaiser Industries and a longtime supporter of Save Mount Diablo (SMD), serving on the Development Committee from 2006 to 2014. Thomas was born in Oakland, California, in 1929. She attended Mills College before beginning work at Kaiser Industries. Thomas began contributing to SMD in 1989 and has been a major donor since that time. In this interview, Thomas discusses growing up in Oakland, California, including exploring nature; attending Mills College; her work history at Kaiser Industries; meeting her partner, Bob Adams; her early retirement and joining a women's hiking group; her early interactions with SMD, including donations and volunteering at the organization's office; joining SMD, including volunteers like Susan Watson, leadership, cofounder Mary Bowerman, longtime staff member Seth Adams, land acquisitions and stewardship, fundraisers like the Forever Wild Capital Campaign and Moonlight on the Mountain, education and outreach, resilience during COVID-19, and SMD's expanded mission; her personal involvement in SMD, including serving on the Development Committee, supporting particular events, serving as a liaison to the retirement community of Rossmoor, receiving the Mountain Star Award, and hosting birthdays on SMD properties; hiking on Mount Diablo and photographing wildflowers; development in the Bay Area; and reflections on her personal contributions to SMD.

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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. All of the interviews were conducted remotely due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Interview 1: July 23, 2021

01-00:00:00

Tewes: This is an interview with Jeanne Thomas 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 July 23, 2021. Ms. Thomas joins me in this remote interview from Walnut Creek, California, which is actually where I am, as well. So thank you very much for joining me today, Jeanne.

01-00:00:28

Thomas: I'm glad to be here.

01-00:00:29

Tewes: Starting at the beginning: can you tell me when and where you were born?

01-00:00:33

Thomas: I was born in Oakland, California, right nearby.

01-00:00:37

Tewes: And when was this?

01-00:00:39

Thomas: Nineteen twenty-nine. [laughs] Way back then.

01-00:00:42

Tewes: Nineteen twenty-nine. And you grew up in Oakland, right?

01-00:00:44

Thomas: I did, and my father grew up in Oakland, and my grandfather came here very early. He was out in Martinez and came out early. My grandmother was born in Martinez. I stayed in Oakland many years.

01-00:01:00

Tewes: Yeah. Well, what do you remember Oakland looking like in the thirties and forties?

01-00:01:06

Thomas: Not the way it looks like now, that's for sure! [laughs] [Lake Merritt] was very pretty. There were no high rises around the lake. It was a very nice town. They had a problem during World War II, because the shipyards were here, so many Blacks and Okies, as they would call them, came out, and then there was a problem of settlement afterwards. There was a lot of prejudice against the Blacks, so Oakland always had a history of segregation and problems, which is unfortunate. But we're coming out of it well, and it struggled along. But we were always the bedroom community for San Francisco, as sort of the poor sister.

01-00:01:41

I have a great feeling for Oakland, so when I moved away in [1969] to [Moraga], I really felt badly about doing it, but I couldn't find housing that I'd

wanted in Oakland—a condominium. They didn't have [many] condominiums in Oakland. I almost moved to Hiller Highlands, which was burned down in the fire [in 1991], so I'm glad I didn't move there. But there weren't too many other opportunities for condos for a single woman. I moved out to Moraga and loved it out there, but I did feel badly about deserting Oakland.

01-00:02:16

I went to college in Oakland, went to Mills College, lived on the campus, and that was a wonderful experience.

01-00:02:24

Tewes: Yeah, you said a lot here. [laughs] I'm going to ask some follow-up questions. [laughs]

01-00:02:28

Thomas: I covered many years, didn't I?

01-00:02:31

Tewes: That's all good, that's okay. One being that you were talking about being on the lake, and I presume that's Lake Merritt?

01-00:02:38

Thomas: Yes.

01-00:02:39

Tewes: What kind of other outdoor activities were you doing in Oakland, growing up?

01-00:02:45

Thomas: I lived right across the street from the lake and [Lakeside Park], and I played in the park every day when I was in grammar school. My mother was not an outdoor person. My father was, but my mother was not, so I didn't—we didn't do a lot of running around, like going up to Mount Diablo or something. That was a big deal to maybe go up there for a picnic, but we didn't do it very often, which I was—I feel badly about. So that's when I was eleven that I went up to the High Sierra to my—a camp up there had been my experience with the outdoors and the flowers and the hiking and all.

01-00:03:15

So but then Oakland had the regional parks in that day and age. They started in—oh, they started up right in the fifties, there were—earlier than that even. They had a wonderful system going already in Oakland, and that's been a tremendous opportunity. Cities come out to Oakland and say, "How did you do it?" We say, "We got started early when the land was available." And once the land is gone, the land is gone, which approaches what Save Mount Diablo says, too. So people gave the regional parks land during the Depression, because they didn't want to pay property tax on it anymore. They had this land up there, and they were going to build homes up maybe in the hills. And they said, "Oh, let's give it to the regional park and get rid of it." So Tilden [Regional Park] and some of the original parks were formed that way.

01-00:04:14

Tewes: And how fortuitous!

01-00:04:17

Thomas: Yes!

01-00:04:18

Tewes: And that's their current work. And you also mentioned that World War II had an interesting impact on Oakland, and I'd be curious to hear more about that. What changed in the city that you knew?

01-00:04:33

Thomas: Oh, I think the fact that all these people moved in, but everyone was, of course, involved in the war effort. But it really was after the war that the ramifications became clear. That certainly all these people, now they weren't employed at the shipyards anymore, and they had this crummy housing that they'd had to live in they'd built for workers during the war, and how are they going to assimilate them? In that era, you didn't—you weren't good on assimilation, and Oakland paid a price for that prosperity with the war with all the workers. But it was in the aftermath that later, and still, the ramifications are still there now.

01-00:05:00

So but I couldn't go to camp. That was my only sacrifice during World War II. The camp up in the High Sierra closed for three or four years, and that broke my heart.

01-00:05:21

Tewes: Was that through an organization?

01-00:05:25

Thomas: Yes. My father loved the High Sierra. The Oakland Girl Scout camp was down in Big Basin, which is foggy and drippy and all. The San Mateo/Burlingame camp was up on the High Sierra [near Caples Lake and they let us go there. Later on, I eventually ended up going to the lake for thirty years with my hikers. We went up every summer. It was wonderful. We love it there and it was a life-changer for me.]

01-00:05:52

Tewes: Why is that? Why was that life-changing?

01-00:05:54

Thomas: Oh, I just loved being up there. I didn't like the woods, I didn't like the drippy, coastal woods. There, it was just wonderful. There were rocks to climb and hikes and just, it was just wonderful. [And] it was beautiful country.

01-00:06:12

Tewes: And you mentioned you attended Mills College.

01-00:06:15

Thomas: Yes, I did. My—

01-00:06:15

Tewes: Can you tell me about that decision?

01-00:06:16

Thomas: My mother had come out to Mills College for a year from Pennsylvania, and that's how she met my father. My sister, during World War II, was looking for a college. She'd entered college in 1943, and everything was in sort of a state of disruption. Cal [University of California, Berkeley] would have been her logical choice, but it just wasn't a good—again, all the men were off and everything was disrupted, so she decided to go to Mills. And I followed her after her four years there, and it was wonderful. The continuity, and—we lived on campus, so we had the campus experience. We didn't stay at home; we lived on campus. It bankrupted my parents, but it was a wonderful experience. [laughs]

01-00:07:04

Tewes: And afterwards, can you tell me about your career path?

01-00:07:09

Thomas: The career path was like most women who graduated from college in 1951 or so. I was a junior Phi-Bate [Phi Beta Kappa], I was vice president of the student body, and a history and government major—and I couldn't find a job. But where was I going to find a job? I didn't want to be a nurse, I didn't want to be a teacher, so what was I going to do? So Kaiser Industries was in Oakland, and they had—they were a company for aluminum, steel, [cement, hospitals, and others], Kaiser Aluminum/Kaiser Steel. We did the benefits for all of those companies, and I was started at trainee secretary. [laughs] The poor boss, I didn't do a very good job. He was loyal to me, but I had taken one semester of shorthand at Mills, which got me the trainee secretary job. It was terrible. And at the end of the [day] when I was late getting his contracts to him, as he was ready to leave on the plane, and I still was typing away. He got more involved with employee benefits, which he hated, and so they made me a clerk, which I thought was a terrible-sounding name, but they made me a clerk. I got into the details of the pension plan, which was growing at that point, and expanded and expanded. So as new people were hired, they worked under me and I trained them. It just sort of grew from there, and it—so eventually I became a manager of employee benefits for the Kaiser Steel Corporation.

01-00:08:32

Tewes: Which is quite impressive, considering you weren't sure what kind of career you could have.

01-00:08:37

Thomas: [laughs] No. But women didn't have careers in those days. You met your boyfriend in college, and your career was to get married and have children, with [your] little white picket fence, and do volunteer work. In fact, I even took a course with a woman who taught a course at Mills on volunteering. She

was a very outstanding woman in San Francisco activities, and that was pretty interesting. But that's what you were supposed to do.

01-00:09:09

Tewes: I know I'm skipping ahead here, but while we're on the topic of Kaiser, can you tell me about your decision to retire early?

01-00:09:18

Thomas: The decision to retire early was that Kaiser Steel announced that they were going to move away from Oakland to their plant—the main plant they had in Fontana, California. If you don't know where Fontana, California, is, it's horrible. We call it the armpit of California. It was a terrible inland location where they built the steel mill in World War II in the middle of San [Bernardino County]. And I didn't want to go down there. I had my thirty years to get a full retirement. I was only fifty-three, but I was not going to go down there, so I retired. That was my decision. I sort of looked for a job. It was a very poor job market then, and my expertise really was in Kaiser benefits—*Kaiser* benefits. So at that point I joined a women's hiking group, and I never turned back. [laughs] Why should I go to work when I have this wonderful thing to do? That's my career, the end of my career.

01-00:10:13

Tewes: But how fortunate that you got to use your pension.

01-00:10:16

Thomas: Oh yes, yes. [laughs]

01-00:10:18

Tewes: How did you meet up with this hiking group? How did you find out about them?

01-00:10:22

Thomas: [A friend of mine] from [high school].

01-00:10:24

Tewes: Oh really?

01-00:10:26

Thomas: She had a friend who lived—when I lived in Moraga, and just by chance, and she said, "You know, I've got this group you might want to join." I hadn't seen her for years. It was really pretty lucky. And it's been a life-changer for me. I still [walk] every day—well, I don't hike every Wednesday now, but I coordinate their social activities and keep in touch with all of them. [laughs]

01-00:10:54

Tewes: How wonderful, Jeanne. You know, someone I wanted to talk about is someone who's been important in your life, Bob Adams. Can you tell me how you two met?

01-00:11:09

Thomas:

My grandparents went to his parents' wedding, so they had known each other. But that's not how we met. When I lived in an apartment house on Adams St. in Oakland, he was there, and we just started—became friends there and started going out for thirty-plus years. Never married, never lived together, but traveled together and did everything—the symphony and the opera and everything. It was wonderful, a wonderful relationship. And when I was broke after I retired, he took me on trips to Europe and overseas. It was a good relationship.

01-00:11:46

Tewes:

Sounds very beneficial. And I think you met around 1960?

01-00:11:53

Thomas:

Nineteen sixty—yeah, about 1960.

01-00:11:54

Tewes:

Okay. And I know he is—well, maybe I should back up, actually, because your parents were philanthropists.

01-00:12:06

Thomas:

No, they weren't. I brought that up, because they didn't have much money in the Depression, but they always managed to give every year to the Community Chest, the United Crusade predecessor, and the church, and that was always very definite. But I was quite pleased they were always able to do that. I gave my nickel every week to the church. My grandfather sent me a dime allowance, and I gave [part] to the church. I did more than tithe, I gave half of it to the church. But no, that was always a lesson to me.

01-00:12:33

And Bob was very, very concerned about philanthropy. He had many organizations he supported and made grants to.

01-00:12:43

Tewes:

Sounds like wonderful examples.

01-00:12:46

Thomas:

Yes. [laughs]

01-00:12:46

Tewes:

I'm curious what kind of conversations you and Bob even had about organizations you wanted to give to or volunteer with.

01-00:12:56

Thomas:

I can't remember now exactly how he got involved with Save Mount Diablo. He knew *my* interest in it. He didn't hike around there at all. I don't know, I can't really directly answer you. [But I'm sure glad he did join the board.] I didn't push him into it. I didn't find someone out there who said, "Do you know anyone who wants to be on the board, and would Bob like to get—" it wasn't through me. But it was interesting. We may have gone to a function

where we met the people, I really can't remember. But he was only on the board for about two years, then he passed away.

01-00:13:42

Tewes: But maybe just in general, when you are looking at an organization and determining whether or not you're going to give to it, what are you looking for? What are important things for you to find?

01-00:13:54

Thomas: We always think [of] the director, and for the board of directors, it's essential to—if you don't have a good director, you're not going to have a good organization. If you don't have a strong board, you're not going to have someone who'll back the director, who'll come up with new plans and all. [Bob] was very active in organizations in Oakland. He was a lawyer who was on a couple of Bar Association activities. He was very liberal, so legal aid was one of his big things. [laughs]

01-00:14:32

Tewes: And you mentioned you moved from Oakland to Moraga in around 1969. I'm curious what—

01-00:14:41

Thomas: Not 18—don't make me older than—1969.

01-00:14:44

Tewes: Yes, did I say 18? Oh my goodness!

01-00:14:47

Thomas: You did.

01-00:14:46

Tewes: Yes, Jeanne. That's how long ago it was. [laughs]

01-00:14:48

Thomas: Some days I feel like 192! [laughs] But no, I feel badly about that, because I didn't want to desert Oakland, but I did. And I loved Moraga. Moraga was semi-rural. It was just a marvelous area. It was settled all at once, but there was property held by Utah Construction [Co.], and they didn't sell it off like over in Lafayette, over in Lafayette where it was sold over the years. But they were sold at once, and so they had two—the shopping centers, and then the housing grew from there. It was a lovely rural—it had a rural feeling to it. I loved it. I was there for about thirty-plus years, then moved on to Rossmoor.

01-00:15:31

Tewes: Yeah, you were certainly closer to the Diablo Range at that point.

01-00:15:36

Thomas: I did live closer. I loved going up to Las Trampas [Wilderness Regional Park] when we hiked, and looking down to Moraga, so I could see my friend down

there. As you looked on the hills, a bit like the *Sound of Music*, you know? [laughs] "I go to the hills when my heart is lonely." But I loved hiking there.

01-00:15:54

Tewes: Did you find that when you moved further east that you were able to get out and hike more often?

01-00:16:02

Thomas: Oh yeah. We hiked once a week with [the] hiking group, and then we'd go off on our own and do some hiking. There's so many places to go, that Walnut Creek didn't make too much of a difference, because we'd go to San Francisco and then out to the coast. We used to go out to Marin County before the traffic got so bad that that became impossible. We'd go up to Point Reyes, and go down south. But Mount Diablo, I'd say, through the years Mount Diablo has been one of our steadiest hiking [areas], numerous hikes in the area on Mount Diablo. There are so many trails there. When you look at the map of what's there, there's lots of different habitats and interesting trails.

01-00:16:52

Tewes: So you preempted my question here already, in thinking about Bob. But I'm curious about how *you* learned about Save Mount Diablo and how you got involved.

01-00:17:02

Thomas: I'd say Susan Watson was the key. My sister and brother-in-law were good friends of Bob and Susie. She was very active. She wasn't one of the founders, but certainly one of the early, early supporters and went on the board and all, and she was a wonderful person. So I used to hear about it from my sister and hear about Save Mount Diablo. I looked at my giving history, and I began giving in about '89, I guess, and I gave memorial gifts. And I see that. I began to give to them and got to see what kind of organization it was.

01-00:17:41

Tewes: And do you remember what it was about Susie or about Save Mount Diablo in general that made you think, yes, this is an organization I want to be involved with?

01-00:17:53

Thomas: Well, if you knew Susie, you would have known she was a very, very persuasive, very wonderful person, and I just loved her. She loved to hike. And tried to get my sister and brother out to hike a little bit, but that was rough, because they were golfers not hikers. So I guess just through her I felt the enthusiasm.

01-00:18:14

When I first started getting more involved, I look back now—I know that when Bob got on the board, Seth traditionally—Seth Adams—traditionally took a new board member and drove all around the mountain, all around the area. Not just around the mountain, but around the area where he was trying to

get property. He knew me well enough to ask me to come along, which of course I just loved, because that opens up your eyes to the immense area that their interests cover. That's one of the best volunteer things they do, is get—so I got a bus trip [for my Rossmoor friends] to go around these different areas. It was an eye opener. I think it's the biggest fundraiser/eye opener for people, to see the area that we're covering. But also, one key point I don't think I mentioned to you at all before is people say about Save Mount Diablo, "Why is the mountain—what are you saving? Isn't the mountain—" and we say, "No, no." And then you wake people up to the huge amount of area that is available for development still, and that I think is a real eye opener.

01-00:19:21

Tewes: And are these bus trips ongoing?

01-00:19:26

Thomas: They usually [happen] about once a year. They're little buses, they're little twenty-passenger buses. They usually do one once a year. I've done it once for the [Rossmoor] group. I need to organize another one. I think it's such an eye opener.

01-00:19:44

Tewes: What do you remember from your first trip of these that was such a big moment for you?

01-00:19:50

Thomas: You mean, when I went with Seth and Bob?

01-00:19:52

Tewes: Mm-hmm.

01-00:19:53

Thomas: Again, the area that's covered. And of course, I was fascinated, because I'd hiked in some of these areas, and we talked about connecting those areas, like Black Diamond Mines, for example. And Seth, he illustrated what developers do, and how they fight developers or try to guide them. Like at Black Diamond Mines, it was property that had—it had mine shafts underneath, and if you build on those things, it was going to be disastrous. [Seth might point that out and suggest a park would be better use of the land.] That kind of thing. Certainly, you hear stories about these different areas and how they kept developers from building on a ridgeline, for example, in these areas. They wanted to build on the ridgeline, and we'd say, "No, no. Why don't you just keep it down below and make it a better development [for] the people [living] there, and *they* have the ridgeline to look at?" That kind of thing is what Save Mount Diablo does—and Seth. [laughs]

01-00:20:51

Tewes: Yes, yes. We'll talk about him more in a second. So you thought you started giving around 1989. Did you have specific areas you were interested in giving to, financially, of the organization?

01-00:21:06

Thomas:

No, I gave memorial gifts, actually. Plus, they have Moonlight on the Mountain, and I became a sponsor. As things came up, I just—or a gift for our thirtieth anniversary party, and I do remember that. We're having our fiftieth now, so twenty years ago they had a thirtieth anniversary party at the Leshner [Center for the Arts] auditorium in Walnut Creek, where Seth and [Ron Brown] had tuxedos on. But most of us didn't dress that formally. Of course, that was one of their big events. Generally, I've supported that kind of thing. But I think the first property, as such, that I gave money to, was the Viera Property. I was on the Development Committee at that time, and they were about ready to buy it. And I thought, well, that'd be fun to give a nice gift to that property, so I did.

01-00:22:03

Tewes:

Do you remember anything specific about that property that drew you to it?

01-00:22:07

Thomas:

Yes. I heard that they were talking about buying it and whatever, but I can't find the actual reference to it. Another [giving history] indicated something else is—I gave to the Viera Property, and then after that I gave to the Forever Wild [Capital Campaign]. It's a specific property within that, but it says Forever Wild, and I gave to Curry Canyon—Curry Canyon Ranch. But—

01-00:22:47

Tewes:

Yeah, we'll talk about that in a little bit. But so you started giving pretty early on, and you also volunteered for Save Mount Diablo?

01-00:22:58

Thomas:

I don't think I volunteered until they opened that first little office. They used to work out of a kitchen table for years: Susie Watson's kitchen table, the Sattlers' kitchen. So they finally got this little office right near me, which was lucky. I could just run over there in about five minutes. A little, tiny office with Seth. Seth was their first paid employee, and they had Gerry Keenan, the first director. She didn't stay too long. She didn't quite work out the way they wanted, so Ron [Brown] came in. And so I would go into his office and do filing for him and take stuff in to file. And then he'd get a call once in a while that was confidential, and so that I'd have to get up and leave. I'd then go back in when he was through, or sometimes he had to close the door. I'd have to leave, and it was a while. But I did whatever they wanted me to do: file, get coffee, whatever. [laughs]

01-00:23:51

Tewes:

Is that what they mainly needed you for, office work?

01-00:23:56

Thomas:

They were really upset. "Here she is, a donor and all. She shouldn't be doing this kind of stuff." And I said, "Well, that's fine. I'm willing to do whatever you need." I mean, I was really quick to pick up things to do. I can remember at Kaiser having an executive's son in the summertime who'd come in to work

for us, so I'd have to give work that my girls did to him and give them the crummy work. He got to do the more interesting things. But I never forgot that. I thought that was grossly unfair, that he got more interesting things to do than the employees. So I just did what they wanted, you know, and I ran errands and picked up stuff. If they were having an event, I'd pick up things or deliver things or whatever.

01-00:24:46

Tewes:

I'm curious how that office work compared to what you'd been doing professionally for Kaiser.

01-00:24:51

Thomas:

Oh, there's no comparison. There wasn't any comparison. They were trying their best to keep their heads above water, and answer letters and record donations. I guess there were two or three employees, so they were trying to figure out, I'm sure, themselves, how they were going to develop. It wasn't a very formal office setup. [laughs]

01-00:25:26

Tewes:

About how long did you do that sort of office volunteer work?

01-00:25:31

Thomas:

I can't remember now. The office opened in '98. Probably a little while longer after that. When Moonlight came, I worked as a volunteer on that, the special things, you know, that they do, more special things. But never anything very innovative. I mean, I didn't use my managerial and my experience in a very innovative way. No offense to them. It was fine with me to just do whatever they wanted. If I had to pick up sandwiches for the workers at Moonlight or pick up artwork for the auction or whatever, I was willing to do it.

01-00:26:13

Tewes:

[laughs] Yeah, yeah. So we spoke about your connection to the organization through donations and volunteering. We're also going to speak, in a little bit, about joining the Development Committee and more formalized work that you're doing with the organization. But you've already mentioned some folks from the early days, and I wanted to give you an opportunity to speak more about them. One is Susan Watson. Can you tell me a little bit more about her role in Save Mount Diablo and what you learned from her example?

01-00:26:49

Thomas:

Well, she was around—I guess I'm not sure when she finally left the board. She finally left the board and got involved in Mount Lassen [Volcanic] National Park. That was one of her things, was a visitor center that she got involved in. So actually, the last few years, she wasn't really around as much. But she was definitely a force on the board, and a real personality in the background of things. I didn't have much to do with her, as far as the organization went. I socially met her once a year at her open house and that kind of thing, but I didn't really deal much with her on Save Mount Diablo issues.

01-00:27:29

Tewes: But whatever she said, she brought you on. [laughs]

01-00:27:30

Thomas: Right, yeah, yeah.

01-00:27:33

Tewes: That's great.

01-00:27:33

Thomas: She was very enthusiastic and felt very deeply about the organization.

01-00:27:39

Tewes: Yeah. And I'm actually curious to hear about Mary Bowerman and the small connections you had to her.

01-00:27:47

Thomas: [laughs] The only connection, the only time I ever met her, I had taken my two grandnieces—the one that you know [laughs]—to a function. It was a dedication of something, and she was there. Hilary [Kirk] and Lindsey [Noyes] and I were wandering around looking at things, and one of the girls picked up a flower and said, "I wonder what this is." So I said, "Well, go over and ask Mary Bowerman." So I went over there, and she was sitting there, because she was quite a bit older and just sitting, and she was so sweet to them. She identified it, talked to them, and was very responsive to them, and that was really my only interaction with her. Of course, she was just a marvel with the whole thing. She was—

01-00:28:40

Bob had a little problem on the Development Committee. He was only there a short time, but Bob was a lawyer and did a lot of investing. He was very good at investing. It upset him when people would give stock to Save Mount Diablo, and then they'd keep it, they'd hold on to it. When you give stock to an organization like that, normally you're giving it to them, because it's not too good anymore and/or it doesn't pay dividends anymore, so you don't want it. You're trying to get rid of it, and you had a low-cost basis, so you want to get rid of it. And Bob said, "Maybe [Save Mount Diablo] should *sell* it." Because they didn't have a lot of money stashed away, so if they needed cash, they needed it right away to make a sale. So if they'd given it when the stock was down, they didn't give it much—they could have gambled one way or the other. The stock might have been up, the stock might have been down, but it was a gamble. So he said, "You know, they should sell the stocks." But Mary just hated to do that, because she had these little favorite stocks that people had given to the organization. She liked a whole lot of them, and she didn't like that new policy, [but] Bob [prevailed]. [laughs]

01-00:29:50

Tewes: That's really interesting, and I think is a good insight into where the organization was at before 2000, really.

01-00:30:00

Thomas:

Yeah, that's right. That's why, for example, the Forever Wild [Capital] Campaign—they'd never had a capital campaign like that. But they're getting something they'll be discussing pretty soon, I guess, the way they operate. I'm getting way out. Do you want to talk about that now? Or—

01-00:30:24

Tewes:

Well sure, let's talk about that now.

01-00:30:27

Thomas:

The theory was that they would get some—a property would come up, say if they'd buy it, and they'd turn it over to the State. The State would then pay them for it. They'd take that money and they'd use it for the next land that they bought. And that was sort of what routine they went through. But then when the State began running out of money, they'd buy the property, and the State couldn't use it, it couldn't pay Save Mount Diablo for it. They didn't want to give it up, because once you gave it up, someone would develop it. That's why you bought the land in the first place. We hold, I think, about nineteen properties and have to manage them now. I think it changed the whole—I may be exaggerating—the whole tenor of the organization, because now we have these properties that we have got to manage. So the staff has grown, and you go from there.

01-00:31:18

And it changes their programs. For example, at Curry Canyon, they have programs there now. I'm sure I'm way ahead of myself now. But the Mangini Property, there's this new thing up on—a center they're going to have there for activities, put a temporary thing with a tent covering and porta-potties and stuff so they could have meetings out there. They'll eventually have a building, which I think is incredible! I was telling this friend of mine who might try to be the volunteer that helps out, I know about ten organizations or several of the committees and groups that I'm in that would use it and would want to have a function out there. It's just natural to have my garden club, the Dirty Fingernails Garden Club, would just love to have that kind of a place to go to. So it's the imagination of using that property that way. But if they had turned it over to the [State] Park, then they wouldn't have the authority to do that, so it's changed the tenor. I think it's really amazing.

01-00:32:32

Tewes:

Well, and you were discussing the Forever Wild [Capital Campaign] in context of this, and I'm just curious what that campaign means for the organization as a whole and for programs like you just mentioned.

01-00:32:47

Thomas:

The majority of it [is] to buy property, and [they paid for Curry Canyon Ranch]. And then part of it, some of it, will be for our Legal Defense Fund, and the other part is for restoration or for maintenance. And they want to build up money there and spend money out of the trust to do this. Maintenance isn't the right word. I can't think [of the word]. In any case—

01-00:33:13

Tewes: Stewardship?

01-00:33:14

Thomas: Yes, stewardship. Thank you. [laughs] So they want to build that up so they can get a way to get income coming in so they can do it on a regular basis. But they were able to buy the properties, these properties in the meantime, and it started with wanting to pay for them. Because when these properties go on the market, they come and they're gone if they don't take them.

01-00:33:37

A side story on the relationship with the [East Bay] Regional Parks, the Regional Parks have a property that they've wanted, and they made an offer and were turned down, and the Regional Parks didn't have the flexibility to go back to them quickly. And they were aware they're going to lose it, so they said, "Talk to Save Mount Diablo. Can *you* go out and bid on this property?" And we did, and we got it, because we could move faster. But because we have that money, we can move faster on these properties now. And of course, one of these questions you have on my work on the Development Committee.

01-00:34:25

Tewes: Yes, yes.

01-00:34:26

Thomas: Backtrack—I'm going off in all kinds of directions.

01-00:34:28

Tewes: That's fine!

01-00:34:28

Thomas: I'm failing you.

01-00:34:30

Tewes: [laughs] We're all fallible. Which property were you just speaking about?

01-00:34:34

Thomas: I don't remember what it was.

01-00:34:34

Tewes: Okay.

01-00:34:35

Thomas: I may be talking out of turn anyway, so I won't identify the property. [laughs]

01-00:34:41

Tewes: Well, the point is that the organization now has funds on hand to—

01-00:34:44

Thomas: Right. Oh, definitely. Yes.

01-00:34:45

Tewes: —to buy properties quickly. That's a good point. Yeah. Speaking about early folks again, do you want to say any more about Seth Adams and your working relationship with him over the years?

01-00:35:01

Thomas: What more can you say about Seth Adams? I'd have to take the two hours! [laughs] I'm just reading the book that came out of his interview a couple of years ago. Have you seen that interview? I don't know how many days it was. It's *remarkable*. It showed me more about the organization than I ever knew. He's just a remarkable person, just loves the organization. It showed how little I knew about all this maneuvering that has to go on with buying these properties, and working with cities and developers and all to work around all these things. His knowledge of the whole history and the whole background, as I say, this book shows it all. He is a fountainhead of information, a marvelous person. He liked Bob very much.

01-00:36:00

Tewes: I want to talk now about your work on the Development Committee, which you said you joined after Bob passed around 2006?

01-00:36:13

Thomas: Mm-hmm.

01-00:36:13

Tewes: Mm-hmm. Can you tell me about joining? How did you come to join the Committee?

01-00:36:18

Thomas: When Bob passed away, he'd been on the board, and someone mumbled something about my going on the board in his place. And I remember saying "No, that's not good," and they decided it's not good either. And then the Development Committee came along, and in my mind, the Development Committee had the same drawbacks for me. I had the same drawbacks for the Committee as for the board. I didn't have the contacts, I didn't have wealthy friends sitting around there, I didn't have a big house that I could throw a party. A lot of board members, unfortunately, on these organizations are taken in, because they have a house they can throw a party at. [laughs] Yet I didn't have a big house, I didn't have the moneyed friends or the business friends. And I thought that's what you need on a Development Committee, and that's what gave me the idea about being the liaison with Rossmoor [in Walnut Creek], and that worked out very well.

01-00:37:07

But in the meetings themselves, I didn't contribute, I didn't feel I contributed a lot, because again, they were talking about fundraising and big ideas, like Forever Wild was sort of hatched there. I didn't have the imagination or really enough background to—I think imagination probably was a lot, too. I would be scared to death to try a \$15 million [capital campaign] at that point. It

doesn't sound like it's much money now, but that—so in that respect I was not very valuable. I think my thing was, really, was Rossmoor. I finally, about 2014, said to Julie [Seelen], "Maybe I should just stop coming to meetings." She thought that was fine. So I wasn't contributing. You have to have the right people to contribute to those groups, and getting those is very hard sometimes to—I did not contribute. I was a body there, I think, a lot of times, unfortunately.

01-00:38:02

Tewes:

Well, I'm sure you did. Well, what do you think you *could* contribute to these meetings, and your background and your interests?

01-00:38:09

Thomas:

I did make one contribution that was valuable, I think. The annual report would come out every year and show people who'd contributed. There was always an issue of minimum contribution, you got to have your name included. I remember my first contribution was about \$25 each, but you can send \$10 in. So do you include every \$10, every \$15 contribution on that list or not? Well, they wanted to at some point to make it \$100 or more. And I said, "No. If your membership, supposed membership, is \$35, you've got to include those people."

01-00:38:49

I know when Bob and I would go to the symphony or to the opera, all these he contributed to, and he'd pore over the list of people looking—in the programs, looking for names of people he knew. I've been doing that, too, because people like to see their names and like to see who else is contributing. And so I felt that was one—I'd forgotten about that—I feel that's one thing I did contribute. So sure enough, they now include everyone. [I think that] thirty-five is sort of a minimum to be a, quote, member to get certain mailings all the time, that your membership does certain things. And membership is on a scale—nothing too dramatic—but you do get mailings if you give at \$35, so I felt very good about that. I forgot about that! [laughs] I accomplished that.

01-00:39:46

Tewes:

That's great.

01-00:39:47

Thomas:

That's something. That's the kind of thing I would get involved in.

01-00:39:52

Tewes:

And you said you weren't necessarily feeling like you could contribute to the conversations, but what were the kinds of conversations that the Committee was having about development work for Save Mount Diablo?

01-00:40:03

Thomas:

Well, trying to get people involved, trying to get people involved to help things and find—I never felt when I was there that the Committee jelled on certain projects. It didn't seem to move ahead very rapidly, not just the

makeup of the Committee at that time. But it did get the beginning of Forever Wild, the beginning of the brochures and all, and got it rolling. I don't know what the makeup of the Committee is now. But I know the board has increased dramatically, and that's wonderful. The board got to be very, very small. It was down to about eight members, which is just terrible. That's way too low. And they've gotten—now built it up and simply have some wonderful people.

01-00:41:03

Tewes: Well yeah, how have you seen the makeup of the board and other committees change over the years that you've been involved?

01-00:41:11

Thomas: I don't really know what's going in the committees. I just know the board; those are the people I know. I think that's good. I think that's one thing I mentioned to you, too, earlier, that we, of course, haven't had functions the last year-and-a-half. But when I'd go to these functions, I used to know everyone, and that was fun, because you knew everyone. But that's not good either, because it means you're not getting new people into the organization. So gradually, as I went to them, there were more and more people all the time that I didn't know. There are people out there who are doing a good job of recruiting new members and new interests. Those committees, whoever they are, must be doing that. And the board, too, has its strong members.

01-00:41:57

Tewes: And why is it important to continue to recruit new board members?

01-00:42:02

Thomas: New blood, new interests, new contacts. Again, just spreading the word and coming up with ideas.

01-00:42:39

Tewes: I'm also curious, given that you started as a volunteer in other capacities, how much of your time and effort you needed to put into something like the Development Committee. What were you giving of yourself for that?

01-00:42:52

Thomas: I wasn't doing very much. That's something that bothered me. I spent time with the Rossmoor thing, but I didn't do other things outside of Rossmoor, pretty much. I usually had a function once a year for Rossmoor, and that took some time to set up and contact people and get it done. We never had very many people that attended, but I think out of it came some—I think a few donors that were quite good. I didn't do as much as I could have done. I never had anyone to assist me. I was talking to their new development person and the new head of the Committee, Margie [Ryan] and Keith Alley, talking to them about what we could do at Rossmoor. And I said I'm getting too old to do it, but I'd need help. But we need some younger people to, who live at Rossmoor, to be in charge of it and have functions. And hopefully now they'll

get it back together again. We've lost so much momentum not being able to get together, and we can't even use any of the facilities to have a function.

01-00:44:13

Tewes: Well, let's back up for a moment, and can you tell me what this liaison position is to Rossmoor and how it started?

01-00:44:22

Thomas: Just my idea, what am I going to do on the Development Committee, when I got the idea. There really is nothing official about it. If it was official, I thought maybe I'd have a club [at Rossmoor], end up joining a club. There are clubs at Rossmoor. But then, there was no real function for having the club. What would we do at meetings? We weren't certain we'd have meetings once a month, and that's one of the requirements for a club. I just got the idea of having a function, a reception once a year and have speakers. At those functions, we'd have about maybe fifty people, so it wasn't a big deal.

01-00:45:01

They kept wanting to push me to have something at one of our auditoriums here, having a bigger function. And this was hitting me just as I was getting older. Since I didn't have someone to help me, I began to sort of fight the issue. No, I just thought my little luncheon—that's why something can be done. We have 10,000 people here, as I'm looking at my view of the mountain. We have a huge hiking group. So it's built in to expand it, so it's still around. I'm hoping that maybe I could work with [them] on the sideline for something. Margie, our new development person, is wonderful actually. She'll help out and get that going.

01-00:45:48

Tewes: Well, I think for folks who don't know the Rossmoor community well here, it's important to say that this is a group of very active senior residents who are active politically and in other ways—and you mentioned the hiking club. I wonder what the response was when you started hosting events at Rossmoor and promoting Save Mount Diablo.

01-00:46:11

Thomas: It was good. Not as much as I'd like to have seen, and I couldn't capitalize on it now. One thing I did when I first got in, I was in the [Rossmoor] hiking group. And they always hiked too fast and never stopped to look at the flowers, so I gave up on that. They came to me to get speakers for a couple of their dinners that they had. I had Ron Brown come out and speak, our director, and then Julie Seelen, our development person, came out. So that was a good, positive thing. But again, they changed; they never had the dinners, and I dropped out of the club and that kind of thing. The club is one of the largest ones, the hiking group, and they have three levels of hiking: ramblers, amblers, and scramblers. [laughs] So there's a very interesting group, but there are nucleuses that we could utilize to get interest growing. One of the directors who was in the hiking group said that you could—again, we had talked about

getting a group in the spring, some sort of activity. But I think we all could have something in our theater here, a set of speakers again. But then we should follow through, and that's what we never really capitalized or followed through [on]. But I'm too old to do it! [laughs] So I could turn it over to someone else, but we talked to our new development person about it.

01-00:47:45

Tewes:

Yeah, what would the follow through look like for folks? What did that entail?

01-00:47:49

Thomas:

Maybe have them interested in doing volunteer work. There [are] projects like planting and cleaning trails, and that kind of thing that they can do, and then if they had that thing out at Mangini Ranch with the staff out there that could help service that or volunteer there when they have a function. I think there's a lot more room for volunteering now under the new programs that we have that we haven't had before. I know they do have planting and restoration work. There's a committee that does that, and I'd love to have done that in my younger days, my late seventies or early eighties. [laughs]

01-00:48:35

Tewes:

Yes, yes! Well, you mentioned these receptions you were hosting, and I'm really curious what that looked like. What spaces were you using?

01-00:48:48

Thomas:

The first one was almost the last one. The first one was at the new offices we were in, and it was on the same day as they were signing up the riders for the bike ride function on [Mount] Diablo, and all these bikers were coming in and picking up their bibs and their enrollment stuff. Right after that, they started the reception, and I did most of the food myself. One minute I was running around with a vacuum cleaner as the guests started to arrive. But I really didn't have that much of a program. It was sort of to see the pictures in the office, and we had some slides. It wasn't much of a program, so it almost ended before it started.

01-00:49:25

The next time, we had Stephen Joseph, who's a tremendous asset for us, the photographer, just incredible pictures, and had just come out with two gorgeous coffee table books on Mount Diablo. And he's been very generous to us. And then Scott Hein, who is our former board chairman, and he's a wonderful photographer. So we had Scott and Stephen Joseph in a couple of programs. They honored Susie Watson at one of the programs. We had a prairie falcon interview. Heath Bartosh is one of the—he's not on the board anymore, but he was our native plant person, condor recovery, and pumas and mountain lions. So it was always fascinating, because we'd serve wine and do hors d'oeuvres and all that. [At the last couple of receptions, we have volunteers who order the food and set it up.]

01-00:50:27

And then we gradually did it upstairs in the offices, and they were down in the lobby and set up the lecture down there. And I looked around, and no one was sleeping! I thought after all the wine, these eighty-year-olds—we got the speakers that were—in fact, it was a tribute to our speakers, I thought, that I'd look around and no one was dozing. [laughs] So I'd tell the speakers that. It was very crowded, it was way too crowded. And again, I was fighting, because I was in my late eighties at that point, "Why don't you have the big function?" I didn't want to go through all that, so then I had luncheons in the conference room, and had Ted [Clement], the new director, speak and Seth, and then we took a bus tour, too. So again, that stopped. The last one was October of 2018. The last year was a lost year, and this year, too, really. So I think we could do it again. A lot of people—ten of them were my friends—but they're all dying off. I'm sure we could get a good crowd with a luncheon and certainly a big crowd, I think, for a function at our theater. And that's what we have to start to work on and find two or three people to sort of head up a committee, a permanent committee, to work on these things, which I think we can do pretty fine.

01-00:51:52

Tewes:

You mentioned all these very interesting speakers and programs you were having for these luncheons. Is there one that stood out to you that was personally interesting?

01-00:52:06

Thomas:

Well of course, Stephen Joseph—the speakers were incredible—his photographs—I don't know if you've had the chance to see them—just beautiful pictures. I think the condor recovery was fascinating, the fact that we might get condors—not yet—but maybe could get condors on Mount Diablo. I would say that both of the pictures with Scott Hein and Stephen Joseph were wonderful.

01-00:52:34

Tewes:

Yeah, I've seen Scott's, and those are really—

01-00:52:37

Thomas:

Oh!

01-00:52:38

Tewes:

—really lovely photos, so I understand that.

01-00:52:42

Thomas:

Stephen Joseph had his 3-D—plenty of 3-D photographs at the thirtieth anniversary party at the Leshner Theater. Everyone was there, and they handed out little 3-D glasses, you know, those funky, little glasses, and we put them on [grumbling], sort of [grumbling] about having to put them on. So then Stephen puts on a slide, and we [all go], "Oh." It was a picture of Mount Diablo, but in the foreground was an awesome tree. And the 3-D and the mountain in the background, it was just outstanding. I went, "Oh, okay, I'll

keep these little glasses on if you want to keep doing this." But he was just wonderful. I think we're due for a lecture during our fiftieth anniversary. Maybe he'll do it again. We have all next year, I guess, as the anniversary, because we weren't able to do anything this year. This darn virus, the variant, is going to keep us from having crowds again, so that we'll have to get it in next year. And, well, hopefully.

01-00:53:52

Tewes: It puts some dampers on the plans for now.

01-00:53:55

Thomas: Yes.

01-00:53:57

Tewes: I'm also thinking about the fact that you are this liaison to Rossmoor, and you're encouraging others to give of their time and their money. And I'm just curious what approach you take when you ask people to do that in any capacity.

01-00:54:16

Thomas: I'm not good at asking people for money. I never have liked that. I really don't. I just set these things out, and then I'm glad it falls out that they can go talk to—one nice man wanted to talk to Ted right after I had the lunch, the director. [There was] a major program that he wanted to contribute to, and I was thrilled to death, but I didn't specifically ask him. I'm not good at that. And at that point, there was not [a lot] people could do as volunteers. Well, I will say, some of the women did come into the office and folded envelopes for mailings. We found that kind of volunteer—there were a few who did that. We had volunteer work in the office, so people stuffed envelopes and all, so there was that aspect. But—

01-00:55:15

Tewes: Well, you say you have a hard time talking to people about giving. But I'm wondering what kind of example you hope you're setting for other people with your own giving.

01-00:55:22

Thomas: Well, I hope when they see the names—if my friends in the hiking group know that I contribute, and I hope that encourages some of them, just by my example. For some, they have joined it or sent money in. I had my ninetieth birthday party—or eighty-fifth. I had eighty, eight-five, and ninety birthday parties—two on Mount Diablo and one at Curry Canyon—and a lot of people gave me birthday presents. They sent checks to Save Mount Diablo, so in that respect, there has been a—I have helped them indirectly in that respect.

01-00:56:02

Tewes: That's so interesting! So for your birthday, they gave gifts in your name?

01-00:56:06

Thomas: Yes.

01-00:56:08

Tewes:

That's great. Yeah, well you just mentioned your ninetieth party at Curry Canyon Ranch. Can you tell me a little bit more about that? What was that like?

01-00:56:17

Thomas:

I had two: for my ninetieth and eighty-fifth. It was wonderful. We wandered all over the mountain and [found a large picnic area with good parking]. And the area is huge. I had more control over the eighty-fifth and didn't have quite as many people. [There were fifty people at both the eighty-five and the ninetieth parties.] By the ninetieth, a lot of people wouldn't be able to drive up the mountain. My friends would help bring stuff in, but it was a hassle, so I knew I had to make a change for the ninetieth. I don't know who on the Save Mount Diablo staff invited me to have it at Curry Canyon Ranch, but I was thrilled with that. There's a ranch house there that was on the property, and they had fixed it up. They did a wonderful job of fixing it up. They have a kitchen, so they thought that was a great idea, and I thought it was a wonderful idea. So I had my hiking group out, and they hiked, and Ted led the hike for them. Some of my family came down from Lincoln, the little kids came down. And then rest of them I brought out on a bus. I got one of those little buses, again, that we use for Moonlight [on the Mountain] and the tours around the mountain. I forget what company it is, but they're a nice size. My Rossmoor friends and [other] friends came over and used that and drove out in that, so all three little groups coming in. We used Sunrise Catering. I'll give a little pitch for Sunrise Catering. They've been wonderful people for Rossmoor. They do Moonlight, they cater for Moonlight and the dinner, so they did lunch. It rained, was the only problem, but other than that it was a great day, and I appreciated the staff worked their tails off on that. [laughs]

01-00:58:30

Tewes:

That's so great. I'm curious, why is it important to you to have these several birthdays on Save Mount Diablo properties? What did that mean to you?

01-00:58:38

Thomas:

Oh, it meant a lot. I got the idea, because my grandfather, who lived to be ninety-nine, played golf until he was ninety-seven, was very active. I remember going to birthday parties at his home, and he was giving it for himself. I thought, why is he giving a party for himself? Well, when you reach a certain age, who else is going to give you a party? [laughs] So I had that idea, and then I thought [it's] just sort of natural to have it on Diablo. My hiking friends helped out, and one of our board members came and helped move tables. It was sort of a group thing. And each time Ron Brown showed up, the former director. He showed up at [ninety] and eighty-five and gave a talk, a nice talk for me. And so I was just thrilled to death. [And Ted was there for the ninetieth.] A perfect, perfect birthday setting. I don't know what I'll do for ninety-five, [laughs] but the Curry Canyon was just perfect, except for the weather.

01-00:59:35

Tewes: What time of year is your birthday, Jeanne?

01-00:59:36

Thomas: May 16. May.

01-00:59:37

Tewes: May? Okay. So nice, beautiful spring weather.

01-00:59:40

Thomas: Most of the time it should be nice, but it wasn't that day. It rained, but they still were able to hike, and we hiked.

01-00:59:46

[We took pictures of my grand-niece and nephew in their Save Mount Diablo t-shirts. As a sponsor for Moonlight of the Mountain, I get space for an ad in the program. When Leo was born the staff gave me a "Save Mount Diablo for Me" onesie. Instead of my usual ad of a Mount Diablo fairy-lantern flower, I used Leo's picture. Now I had the idea of using pictures of him and then his sister every year in the ad. So you see] them grow up. Now, they're eight and six, and now they've got Save Mount Diablo t-shirts. So that's an annual thing in the household up there in Lincoln, that the kids get their pictures taken with their t-shirts on, so you see a whole series of them in Moonlight on the Mountain ads. [laughs] I enjoy that.

01-01:00:48

Tewes: Yeah, great to include the family in that event—

01-01:00:52

Thomas: Yeah.

01-01:00:53

Tewes: —which I do want to talk about in a moment. But I want to back up for a moment and finish with some questions I have about [the] Development Committee. Because when we spoke last time, we were thinking about what's important to plan financially for the next fifty years of Save Mount Diablo's work, and you spoke about the Charitable Gift Annuity Program that Burt Bassler set up. Can you speak a little bit more about that and what your thoughts were around it?

01-01:01:24

Thomas: I think you asked about how successful that's been. I don't think it's been overly successful. Organizations depend on these programs. You give money to the organization, and they give it to their—a trustee of the program. They invest it, and you get monthly income from it, and then when you die the money goes to the organization. But you have no inflation. The income is set, so the inflationary time, well, it can still backfire on you. But it's a good way to—the taxable things are good from this, certain stocks—if you have a low-cost basis in these stocks, you give them the low basis, and so on and so forth. But it's a good way—just a different way of giving money but getting an

income from it until you die. So I inherited some money from Bob. A lot of my generosity is his generosity. [laughs]

01-01:02:34

Tewes: Is that how you prefer to give, the annuity?

01-01:02:38

Thomas: I sort of [had] these extra funds at that point in cash, so it seemed like a good idea, and I haven't done it since then. I should have asked how successful that's been. I don't think it's been overly successful with Save Mount Diablo. What they are working on is having people give money in their will. That's a key point, to get people to do that. On the Development Committee, I was trying to work on a brochure they would have sent out then, and we never got it moving. That was frustrating, and now they have [brochures] to give out to people, because that can be very successful.

01-01:03:33

Tewes: Well actually, that reminds me of a conversation we had previously about [how] you and Bob used to read obituaries.

01-01:03:42

Thomas: [laughs] Oh, that was one reason I started, I did volunteering. My father was an insurance man, so he always read obituaries, because he had to see if clients, you know, died. And Bob was a lawyer—same thing. He worked on probate law. And when I worked at Kaiser in the Pension Department, I had to read them. Well, the last—it started a few years ago—obituaries got very interesting. It wasn't "he loved life," that kind of stuff, but they got very, very interesting. I'm reading more and more about these people and what they're doing. And I thought, gosh—this was in the late eighties—what am I doing? I'm going here and doing that, and I'm not really concentrating. I can't put that [in my obituary]. I collected money for the Red Cross, you know, so I thought—that was one thing that sort of got me into this idea of doing something for a good organization that's been making a difference. That was funny. Of course, Bob would volunteer a lot. He did legal aid and other things, too, so he was always—he was conscious of it, too, and very conscientious about his giving. He had a lot of money, and he'd say it made no difference to him. He got mad at me, because I was so broke after I retired, and I sent in \$10 or \$25. He said, "You're costing the organization more money to process it than you are [helping]." [laughs] I said, "Oh." [laughs] He was very good about donating.

01-01:05:12

Tewes: That sounds ideal.

01-01:05:12

Thomas: That was the obituary that really was a—it occurred to me about trying to settle down and do something for one or two organizations around, rather than just doing a little bit for several—where you can make a difference. So I started on Save Mount Diablo.

01-01:05:36

Tewes: That's an interesting strategy. So I want to think about, again, some of the significant events that you've encountered in the organization over the years. You did mention the thirtieth anniversary, and I wanted to ask a few more questions about that. Did you say you set that up?

01-01:05:56

Thomas: Oh no, no, no. Oh no.

01-01:05:57

Tewes: No.

01-01:05:58

Thomas: No. It was at the Leshner Theater, and it was, oh, about twenty years ago. Everything was well done and served in tuxedos. [laughs] It was a big crowd. They had a good crowd. But no, I didn't have anything to do with setting it up. That was a nice party, so I hope they'll just—they're trying to do something similar for the fiftieth, if they can have things. [laughs]

01-01:06:27

Tewes: That would be lovely. And we've alluded to Moonlight on the Mountain a few times, but I want to speak more about that, because I think it's been around since 2002. And were you a volunteer in the beginning?

01-01:06:45

Thomas: I'm pretty sure I was. Of course, Bob [Marx] does a lot of things for Save Mount Diablo. I think we went to something at his barn and sat around on some haystacks that I wasn't too impressed with. But then he had the idea of going up to the mountain, and we thought that was a wonderful place to have it, so they started having it. And Sunrise [Catering] has catered it. All along they've done the catering. So these poor waiters and waitresses have to go tromp up there, and then go over the ground, the dirt, to serve these people a three-course meal. But it's grown into an absolutely—everyone just loves it. It sells out when they get the announcement out. I think it started being 200 and now it's 450, and that's probably about the maximum they can have. It may be 500, but by the time you get the 450 or 500, and you have volunteers all over the place, and the waitstaff are all—so it's a huge number of people on the mountain. And what they do is they have some buses. So you can't drive, you couldn't have everyone drive up. The buses pick you up from a set place and drive you up and take you back down.

01-01:07:57

We have a silent auction and a regular auction. The silent auction has lots and lots of art; meals at restaurants and theater tickets and baseball games; objects like art pictures, paintings, and books and things. And that's been very successful, too, because people want to save our mountain, and people are willing to give things to the event, and they [do]. They used to give out awards there. The Mountain Star Award that I got in [2008]. [telephone rings]

01-01:08:39

Tewes:

Let's pause for a second. [break in audio] Okay, we are back from a break. And, Jeanne, we were just talking about Moonlight on the Mountain and some of your experiences there.

01-01:08:52

Thomas:

It's been wonderful seeing it develop, because after it was over, I was sending critiques to them, [little] details, and came up with [some] things. And every year they'd change things and make it better. The auction thing was [good]. Checking out at the end, they'd go line up to pay for what they bid on, and it took forever to get it paid for and pick it up and all. And each time they'd get just a little better and a little better. You'd have to go to the trailhead and they had restrooms there, but the restroom is not open, as a matter of fact. You could start there and bus up to the top, but then you'd have to park in the neighborhoods, too, so that was sort of a mess. And then they finally—there was a school, a high school a little ways down. I don't know why they didn't think of this years before. Now you meet there and the buses take you up, so there's lots of parking. And they bring the auction items down there and hand them out. It's just a *thousand* times better. It's just things like that that they should have thought of in the very beginning and no one ever did. The food has gotten better. Sunrise does a beautiful job on that.

01-01:09:58

Then they had that Mountain Star Award that I got in 2008. They gave that out every year. There are three awards every year. So they had talking about the person, then the person got up and talked, and they had all the county and city officials that were there. They would talk and the director would talk and the chairman of the board would talk—it was way too much talking. So they stopped the awards, [except for special recipients], and I think no one's really missed them. No one from the city or officials even talk. It's much better, because everyone's so busy talking *anyway*, and rattling away and enjoying their drinks and their wine and their food. They have a wonderful auctioneer, just terrific. They have the silent auction for all those items, and then they have an auction, the actual auction after you're through with dinner. They get things like three nights at a house in Tahoe or things like that, a little more impressive. I forget. I should [know] the amount of money that that made. You should probably—will find out from somewhere else, but it's our big fundraiser, so hundreds of thousands, I think. And they [also] do that as a public relations [opportunity] so that companies will buy a table, for example. It's good outreach for the people to learn about Save Mount Diablo.

01-01:11:38

When I got the award, my family came down because I was getting the award, and they've come back every year, so I think it's the most wonderful event. They come all the way down, a hundred miles down, stay overnight. [laughs] They just love it. It's a great event. I get a table every year for ten people, and I've got friends who just really appreciate that. Mainly it gets to the whole point about this whole organization. They have, let's say at the end, the key

part, the people that are involved in it, when you're working for Save Mount Diablo or when you go to a function, everyone is so nice. You just remark about what fine people they are. It's interesting. There's just something about it that you just—that makes it a joy to work with the organization. But these events are really pretty special, and Moonlight has been special.

01-01:12:59

Moonlight was going to be when the [full] moon came up. The first time they had it over Diablo, the moon came out, this gorgeous full moon. And so they started to look at the calendar and the moon and all, and so they would change within weeks, but this was ridiculous. They've got to have a set time, like it's the second Saturday in September, and not fight the issue. [laughs] And they were very lucky with the weather. A big fire broke out a couple of years ago, but it broke out the next weekend, and there was one a couple of years ago that it was the previous weekend. Or they'll have rain, it's sort of coolish. The fog was building a couple of times as the regular auction began, and they lost an awful lot of money, because people left. And then it has been very hot. Generally speaking, it's been very successful. One of our favorite events of the year.

01-01:14:00

Tewes:

I want to follow up with some great ideas that you brought up here, one being that with your award, that your family came and has really enjoyed this event. Why is it important for you to involve your family and your younger generation in this?

01-01:14:16

Thomas:

Well, because I'm giving their inheritance to Save Mount Diablo. [laughs] But they're real attuned to it. They just think it's wonderful what I do, and they're all for it. They're all for the outdoors and hiking and all, I think I do have to do memberships for the little ones. That's a good idea. You just reminded me. That's why I do it.

01-01:14:42

And I'll go entirely off the written script here about a point I've been meaning to make to you about the name Save Mount Diablo. People say, "Well, what are you saving? The mountain [is] saved. What's to save?" And then there was a thought of changing the name. Well, Save Mount Diablo, and then you tell them that there's lots of property around that's still—that's privately owned and you don't want them to develop it. But that is an issue that's come up, and I now—there's no one's going to change it. It's too ingrained in the community. But it's been a little issue in the past, that maybe we should change it. It's been a bit of success. Anyway, that's off the script.

01-01:15:24

Tewes:

I hadn't heard that before. That's interesting. Well also, about the Mountain Star Award, what did that mean to you when you received it?

01-01:15:35

Thomas:

Oh, it was pretty special. I thought it was wonderful. Part of it was I had been giving. And again, I was able to give a lot, because I inherited it from Bob, so it's partly a reward for him. [laughs] And my volunteering and all. It was because there are such special people involved in the organization, I just—it's even more true that you feel you're pretty special, too. [laughs]

01-01:16:07

Tewes:

Yeah. And also, for someone who has not been to this event, could you describe what it looks like, and where the Moonlight event is?

01-01:16:18

Thomas:

It's on what they call the China Wall. There's a rock wall that comes down alongside a manmade rock wall. And you look on up to the mountain, and across to the mountain, and when you come from the bus, it's just magical. You look, and there are these [forty-five] tables, all real tablecloths are on, and the lights are on, and you think, It's a gorgeous place. When the sun goes down, it's magical. My friends just vie to come. I've made sure they've gotten to over the years. The food is always excellent, and they have a band that plays. It's hard to describe. It's just a very special event.

01-01:17:07

Tewes:

And you said you hosted a table.

01-01:17:09

Thomas:

Yeah, I was a sponsor.

01-01:17:12

Tewes:

Why is that important for you to do?

01-01:17:14

Thomas:

Well, it's a way of giving money and then getting something for it. I would want to buy a table anyway, so why not give more and get the sponsorship? And it makes me do the—

01-01:17:33

Tewes:

That sounds great. Another major event we've sort of talked about was the acquisition of Curry Canyon in 2003. And we've already mentioned that you had a party there, which is amazing. But I'm curious why this was important in the larger history of the organization. What was so special about this?

01-01:17:56

Thomas:

If you look at the map of where it is, it just juts right into the park, and a lot of hiking trails that we love go into Curry Canyon. And eventually, when they open those up as hiking trails, we'll have people be able to hike down to it. It's such a central way into the mountain and the park. And you have the greatest little spot down there, and they have little creeks in the hills, plus these trails that come down. They're so special.

01-01:18:29

Tewes: Well, is there a particular trail or part of the Save Mount Diablo properties that you really love, that's really special to you to hike?

01-01:18:40

Thomas: In things that I've written, I usually say Mitchell Canyon, which is not a very hard trail. It's a very beautiful trail, and that's the one I say that when I go up, I think, my gosh, if we hadn't saved it, there would be executive homes sprouting up. Oh, there are others like Devil's Elbow, off the top of the mountain, and the wildflowers on that trail are just beautiful. Back Canyon, Donner Canyon. There are just lots of trails that are my favorites.

01-01:19:17

Tewes: Well, you mentioned the wildflowers, and you are also a photographer yourself. Can you tell me about how that came about, how you started doing photography?

01-01:19:28

Thomas: Well, I will say that I'm not into photography, as such, but I began to take wildflower pictures, and then I learned how to crop them and make close-ups, which makes them pretty special when you do that. You get a little picture of something and then enlarge it, so I'd send people a lot of those pictures, send greeting cards with those pictures on them. And then I got the idea of doing a little desk calendar that people just love—a lot of people say they like it, anyway. In fact, I have July and August up, I have two of them on my desk right now. [holds up calendar] Since we're on Zoom, there's July and there's August.

01-01:20:07

Tewes: Oh wow, is that a poppy?

01-01:20:10

Thomas: That's a poppy, and that's a—what is this? [laughs] My mind. Anyway, it's a flower. [laughs] This is a clematis. And this year, I probably—I didn't get out. I only got two [new] pictures. These are past years. But people seem to like it. I give it to all the staff. A lot of people say they really like it, and I believe them, [so] I'll keep sending it out.

01-01:20:52

Tewes: I'm sure they do. [laughs]

01-01:20:53

Thomas: It's a little gimmick that I send out to the people who come to the lunches and that kind of thing. So it's interesting.

01-01:20:59

Tewes: Well, what kind of wildflowers are you encountering on the trails?

01-01:21:05

Thomas:

Oh, we'd have to look at a list of Mount Diablo wildflowers. It's endless. It's hundreds—well, not a hundred maybe, but a different variety.

01-01:21:16

Tewes:

Well, are there any that are your favorites, that you're always happy to see?

01-01:21:23

Thomas:

Oh, the [Mount] Diablo fairy-lantern. That's certainly the plant you [only] see on Mount Diablo. It's sort of a symbol of Mount Diablo. I used to have that in my ad, in the program for the Moonlight on the Mountain. I always had that picture. But I send out the little kids' pictures instead in my ad—oh, maybe baby blue eyes. Anyway, there are a lot of them. I miss being able to go up there and hiking, and [finding] them. Although the last couple of years have been a little sad [with the] drought. But they've obviously not been coming up as much.

01-01:22:15

Tewes:

The flowers aren't coming up as much, you say?

01-01:22:18

Thomas:

They'll not be coming up with the drought.

01-01:22:19

Tewes:

Oh yes.

01-01:22:20

Thomas:

They'll suffer. They need that rain in the wintertime to sprout up.

01-01:22:29

Tewes:

That's actually a good question. How have you seen the mountain and the trails you've hiked change over the years?

01-01:22:39

Thomas:

We've had very, very wet seasons, and it's been wonderful, except you can't cross the streams as much as you can in a normal year and that kind of thing. But when the seasons are drier like this, it's just depressing. My friends will go out, and they'll say it's just like fall already and very depressing, so it makes you much more aware of the water conditions when you hike some of the same places everywhere and you see the changes.

01-00:23:16

Oh, the fun thing about hiking any—hiking the mountains or in Diablo, the interesting thing is, from season to season, there will be a certain flower that's all over the place. And then the next year it won't be up there at all practically, and another flower will take over. So it's interesting. You never know what's going to be the predominant flowers sometimes in the whole area. Sometimes that doesn't happen, but often it may change from year to year, the flowers. They don't have a park ranger taking all the time to keep the trails up as much, as they don't have enough personnel.

01-01:24:04

Tewes:

I'm also curious about what you've observed about the way that Save Mount Diablo works with community organizations.

01-01:24:12

Thomas:

All along, they've been sort of a spokesman in the Contra Costa/Bay Area, mainly for conservation organizations. If there's an issue about a park expanding or someone buying up—they'll quote the director of Save Mount Diablo. Seth Adams is often quoted. They'll go to him for information, "What do you think about this? Should this be happening? Should that be happening?" So they've been very influential in that respect. And I guess with advocating—I cannot say that word—advocacy. [laughs] They have been very active in their advocating for issues. In fact, it was very interesting. There was just an issue lately on this property. They want to change the line for development—

01-01:25:18

Tewes:

The urban limit line?

01-01:25:19

Thomas:

—thank you, yes—in this one area to let this developer put in some homes. He says he's also going to give 750 acres to the East Bay Regional Park District. And so a lot of people are against it, but Save Mount Diablo was for it. And I don't know if that's right, I thought that was wrong. But they were for it, because of getting that 700-plus acres to the Regional Park meant more to them than moving the line. They claim that that made a [a difference]. So that's a decision, a hard decision they have to make sometimes on those issues. Normally, they side with the—but they were a little off on that one. I thought that was interesting.

01-01:26:00

But the pressures are—with the developers—are tremendous. The developers through the years have incredible respect for Seth. They may not agree with him, but they have great respect [for him]. They come out, "We're going to develop 500 homes here." [Here comes Seth and he says, "How about 300 homes?" and gives reasons why. The developers might not like it, but they know that Seth and our organization can be trusted to keep their word in any negotiations. We work with developers, governmental agencies, property owners, et cetera and hope to work out a compromise.] Of course, we've got certain developers, who probably should remain nameless in this recording, who are very, very [distrustful]. A good example, he was told not to take out oak trees standing on the property. The next day, the oak trees were gone. "Oh," he said, "was that an oak?" So you deal with that kind of thing, and it's very difficult. You can't trust him. But I think the organization through the years has developed this reputation for being a place to go to, so that's a positive thing.

01-01:27:18

Tewes:

Well, you mentioned the advocacy part of Save Mount Diablo.

01-01:27:21

Thomas: You did very well on that word. [laughs]

01-01:27:25

Tewes: Yeah, I didn't trip over that one yet. But I'm curious as to what you've personally been connected with, with the advocacy work in Save Mount Diablo, following certain measures or local ordinances or things like that.

01-01:27:40

Thomas: Oh gosh, I think the County—the [urban limit] line is very important. You set these lines where developers can't go beyond that line. That's very important to have those lines, I think, otherwise the place would be just inundated. There was a man, a very good close friend of Seth's, Bob Walker—a marvelous man, who worked—I'm not sure whether he was employed by the Regional—no, he wasn't employed by the Regional Parks. A wonderful photographer. He would take pictures out around Morgan Territory, that land that was being developed, and he'd take the areas and show the buildings and housing coming in. Bob was very strongly against that. But unfortunately, he was gay in the beginning of the age when—he got AIDS and died. That was a *tremendous* loss to the—in general and to the conservation community. He was very responsible for getting lots of Morgan Territory set aside as a regional park. But his photography told a story. And the mountain, you looked down and could see development coming up and say, "Oh, if it weren't for the park, the development wouldn't stop. It would have gone up to the gates almost. The developers would have—" Bob was the key to that whole thing.

01-01:29:11

[Another way to save property from development is a conservation easement. We just made an agreement with the Concord Mount Diablo Trail Ride Association with their property up on the mountain right next to the park. Ted took us up to see the property the other day. I was astounded to see new homes up there, where they had sold off property because they needed money to keep the horsemen's association going.] It was amazing, but it was an interesting arrangement. But we had an agreement with them, the horsemen, that they would never develop—no one could ever develop on that property. If they ever sold it off, I guess we have first rights to buy, but I'm not sure of that angle. But it's advantageous to both groups. It gave them money to keep operating in the way they wanted to, and it allowed us to save the property.

01-01:30:12

He also pointed out on the map a property right nearby, right next door, a huge property that they were already talking to the owner. They've been trying to get relationships with owners all over the area. Of course, this is like Mary Bowerman. The famous story about Mary Bowerman was that years ago, she would walk up to the front door and knock on the door and say, "Are you planning to sell your property soon?" And they'd go, "What?" [laughs] She was trying to see if it could be saved rather than having it sell to a developer. This woman they hardly knew would ask them what their plans for selling

their property were. She had quite a reputation for that. But there is a lot of property still to be developed. It's quite interesting.

01-01:31:09

Tewes: Do you know how successful Mary was by going door to door?

01-01:31:12

Thomas: I don't know. That's the story, but that's a story someone else is going to have to tell you.

01-01:31:21

Tewes: I'd love to hear it from Seth. [laughs] You know, a few years ago Save Mount Diablo expanded their mission to include acquiring and protecting—well, not acquiring, but protecting the whole of the Diablo Range.

01-01:31:43

Thomas: Oh yes.

01-01:31:43

Tewes: And I'm curious what that has meant for you in thinking about what the organization does now.

01-01:31:49

Thomas: It's so scary to me, that we really ought to be expanding, but they're not going to be buying any property, they're not going to be raising money. I think it's mainly raising awareness, I think, the idea that I get, which is astounding. I will say, from a personal standpoint, I was a little short of pictures one year, and we'd gone down to near Mount Hamilton, and I thought, I can't use those pictures in the calendar, because I used to say the calendar was at Mount Diablo. They said, "Why don't you say wildflowers from Diablo Range?" Little did I know that that was a prelude to what we were going to be doing. Mount Hamilton is part of Diablo Range, and I was using wildflowers that now we're all out and protecting it, so I guess sort of a precursor of what they were going to do. I knew I wanted to protect those flowers. [laughs] But it's enlarging our area. I hope we're not expanding way too fast, spreading ourselves too thin. That's wonderful, because it's right for—with the way the state's developing, with people coming in, it's just scary, so we might as well try to save it. And you need that contiguous land.

01-01:33:11

The Nature Conservancy is one that really touted that, and we admire them. They would allow things to happen on certain properties, but why are they allowing that? Or why aren't you buying that land? They want to buy land; they deal with developers and work out arrangements. "You can develop there if you let us develop here." "Oh, okay." They were sacrificing some nice property that you wanted to save, but it wasn't really worth saving if you couldn't have animals moving back and forth and plants. So they were really strong on that, and that was quite interesting. Educational with the public, I think, to have them—and that's why, of course, we have done it here. You

look at the map. The best thing you show people when you have a luncheon or lecture is a wonderful map they have that shows the saved areas in green. And they'll show, "This was the park originally, the 7,000 acres. And this is what we have now." But it's not a solid mass at all. There's a huge amount of white space in there that needs to be claimed. But like I said, one of the best advertisements they could have for Save Mount Diablo and the work they're doing.

01-01:34:37

Tewes:

Well, I'm curious what development you *have* seen happen here in the East Bay since—well, I guess since you moved to Moraga.

01-01:34:48

Thomas:

Oh, it's awful. All over Moraga and Orinda and Lafayette. Although Lafayette was pretty well filled in, but Orinda [not as much]—Moraga's filled in a lot. I can remember my parents would go over—the Bay Bridge was put in in 1936, and it was a big deal to go to San Francisco in the car and come back. Every time we came back, I guess into the forties, we'd say, "Look at all the lights up in the hill." The next time we go, "Oh, the lights up in the hill." And that was a common thing. That was fascinating, because we didn't go that often, but we always commented on the increasing number of lights in the hills from the housing. Of course, what you're getting now is housing, houses, pretty much, which is the white area, but houses in the tree areas. And you're getting complaints about deer and coyotes, because we moved into their territory. [laughs]

01-01:36:01

Tewes:

You know, Jeanne, we've been talking throughout about how COVID-19 has changed things for Save Mount Diablo, especially, in the last year and some change. But I'd be really curious to hear your thoughts on why the organization has been so resilient in this moment of great change.

01-01:36:20

Thomas:

That's a good question, because I think if you hadn't had the right employees, it wouldn't have been this—I think it shows that they did have the right employees. They were able to get along without having meetings and cooperate with each other. They put on a virtual Moonlight that was absolutely incredible. I admire them tremendously. They were able to put it all on a Zoom meeting when they hadn't had that much experience. I thought they were just incredible. And now they're so excited to get back in the office and work things out. Was it just Ted himself or the ones they hired, the ones they had before? I don't know. I think, as far as I can see, that it's a tremendous compliment to the staff and the team that they have done so well. And the remarkable thing is that the contributions—we thought, oh my gosh, no one's going to contribute. They are better than normal. The contributors must have been in that bubble that was not spending money on other things and had income coming in. You're likely to find that at other charities, I'm sure. But

we're lucky in that the circumstances they were in, that the contributions were up, and people were trying to stay positive about it.

01-01:37:45

Tewes: I think that's so important to think about, that it was a really tough year for a lot of people, and you've pulled through so well.

01-01:37:53

Thomas: When Margie came in, I talked to her on the phone about three times for basic conversations. And finally, about a couple of months ago, she met me, and I was the first person she'd met face to face—and this is development, where your whole thing is making relationships, and that's hard to do over the phone. Poor thing! So she is so excited to finally meet someone, but she's doing very well. I'm proud of her.

01-01:38:21

Tewes: Wow, that's a great story. [laughs] So as we're wrapping up for today, I'm curious if you can just give a bird's eye view of all the changes you've seen at Save Mount Diablo. What has been the most important to the organization?

01-01:38:45

Thomas: I think the new programs we're coming up with now are tremendous. I think we've got more staff now that can do it. I guess Ted has the ideas—I think what they're coming up with, we did something in the schools before, but now we have these programs where we adopt a school and lecture them, and then take them out and have them stay for an hour and be quiet. If you have time, I could tell one incident where they had a function at Bob Marx's ranch for [contributors]. Faculty from two high school classes [we] adopted, and two high school students spoke, and they had tears—they were talking about global warming and how they feel about the future. [We] were so moved that [we] were [all in] tears. A lot of our programs are helping that kind of thing, the awareness of these kids, and that's an incredible program. And then that program out at Mangini Ranch, having that center out there is incredible. As I said, I've got ten groups that I could take out there and have a function or a program. That's PR for Save Mount Diablo, as far as I can see. When we're having hikes, a new hiking program of additional hiking and rock climbing. And bilingual hikes up. I just am generally impressed with the ideas they're coming up with.

01-01:40:18

Tewes: And as we've mentioned, you've been giving and been connected with the organization since the eighties—a long time now. What keeps you motivated to stay involved?

01-01:40:28

Thomas: Oh gosh, just what they've done, what they're doing. I look at that map of what they've acquired, I've hiked up in the mountains and seen what they've saved. As I said, you look down and think, oh wow, if they hadn't bought that property, it would be all developed. Now, to me it's just a key. If they do

nothing else, I'll just support them for that. But it's also the education and their advocating for getting people educated about development and not building on ridgelines, and taking the Concord Naval Weapons Station and not letting any developers develop the whole thing. There's lots and lots that was set aside for the Regional Parks—all that kind of stuff. They've been out to these towns and done elections and gotten people who've never thought about it before to vote for saving these programs. It's been wonderful, I think, advocating—[laughs] and educating, the process of advocating to educate.

01-01:41:34

Tewes: What do you hope *you* have personally contributed to Save Mount Diablo?

01-01:41:39

Thomas: More than money. I think, hopefully, I've influenced some people to join and to contribute and to participate: my hiking group out here at Rossmoor and my friends. At my birthday party, I was astounded that all the people—I never said anything about it, but they set up a birthday gift to Save Mount Diablo for me, and I thought—I felt strongly about that, that I've gotten people interested in the organization. I've got my family behind it, that's for sure. [laughs] As you know.

01-01:42:14

Tewes: And what do you want people to remember about what Bob contributed to Save Mount Diablo?

01-01:42:20

Thomas: Well, not too many people remember him, because he wasn't on the board that long, so there are just some old timers who remember him. But they have remembered [him] through me, and maybe they know the circumstances, that he's part of the reason I am able to give so much, and not participate, certainly, but to give so much. [And there is more coming at my death.]

01-01:42:48

Tewes: I'm sure that would have been really special to him to know that. Yeah. I'm just overall curious what the organization, and also the lands it protects, means to you.

01-01:43:05

Thomas: Well, as a native Californian, I've seen the changes. There's also all those lights when you cross the [Bay] Bridge, all those lights on. But if not for organizations like Save Mount Diablo, there'd be a lot more lights up there and not very many parks. I'm very happy that Save Mount Diablo cooperates so well with—certainly with the Regional Park District. They have a wonderful relationship, and that's such an incredible thing in this Bay Area that they're able to save all those properties so that children will have a place to play. What is it, they say that children spend a small amount of time outdoors, I forget what the—spend nineteen minutes a day outdoors. I thought, Oh my gosh! They watch television and play their video games that are all inside. How are children going to grow up with—so I think Save

Mount Diablo, what they're doing with saving the land and getting people educated, I think those are the two things that, I guess, are important.

01-01:44:09

Tewes: And finally, we are speaking on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of Save Mount Diablo. What do you hope for the next fifty years of the organization?

01-01:44:19

Thomas: Well, hopefully, we won't need fifty more years to buy all that property, but who knows? I don't think the education is ever going to end. You're always going to have another generation coming along, and more enticing video games or something to keep people inside, but I think the education is endless. And we'll have to do more, I'm sure, by that time, to save animals, to keep animals and species going. It's scary. God only knows what the global warming will do, and maybe an organization like Save Mount Diablo could help fight some of the problems with global warming. Someone's got to do it.

01-01:44:59

Tewes: This is one important part of that plan. Well, Jeanne, is there anything you want to add that we haven't already discussed?

01-01:45:09

Thomas: I think we've covered an awful lot! [laughs]

01-01:45:12

Tewes: Certainly, certainly.

01-01:45:12

Thomas: The organization: nice people, worthy cause. [laughs]

01-01:45:18

Tewes: Yeah, and lots to look forward to, I hope.

01-01:45:21

Thomas: Yes.

01-01:45:23

Tewes: Well, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

01-01:45:26

Thomas: Well, thank you, Amanda. I enjoyed talking to you.

[End of Interview]