

George Rex Gardiner
Oral History Interview
With Ginger Summit and Jitze Couperus
Friday, April 12, 2013

GINGER: This is Ginger Summit and I'm speaking today with Rex Gardiner,¹ who was one of our original "Green Sheet" [contributors]. He put the Town together. And we are so lucky to have him. Rex is the reason that we are all able to be here. We're talking from the Heritage House at the Los Altos Hills Town Hall. And Rex, thank you so much for being here; I can't tell you what a pleasure it is.

Now, we were starting to talk about how you came to Los Altos Hills. Can you give us just [some idea]?

REX: Well, yes. My name is Rex, and I grew up in San Jose. And when I was young, maybe 22 or 23 years old, I had a job [I wasn't working for PG&E yet] where I went from South San Francisco to King City, south of San Jose. I travelled the whole area and I liked this area. So I came in to the little village of Los Altos, which was very tiny. It had one real estate office, E.L. Hutlinger – everybody called him Hut – had that office. So I went in with my wife and I think our two little kids,² asking if there was anything up in the Hills available. I'd been up there and I liked the looks of the Hills.

And he said, "Well, nobody – or very few people – are living up there, up there, but there are two little subdivisions that have been developed, and I'll take you up there if you like, and you can look at one of them." So we did. We went to Oneonta Drive. And these were acre lots. We looked at one. We liked it. We went down and met Joe Eichler – I did – I saw Joe Eichler and showed him my lot plan. And he agreed to

¹ At the time Ginger interviewed me, I was 90 years old. I celebrated my 91st birthday shortly thereafter, on April 20, 2013.

² In 1950, when we moved from San Jose (where we shared a small house with Phyllis' stepfather, Curt Bodi) to our own home in the Hills, my two children were Kathleen and Vicki, who were then about 7 and 2 years old

1 arrange to have a house - an Eichler house - built on the lot. And then I financed
2 through my GI Bill, which, I think [meant] I had to pay 5% down at the time. It was pretty
3 expensive, looking at the payments. The lot cost \$3,200 and the house cost \$14,000,
4 so it was \$17,000 that - [for] the loan we would have to get. I don't know how much we
5 paid down; I think that [it was] 5%³ and to us that was a huge amount of money. But we
6 did it. We built the house, or [rather] Eichler had it built, and lived there.

7 GINGER: Can you tell us the year? That was about 19- ?

8 REX: 1950.

9 GINGER: Okay; good.

10 REX: Yeah. 1950.

11 GINGER: Not much else here then.

12 REX No, there wasn't much in Los Altos and practically nothing above [in] Los Altos
13 Hills.

14 GINGER: Right.

15 REX: No.

16 GINGER: Right. So you definitely, you were one of the pioneers.

17 REX: But then some years later, in 1955, our neighbor, Bill Simrell – and I always
18 thought they should plant an oak tree in honor of Bill - because he came down to me
19 and he said - well, he walked down the hill [on Oneonta] and he said, “Rex, we ought to
20 have our own town.” And I said, “Bill, come on, Los Altos just became a town a couple
21 of years ago; why don't we join them?” And he said, “No, they have quarter acre lots
22 and we ought to have nothing but one acre up here.” And we talked about it, and I
23 agreed with him, and we agreed to set up a Committee, which we did. We got some of
24 the older, more respected people in the community and then I was assigned the job of
25 laying out the boundaries of the town.

26
27
28 ³ It was 5% down (about \$850) because after WWII the GI Bill offered a special rate to
Veterans.

1 GINGER: Oh!

2 REX: Yeah, well that's how this –

3 GINGER: Right. All the papers that we have; right!

4 REX: The papers you will see, like, I've got a hand drawn [map].

5 GINGER: Right.

6 REX: And one interesting thing, I had to deal a lot with the County. This went on for a

7 year.

8 GINGER: I was wondering if the land was part of the County or was it part of Los

9 Altos' original boundaries?

10 REX: No, it was all County.

11 GINGER: It was all County; okay.

12 REX: And one of the reasons Bill Simrell said to form our own town is because Los

13 Altos may come up here and take over...

14 GINGER: Oh, okay...

15 REX: And they'll have one acre – they'll want to divide these lots into quarter acres,

16 and we don't want that.

17 GINGER: Right.

18 REX: And we agreed. So, yeah, where was I then?

19 GINGER: Yeah. Oh, you were dealing with the County and -

20 REX: Oh, the County was terrific. I was in there for a year off and on. They got to

21 know me so well. The County Road Commissioner drove every mile of the roads of the

22 town with me and he said, "Rex, we'll be happy to get rid of these roads. They are the

23 most expensive roads in the County!"

24 GINGER: Right.

25 REX: And we drove along the far side of the – over on the Palo Alto side of the –

26 what's the main road?

27 GINGER: Page Mill?

28

1 REX: Page Mill. And I had, when I drew the map of the town, where there was a road,
2 I drew the city limit down the middle of the road.

3 GINGER: Okay.

4 REX: And that made sense, right?

5 GINGER: Yeah.

6 REX: Well, the Road Commissioner from the County said, "Rex, can I give you some
7 advice? Do you mind if I make a suggestion?" I said, "No." He said, "Draw the lines on
8 the *inside* of the road; then you won't have to maintain the road. Somebody else will
9 have to maintain the road." So that's why -

10 GINGER: Oh, right!

11 REX: - That road is not in the City of Los Altos Hills.

12 GINGER: That's right; it's a County Road, and also it's Palo Alto, so there's three
13 jurisdictions.

14 REX: Right. So where do you want me to go from here?

15 GINGER: Okay, keep on going. You're just in the middle of starting to form this –
16 you have a group of people who are forming the Town.

17 REX: Yeah. So Bill, we got this Committee together and we had a series of meetings.
18 And it was agreed – well, one big issue – we agreed we should form a town, but one big
19 issue was whether we should take in the [Los Altos] Country Club area.

20 GINGER: Ah, yes. Now, that was on the other side of the train tracks?

21 REX: No, same side, in the hills, if I'm not mistaken, and I believe it is.

22 GINGER: Okay, now that's fine.

23 REX: But again, when I was talking with the County – and as I say, I talked to them
24 quite a few times – I showed him the boundaries, and it included the Country Club.

25 GINGER: Sure, okay.

26 REX: And I said, "These are the boundaries, and we're going to vote to form a new
27 city." And the fellow at the County said, "Rex, can I make another suggestion?" I said,
28 "Sure." He said, "Why don't you *not* include the Country Club?" And I said, "Well, why

1 not?" And he said, "Because they are heavily populated. Your town is not; there are
2 very few people there. And they could outvote you and you won't have a town!" So I
3 excluded the Country Club from Los Altos Hills, and that's why it's not in.

4 GINGER: Oh. Oh, excellent. Yeah, it's down here.

5 REX: And he said, "You can always annex them later if you want to."

6 GINGER: Excellent idea.

7 REX: You mean annexing them is an excellent idea?

8 GINGER: No, I think that this fellow was giving you excellent advice: to keep your
9 contours, to keep the potential voters, keep it rural, and to keep the people that would
10 be involved positively thinking about forming a separate town.

11 REX: Yeah. And that's what we did. So we had a number of meetings, obviously, and
12 I was assigned the job, I think I mentioned, of laying out the boundaries, and the big
13 issue was tax rate.

14 GINGER: Right.

15 REX: Because you form a town and the people have just been paying county taxes.
16 Now they're going to have to pay city taxes. Well, there's going to be opposition, which
17 there was.

18 GINGER: Yes.

19 REX: As time went on, there definitely was opposition. The tax rate - and I've got them
20 in my little book over there - I think 27 cents per hundred dollars assessed valuation
21 was the tax rate. Which doesn't seem like much, but at the time -

22 GINGER: Oh, yeah.

23 REX: It could have been a killer. But - so I had to draw the boundaries of the town,
24 which I did.

25 [Sounds of rustling papers.]

26 REX: :- This road is Arastradero?

27 GINGER: Arastradero is up there, toward Palo Alto.

28 REX: Yeah.

1 GINGER: And Magdalena and, let's see, the railroad tracks came down here. There
2 was Ravensbury, Loyola – I don't think so – are we thinking El Monte that came down?

3 REX: Yeah.

4 GINGER: Because you were on the other side of El Monte, so you wanted to include
5 it.

6 REX: I drove El Monte all the time to get to Town [Downtown Los Altos].

7 GINGER: That's right; you came down to Fremont. Right. So I'm not sure what –
8 maybe Magdalena was the southern border?

9 REX: Well, has the City annexed more land?

10 GINGER: Yes, the City is gradually annexing more portions, so this is probably more
11 than your original.

12 REX: Well, I'm looking at that.

13 GINGER: Right.

14 REX: And my original is over there in that binder, we can compare.

15 GINGER: Yeah. We'll do that in a moment.

16 REX: You want to turn this off?

17 GINGER: No, because I'm afraid that if I turn it off I won't be able to get back on the
18 right page. Let me see. Okay, it's Magdalena. Your southern boundary is Summerhill
19 to Magdalena to Ravensbury, which is this area right over here.

20 REX: Yeah, so you added that.

21 GINGER: Right. And this part over here has just been annexed, but this part was
22 included in your original plan, right here.

23 REX: Right.

24 GINGER: Okay

25 REX: We're looking at my plan now.

26 GINGER: Yes.

27 REX: And if you notice, on my little sketch here that I made for the – it's titled City of
28 Los Altos, incidentally, which I think is kind of nice –

1 GINGER: Uh, huh.

2 REX: I was optimistic. The possible incorporation boundaries - I showed that and then
3 below I show estimated actual population now. That was really difficult to determine.⁴

4 GINGER: MmHm.

5 REX: How do you determine in the Hills, who's – how many people are living there?
6 Nobody knew.

7 GINGER: That's right.

8 REX: So I had to go to -

9 GINGER: The Census?

10 REX: The phone company. How many phones do you have up in that area? Well –
11 and then PG&E, which I worked for at that time – I went to the PG&E Manager here and
12 said, "How many people do you have up there?" So my guestimate was 2,500 people.
13 Registered number of voters – again, from talking with the County, what do you have up
14 there? 1,167.

15 GINGER: Right.

16 REX: The assessed valuation on the number will blow your mind: for the whole City,
17 \$5,700,000.

18 GINGER: Now, we have to just in keep in perspective that this was in the 1950s.

19 REX: 195-

20 GINGER: 1955, right.

21 REX: The date – I always date these things.

22
23
24 ⁴ To illustrate how much the population has grown and the Valley has changed, let me tell you the
25 story of when a friend and I were driving down Highway 101 (only 2 lane or 4 lane at the time) from
26 San Francisco, when the towns along the Peninsula were still separated by miles of orchards, and at
27 night, from 101, we could see the lights along El Camino. We could also see patches of light here
28 and there along the hills from city lights distinctively shining in the darkness. As we drove along,
looking at the city lights, my friend commented, "Someday those towns will all be joined together."
Boy was he right!

1 GINGER: Well, this was just when you were still putting the group together, so that's
2 all right. We'll be able to find that later.

3 [Sounds of rustling papers.]

4 REX: Yeah, here we are. Oh, these are the possible tax rates.

5 GINGER: Right. Here's something with a date. Oh, no. That's – we'll be able to
6 find all of that information as far as specific dates, later.

7 REX: I can't believe I didn't date this because I *a/ways* dated things, especially a
8 document like that.

9 GINGER: This was part of the Green Sheets, and that was 1955, okay.

10 REX: Well, the Green Sheets were what we prepared to convince people to vote for
11 the Town.

12 GINGER: Right. Well, I don't see dates here, but we'll be able to find them.

13 REX: I think in my briefcase I can get them.

14 GINGER: Right.

15 REX: But you'll notice here I have a chart with possible tax rates, and one was 90
16 cents/assessed valuation. Well, what I say down below of my chart is:

17 Graphic illustration of possible and probable annual budgets and resulting taxes.

18 Estimate of recent annual County road expenditures shown for comparison of the same
19 area.⁵

20 GINGER: MmHmm.

21 REX: Okay. So I, on my chart I show what we could, what it would cost in putting the
22 City together if we provided certain services.

23 GINGER: Right.

24 REX: Well, the big one was roads, because as the County had said, they were the
25 worst roads in the County and they were happy to get rid of them to us.

26 GINGER: Right.

27
28 ⁵ By the way, in those days we didn't have calculators and computers like we do now, so I would use a slide rule, paper and pencil for the calculations, and then would have to type everything up on a manual typewriter.

1 REX: The next was a police department.

2 GINGER: MmHm.

3 REX: Now you stop and think about that. If we had this Town, you have police, you
4 have to have a policeman on duty 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. They have to have
5 vacations. And I looked into how many police officers you had to have and a police
6 chief to do all that. It was unbelievable. I mean, no way we could do that.

7 GINGER: Right. No.

8 REX: Well, somebody said. Oh man, what was his name? The young fellow from
9 Stanford had just become, had been elected to the County Board of Supervisors, I
10 guess.

11 GINGER: Right.

12 REX: And, this person said, that I was talking to, "You know, I just read about a town in
13 Southern California that arranged to get their protection from the Sheriff's Office."

14 GINGER: Right. Sub-contract with the County.

15 REX: Yeah. It had never been done. He said, "That's the first time it had been done."
16 He said, "Why can't we do that here?"

17 GINGER: Excellent.

18 REX: So with my chart the police department was – we wouldn't have been able to
19 incorporate.

20 GINGER: Right.

21 REX: But we were able to make an agreement because the Sheriff happened to live in
22 the Hills.

23 GINGER: Oh!

24 REX: One of the few people that lived in the Hills.

25 GINGER: Oh, excellent choice. Right.

26 REX: And he said, "Yeah, I'll do it." So he did. So then – I'll look at this chart here.

27 GINGER: You did the same with fire, didn't you?

28 REX: Yeah, with fire. Well, that was automatic, I think.

1 GINGER: Oh, okay.

2 REX: But I had to figure out what the income [was]. So by eliminating the police
3 department, and the County maintaining – no, the County didn't maintain the roads.

4 GINGER: But you were able to get rid of some of the major roads just by the way
5 you drew the boundaries.

6 REX: Exactly. Major expenses. And there was, had happened to be a contractor, a
7 road contractor, living in town, so we arranged for him to do the maintenance. But we
8 got the roads done. And the Committee didn't care about what the road cost was going
9 to be. As far as they were concerned, we're going to form a town, and the hell with the
10 cost of the roads. Even though the County said they're the worst to maintain.

11 GINGER: Right. There is going to be –

12 REX: We're going to form the City.

13 GINGER: Okay.

14 REX: Incidentally, I think it's called the Town of Los Altos Hills?

15 GINGER: Yes.

16 REX: We wanted to call it that, because Bill Simrell was from the East Coast, and he
17 said we should call it the Town of Los Altos Hills. And he said that because back East,
18 where he came from, the Northeast, there are a lot of towns.

19 GINGER: As opposed to, like, city?

20 REX: Cities.

21 GINGER: Okay.

22 REX: California does not allow towns. You cannot have a town. Everything is a city.

23 GINGER: Oh.

24 REX: Now, you were on the Council, but you may not have noticed, but this is the City
25 of the Town of Los Altos Hills.

26 JITZE: I've seen that written down somewhere.

27 GINGER: Okay.

28 [Laughter]

1 GINGER: I have to say,
2 JITZE: Let me just interrupt briefly, you had a bunch of loose clippings in here. I'm
3 putting them in here so that they don't – there are some small bits of paper.
4 REX: Yeah, my son left them that way.
5 JITZE: Ah. I've put them back in here,
6 REX: Thank you.
7 JITZE: To hold it together, otherwise it will slip around.
8 REX: Have you got all that done?
9 JITZE: No. I'm still plowing through.
10 REX: Okay.
11 JITZE: Some are easier than others. The last one was all – it had the brass brad things
12 and you couldn't open it up to see it all, so what I did was, I really carefully undid them,
13 photographed them all, and put them back exactly.
14 REX: That's okay. Don't worry about it.
15 JITZE: Well, I do. Because this is irreplaceable.
16 REX: Yeah.
17 GINGER: Excellent.
18 REX: I have a question here. That's my property [the documents] that I've valued a
19 long time, as you would understand. And I said, I gave copies of most of this to the City
20 on the 25th Anniversary, which disappeared. But I'm wondering if I shouldn't just
21 donate it to you guys.
22 JITZE: Well, between you and me and the gatepost, India, the community museum
23 might be a safer place.
24 GINGER: Yes. And I think that, let's save that discussion until,
25

26
27 ⁶ It must have been for the 20th Anniversary, because I gave some of my original incorporation
28 papers to Florence Fava, who used them in her book, "The Colorful History of Los Altos Hills," which
was published in 1976 (20 years after the Town was incorporated). Later, Mrs. Fava also may have
donated many of my original papers to the Los Altos History Museum. So I owe her an apology,
even though she's deceased now, because she took good care of them. .

1 JITZE: I think we have a better solution for you.

2 GINGER: Right.

3 REX: The History Museum already made copies of them, most of this stuff.

4 GINGER: Okay.

5 REX: All right. So the police department was the huge expense. The roads - they
6 said, "You know, we'll worry about that later."

7 GINGER: Right. We can deal with that another way. MmHmm.

8 REX: And - I'm trying to think of the name of the Sheriff. As I say, he was a Stanford
9 graduate. The Sheriff that had been there had been corrupt and [had] been, I don't
10 know, taken or gone to jail or something. And this young Stanford Law School graduate
11 went down there. I think he was Law School. And so we went to him. As I say, he built
12 his own house up here in the Hills.

13 GINGER: Right.

14 REX: And he said, "Yeah, we can, I'll do that," you know.

15 GINGER: Yes.

16 REX: So that's how we got the major expense taken care of. Well, one of them. Like
17 I say, the other ones are roads and they said, forget it.

18 GINGER: Right.

19 REX: I'm looking at my chart here and the other expenses are in lieu taxes - no that's
20 income. The income from the Town was going to be from the city tax and in lieu tax,
21 which is automatic. In lieu taxes are given the City, I forget, in lieu of State taxes,
22 I think.

23 GINGER: Okay.

24 REX: But anyway - and then there's gas tax and then there was other.

25 GINGER: MmHmm.

26 REX: Well, the bottom line is that the possible tax rates were 90 cents, 65 cents,
27 28 cents or 0. And then I gave them a chart of the recent County road expenses and
28 the most recent were about the same as a 28 cent tax rate.

1 GINGER: Right.

2 REX: And that I believe is what they took as the tax rate.

3 GINGER: Right.

4 REX: And that I think is the reason, because the chart shows that that would [work.]

5 GINGER: Right. So when you went to the Election, you proposed, or – you're

6 writing the Green Sheets.

7 REX: I didn't write the Green Sheets. I don't know who did. Bill Simrell may well have

8 been the key to that. I just don't remember who wrote the Green Sheets. I'm sure I was

9 involved because I was on the Moody Hills – on the Committee, you know. We

10 probably edited it, whoever wrote it.

11 GINGER: Right, right.

12 REX: But I don't know who wrote it. Probably Bill.

13 GINGER: And then you took that out to the voters?

14 REX: Yeah, we had to.

15 GINGER: Right. Was there a little discussion?

16 REX: Yeah, but there was opposition.

17 [Laughter.]

18 GINGER: Right.

19 REX: Tony Lagorio⁷ – Does that name ring a bell?

20 GINGER: No.

21 REX: I think it was Tony. Well, we set it up for an Election and you know, there's a

22 time period before you actually have the Election.

23 GINGER: Right.

24 REX: And we were getting all these sheets stapled to trees and all around town.

25 GINGER: Right.

26 REX: You know, saying what a terrible idea this is. And it turned out that was Tony

27 Lagorio, I believe, that I got to know later and we became friends. But he was doing

28 _____

⁷ Tony Lagorio was later the City Attorney for Los Altos, according to the Los Altos Town Crier.

1 everything he could to – and I don't know, I never knew or found out who was behind
2 that.

3 GINGER: Yeah, what was his reason? Did he give you a reason?

4 REX: No. He probably did, maybe over glass of wine, but I don't remember.

5 GINGER: Okay.

6 REX: Tax rate, probably, you know.

7 GINGER: Okay.

8 REX: Nobody likes to pay taxes.

9 GINGER: Right.

10 REX: So we – and then we had to have a Slate, and we had to have – what, a Slate of
11 five?

12 GINGER: I think so.

13 REX: I think it's five.

14 GINGER: MmHm.

15 REX: And we chose – it was really the Committee that formed the Town, and *that was*
16 the Slate. And I was on it, a key part of the Committee, so I was on the Slate. And the
17 day before the Election I thought, you know, I ought to tell my boss, Bill Boller⁸, that
18 there's going to be an Election and it's almost automatic that I'm going to be on the
19 Council because I did all this work. So I went in and said, "Mr. Boller, Sir, we're forming
20 a town in the hills, so," – He knew that – maybe he called me in, because it was in the
21 newspaper that I was going to be on the City Council. And he said to me, "If you want
22 to continue working in this Division [at PG&E], you will get yourself off that Slate."

23 GINGER: Ooh, and the Election is just coming up?

24 REX: Right, and I have two kids and a mortgage.

25 GINGER: That was a gamble you couldn't take.

26
27 ⁸ This was when I still worked at PG&E. However, it was also *after* PG&E had been very supportive
28 of my efforts, for about a year, to help incorporate Los Altos Hills. PG&E was probably supportive at
least in part because neighboring Palo Alto had their own utilities company, and if Palo Alto annexed
the Hills, PG&E would lose those customers!

1 REX: Well, you know, looking back now, I'd say to myself, if I'd been as smart then as I
2 am now, I would have gone to the Committee and said, "You know, my Boss says that I
3 can't do this." And this is a pretty heavy-weight Committee.

4 GINGER: Right.

5 REX: And I think they had good connections and I think they might well have been able
6 to have said, "Wait a minute, you know, we'll take care of that. We'll go over his head at
7 PG&E."

8 GINGER: Oh, right.

9 REX: And if I were betting, I would bet that's what would have happened.

10 GINGER: Right.

11 REX: But, you know –

12 GINGER: And once the Town is established, your responsibility load is lightened
13 considerably. So it possibly could have worked out, if they had negotiated with your
14 bosses.

15 REX: Yeah.

16 GINGER: MmHm. Now, once the Council got started, I know that they still had a
17 lot of issues to resolve.

18 REX: Well, yeah, what they did when they – I went to them, and I didn't tell them why –
19 which was a mistake – in hindsight I say it – it maybe wasn't [a mistake]. But they said,
20 "Well, we'll make you Road Commissioner."

21 GINGER: Oh! That's a nasty job, but –

22 REX: Yes, with the worst roads in the County, yeah. So I became Road Commissioner,
23 and I can't remember what it is I did.

24 GINGER: Is that when they established which roads are going to be public and
25 which roads are going to be private and how they're going to be handled?

26 REX: Well, that would have been the City Council.

27 GINGER: Right, but as the Road Commissioner, would that have been part of your
28 [job]?

1 REX: I'm sure I was involved, yeah.

2 GINGER: Yeah. That's a continuing issue.

3 REX: The big issue in Town – there were two big issues – was Bellucci with the Adobe
4 Creek Lodge.

5 GINGER: Adobe Creek?

6 REX: Right. When my wife filed for divorce, [a few] years later I went up and lived
7 there at the Lodge.⁹

8 GINGER: So that would have been in the '60s?

9 REX: I was divorced in 1960. I lived in Adobe Creek Lodge for a year or so.¹⁰ What
10 was the other part of your question?

11 GINGER: Oh, just the continuing – we were talking partly about roads, but also
12 about the continuing issues that face the Town, and you said, Bellucci was one issue.

13 REX: Well, the other one was the Neary Quarry.

14 GINGER: Oh, yeah. MmHm.

15 REX: The Nearys were nasty people. For example, the City Council asked me to go
16 over and talk to Mrs. Neary, to Mrs. Neary and her son. Her son used to put a pistol on
17 his hip and walk around the roads.

18 GINGER: Whoa!

19 REX: I mean,

20 GINGER: George Neary?
21
22

23 ⁹ Phyllis and I had been married at Adobe Creek Lodge in 1947. At the time of our divorce in 1960,
24 which was finalized in about 1961, the norm was that the home was given to the woman, so I
25 deeded the house in Los Altos Hills to my ex-wife (who was the mother of our four children then
26 living at home, Kathleen, Vicki, Craig and Curt).

27 ¹⁰ I lived at Adobe Creek Lodge from about 1966 to 1967, with my daughter Vicki, who was
28 recovering from a serious bout with mono after graduating from Los Altos High School in 1966. The
Lodge was located in that beautiful little valley area just south of Hidden Villa off Moody Road. It
was peaceful, quiet and full of deer and quail. Vicki enjoyed living there as much as I did.

1 REX: I think it's George [or possibly Frank]. But Mrs. Neary was – maybe George had
2 passed away; I don't know, because Mrs. Neary was the key. So I went to Mrs. Neary
3 and said, "Well I'm here representing the City Council and want to talk to you about the
4 trucks coming down the road and some of them not stopping at the stop sign."

5 GINGER: That would have been down Summerhill stopping at El Monte, perhaps?¹¹

6 REX: Yeah. And she told me, I don't know, in not very nice language to "Get the hell
7 out of here. If you come back I'll have a pistol" or "I'll shoot you," or something.

8 GINGER: Oh!

9 REX: I think she said she'd shoot me. I went back to the City Council and I said, "You
10 know the conversation didn't go very well."

11 [Laughter.]

12 GINGER: No, right.

13 REX: So we just lived with the Neary situation, because you notice the boundaries here
14 excluded the Neary Quarry.

15 GINGER: Right. Let's see. This is the Quarry over here? Right.

16 REX: Right. As I recall, we excluded it. So we had no control over them.

17 GINGER: Okay. It was still functioning as a Quarry?

18 REX: Yeah, for years.

19 GINGER: MmHm.

20 REX: Yeah.

21 GINGER: And then, at what point, how did you, how did that stop? Was that their
22 choice, or was that the Town or the County slowed it down?

23 REX: I don't recall how it stopped, whether the City was able to finally do something, or
24 the County.

25 JITZE: I'll just jump in here.

26 GINGER: Yeah.

27
28 ¹¹ Actually the trucks drove up and down *Stonebrook Road* and often failed to stop at the Oneonta Drive intersection.

1 JITZE: The Town passed an Ordinance which said no trucks over 12 tons.
2 GINGER: Okay.
3 JITZE: And that reduced the traffic, but didn't kill it.
4 GINGER: Okay.
5 REX: Okay. Thank you.
6 GINGER: Thanks, Jitze.
7 REX: Glad you're here, Jitze!
8 JITZE: Well, I've just had to read through all the year before incorporation, and
9 I can tell you more about that. But I'll let you continue.
10 [Laughter.]
11 REX: Yeah, tell me about it. I'd like to know more about it.
12 JITZE: Well, what happened is the Town – well, just before incorporation, there
13 was a border around it. Neary complained.
14 REX: I drew that border.
15 JITZE: Yeah. And the Supervisors at the last moment cut out the Neary Quarry part of
16 Town. Then the Town passed an Ordinance - less than 12 tons – nothing over 12 tons,
17 because they were tearing up El Monte bad, which increased his costs of delivering
18 materials to his clients, one of which was this funny little town called Palo Alto, which
19 got awfully upset that costs suddenly went higher. So Palo Alto was complaining that
20 this little upstart town [Los Altos Hills] was causing a problem. And that went on and on
21 and then got so bad that the Neary faction, as I would call it, because he had a bunch of
22 friends, had a movement to disincorporate about a year later. And they had a vote to
23 disincorporate, but that failed.
24 GINGER: Right.
25 REX: I remember that, I think we had more than one vote to disincorporate. They
26 came back a couple times and the guy that I mentioned a few minutes ago, Tony
27 Lagorio, I think, was the key.
28 GINGER: Oh, right.

1 REX: I think he was the key man.

2 JITZE: Now, if I ever write a book about Los Altos Hills – which I won't – it would
3 be called *A Tale of Two Quarries*.

4 [Laughter.]

5 JITZE: There was another quarry at the other end of town.¹²

6 REX: Right.

7 JITZE: Which was defunct. And by federal law it couldn't be restarted because it was
8 now zoned residential. It hadn't been in operation for at least half a year. Therefore, it
9 could be revived. It belonged to Mrs. Taaffe. She sold ten acres to a developer, who
10 started the quarry again! So these trucks were coming down Page Mill loaded with
11 rock. So the Town said, "How did this happen?" They investigated, and they found that
12 the land had been bought by a Member of the City Council. So they approached him
13 and said, "How can you do this? You're a Councilmember, and you're operating a
14 quarry!" And he said, "I'm just a lawyer. I just signed the conveyance documents that
15 passed the property from Mrs. Taaffe to this development company in Fremont in the
16 East Bay. It has nothing to do with me; I just caused the documents to be made." So
17 they then investigated who the owner of the Fremont development was. Same guy!
18 And he was now no longer a resident of Los Altos Hills, even though he was on the
19 Council.

20 GINGER: He was on the Council?

21 JITZE: So, *A Tale of Two Quarries*.

22 GINGER: Oh, my goodness sake. Well, this is a town that has had, for a very small
23 town and very few residents, we've had more than our fair share of intrigue.

24 JITZE: Yeah. I'll continue my work.

27 ¹² This quarry was probably the one that was located behind and almost beneath the Simrells' and
28 Mellquists' houses, at the curve in El Monte Road as it wraps around the northwest corner of what is
now Foothill College, just before the intersection where Moody Road distinctly forks off El Monte
Road.

1 GINGER: Okay. So, that was this quarry, which was just up the road from your
2 home on Oneonta.

3 REX: Right. The trucks ran by,

4 GINGER: Right. They just went right down Stonebrook, which was right past your
5 house.

6 REX: Yeah. Our house was up the hill, but the bottom of the hill was where the trucks
7 went, they stopped there - or were *supposed* stop at a stop sign there.

8 GINGER: Right. Right.

9 REX: I think originally there may not have been a stop sign, and I think maybe we put
10 one, you know, the City put one in.

11 GINGER: Right.

12 REX: But these costs, let's go back to that.

13 GINGER: Right.

14 REX: I'm looking at original papers from 195-

15 GINGER: Probably about '54.

16 REX: Yeah. I'll find it.

17 GINGER: Because this set, the final date here is 1953, 1954.

18 REX: Yeah.

19 GINGER: County Records.

20 REX: So this could have been - and this would have been '55.

21 GINGER: Right.

22 REX: And that's right. So the Council, let's see, had to choose a tax rate and they
23 chose the lowest one they could, which was the 28 cents.

24 GINGER: Right.

25 REX: And that included a police department and other expenses.

26 GINGER: Right.

27 REX: Our income was gas tax, in lieu taxes and City tax (which was the 28 cents), and
28 the in lieu tax was about the same amount. The gas tax was maybe two-thirds of that.

1 And that's what the - I guess it was the City Council at this point, and not the Moody
2 Road Committee.

3 GINGER: No.

4 REX: I would be the City Council voting to do the 28 cents.

5 GINGER: Right.

6 REX: So I think that was the original tax rate. Do you know what the tax rate is today?

7 GINGER: Jitze? Current tax rate?

8 JITZE:I have no idea.

9 GINGER: Nope. But we can find that out.

10 REX: It would be quite interesting.

11 GINGER: But I'm sure it's raised a little.

12 REX: I suspect it has.

13 [Laughter.]

14 REX: But you know, what we did – you don't have a police department.

15 GINGER: No, we don't.

16 REX: And it's all because of that decision.

17 GINGER: That's right.

18 REX: Way, way, way back. You know?

19 GINGER: Yes.

20 REX: And I don't know who maintains the roads.

21 GINGER: Many of the roads are private.

22 REX: Right.

23 GINGER: And some of them are public. And so this is a discussion that is facing the
24 Council right now, how they're going to balance between the expenses for maintaining
25 the public roads and the people who want to change their private roads to public. But
26 roads and road maintenance has been, is an expense for the Town right now.

27 REX: Well, that's exactly what I predicted.

28 GINGER: Yes.

1 REX: In 1950 [actually 1955], that was – the police department; we solved the police
2 department – but we couldn't solve the road problem.

3 GINGER: That's right.

4 REX: And remember what I told you, the Committee said, "The heck with the road
5 costs. We're going to form a city!"

6 GINGER: That's right.

7 REX: Okay. So that's what you're faced with.

8 GINGER: Well, that's right, but they are issues that can be solved as they appear.
9 The new Councils have formed Committees and we're dealing with that, because you
10 already gave us a wonderful blueprint to work with. Now let's get on to the Bellucci
11 issue. Was that something that...?

12 REX: Well, Dave had this Adobe Creek Lodge.

13 GINGER: Right.

14 REX: And I said, I got divorced.

15 GINGER: Right.

16 REX: And so, I don't know why, [after some years had passed] I just moved up to Dave
17 Bellucci's place. I knew him and I could rent a place there. So I did. And I got to know
18 him. We used to sit out in the early mornings on a bench and just talk about things.

19 GINGER: Well, you knew him. MmHm.

20 R. And then I left there and I moved to San Jose – not San Jose – to Mountain
21 View. I just rented an apartment.¹³ And then in 1960 [1967]¹⁴ I got married again.
22 I still, all this time, I kept my business in Los Altos.

23 GINGER: Yes.

24 REX: 40 years I had my business right in Town.

25 GINGER: Right.

26
27 ¹³ I was single for five or six years after the divorce. During that time I lived in a small backyard
28 apartment an aunt [Jennie Lee] had in San Jose, then rented apartments in Mountain View and
Sunnyvale, and for awhile rented a house on University Avenue in Los Altos.

¹⁴ My second wife Rita & I were married in 1967, so we have been now married about 46 years.

1 REX: So, even though I moved my residence, I often thought, "You know, I spend more
2 time - I spent more of my life's time walking the streets of Los Altos than anything else."

3 GINGER: Now, tell me, moving to Mountain View, and you had already invested so
4 much time and energy into the formation of Los Altos Hills. Did you return to the Hills
5 after you moved?

6 REX: What do you mean, returned?

7 GINGER: Well, just going back to enjoy it, or go with friends, driving around? Going
8 over to Hidden Villa maybe, or -?

9 REX: You mean to be with friends? Oh, not really.¹⁵

10 GINGER: No.

11 REX: No, I guess that was part of my past.

12 GINGER: Okay. Now one of the things that you were mentioning is that, when you
13 were working, or – when you were living up on Oneonta and would be driving down, that
14 the Town at that time was mostly orchards and just rural, no fences. Can you tell me
15 some more about just what Los Altos was like during that decade when you were here?

16 REX: Well, you see, it [Los Altos] had been formed by people, wealthy railroad people
17 [Shoup, and others] out of San Francisco.

18 GINGER: Right.

19 REX: Because the Railroad ran from Palo Alto to Los Gatos, what is now the Foothill
20 Expressway. And they developed the Town [of Los Altos] to have summer places.

21 GINGER: Right.

22 REX: You know, it's cool in San Francisco in the summer time. So it was just a little
23 [place].

24 GINGER: Right. A resort.
25

26 ¹⁵ Of course, in the '60s I often drove up to Los Altos Hills to pick up and spend time with my kids
27 still living at home, Vicki, Craig and Curt. We especially loved camping in Yosemite. I would watch
28 my sons, Curt and Craig, play their Little League Baseball games at the Los Altos Hills Field, before
they had a backdrop. It was a beautiful location. I was one of the umpires, rotating with another
father. We took turns: one of us would umpire for the plate and one would umpire for the field.

1 REX: A little burg. But as I said, that's the way it was when I drove in Town and said to
2 Hut, you know, "What is – is there anything up in the Hills?"

3 GINGER: Right.

4 REX: And he said, "Well, no. Nobody's living up there – very few people."

5 GINGER: Now, your kids grew [up], they spent their first ten years or twelve years
6 there? So it's very different for them than kids who are growing up in the Town today.

7 REX: Oh, yeah. It was more open. Well, there weren't as many houses.

8 GINGER: MmHmm. No. That's right.

9 REX: It was very few people, as Hut said. Very few people living up there. To me it
10 was prime location, prime climate, but people found that out *after* I did.

11 GINGER: Right.

12 REX: So – but, the kids, they all went through high school – Los Altos High – in fact,
13 I had six [of my seven] kids go through Los Altos High.¹⁶

14 GINGER: Oh!

15 REX: Because my kids by my second marriage also went through Los Altos High
16 School. I remember walking Los Altos High School at one of those year end or end-of-
17 year, end-of-school-year celebrations.

18 GINGER: Right.

19 REX: And I think it was when my last, the last of my kids were going to Los Altos High,
20 and I was walking down the hall and I met the Principal, who I knew. And I talked with
21 him and I thought afterwards, you know, I've walked these halls longer than any of
22 these principals have.

23 GINGER: Right. Uh-huh.

24 REX: The – one –one my daughters, my step daughter from my second marriage
25 [Donna], went to Mountain View High.

26 GINGER: Oh, okay.
27 _____

28 ¹⁶ Those six children who graduated from Los Altos High School were Kathleen Gardiner (now Dillwood), Vicki Gardiner Taylor, Craig Gardiner and Curt Gardiner, and Steve and Mike Gardiner.

1 REX: But otherwise, all my kids went to LA High School.

2 GINGER: Now did they go to Bullis School and Purissima?

3 REX: [Hillview and] Covington.

4 GINGER: Because you were closer to the new order, down El Monte.

5 REX: Well, the fact that they went to school – up in the hills – as I recall it was an
6 elementary school, Purissima, that they went to.¹⁷

7 GINGER: And then they closed that down.

8 REX: And I think Foothill took over that area, didn't they?

9 GINGER: Yes, they did. Now, do you remember when the Foothill Expressway was
10 turned into - when the Railroad was turned into the Foothill Expressway?

11 REX: Yeah, sure do.

12 GINGER: It sort of helped to transform the area, didn't it?

13 REX: Well, driving up today, driving along the roads to get here [to the Heritage House
14 at the Los Altos Hills Town Hall], that's the way I used to have to go to take my
15 stepdaughter¹⁸ at the time to Pre-School. There was a Pre-School over on the other
16 side of Arastradero a woman had, and I used to drive this road up here all the time, past
17 where the City Hall is.

18 GINGER: Right. That was Fremont.

19 REX: But that was before they put in – and that's the way you had to go to Palo Alto, if
20 you were up in the Hills. You didn't *have* to, you could go down farther, but there was
21 no Foothill Expressway. You'd go to El Camino, and that was it.

23 ¹⁷ Kathleen and Vicki both attended Hillview Elementary (which was located Downtown near the
24 current Los Altos History Museum) and Covington Junior High, also in Downtown Los Altos. Vicki
25 says she recalls she would ride her bike several miles both ways if she missed the school bus, or
26 she would enjoy a lovely ride on the bus with her neighborhood friends through the Hills to get to
27 school.

28 ¹⁸ Actually I would have been driving Vicki to the pre-school some time in about 1951-53; since
Kathleen was already about 7 years old when we moved to Los Altos Hills; Vicki was only 2.
Vicki says she still remembers attending the pre-school when it was located in a beautiful 1912-era
home off San Antonio Road near Almond, which was probably run by Mrs. Meyers, the widow of
Dr. Meyers. The Pre-School may have been moved from its earlier location in the Hills.

1 GINGER: Right.

2 REX: So I was always driving this back road. Driving it today was, you know, hey –

3 GINGER: A little nostalgic.

4 REX: Yeah.

5 GINGER: Now, did you ever take the train?

6 REX: No.

7 GINGER: Okay. Now do you remember there was a little controversy about the

8 routing of 280?

9 REX: Oh, absolutely, because the original route was to go through our house.

10 GINGER: Oh!

11 REX: And if you look at your map, you can see where –

12 GINGER: Let's see, [24931] Oneonta is here.

13 REX: Right.

14 GINGER: And I think that the original route for 280 was to go fairly close to Foothill

15 Expressway and then come up, and the big problem was these interchanges.

16 REX: No. It was originally to go right where Foothill College is.

17 GINGER: Oh, okay.

18 REX: And Foothill College had not been formed. They had just bought the property

19 from John... John¹⁹, anyway, our neighbor who owned the property. And they

20 contacted the State and said, "We're going to build a college here, and we don't want

21 you to try to a freeway through the college, so would you mind bending it to around the

22 college?"

23 GINGER: Oh!

24 REX: So if you're coming from San Francisco down, when you hit Foothill College, you

25 make a – you kind of swing left and you go around –

26 GINGER: That's right. Here's your swerve, going around Foothill.

27

28 ¹⁹ The John Lohman family and Willard Griffin families owned most of that land prior to Foothill College. The College purchased John Lohman's ranch and both the Lohman and Griffin family homes for the site of their new community college.

1 REX: Right. Well if it had gone straight ahead it would have gone right through our
2 house.

3 GINGER: Yes, indeed it would!

4 REX: But it went near us and it wiped out – thank you – it wiped out our little frog
5 pond²⁰, which was one of the big things. Every spring we used to go down to the frog
6 pond and get some frogs, you know, in a bottle, and take them back up the house, and
7 then later take them back and put them in the frog pond.

8 GINGER: Oh, yes. Right.

9 REX: And so when the freeway went through, it took one of the big things for the kids;
10 it wiped out their frog pond.

11 GINGER: Oh, dear.

12 [Laughter.]

13 GINGER: That's probably where Adobe Creek then went over – it now goes under
14 the freeway, but it goes through that corner of Foothill College over near Griffin House?

15 REX: Well, they moved the creek, you know.

16 GINGER: Yes.

17 REX: Because our kids used to go down and fish there.²¹

18 GINGER: Oh, there were still fish in Adobe Creek?

19 REX: Oh, they weren't big fish, they were little fish, but for little kids, you know.

20 GINGER: A good size for little kids.

21 REX: Yeah. So yeah, we used to go fish. Walk down the hill and walk across in front
22 of John's place and fish for little trout. Yeah.

24 ²⁰ Our frog pond was located just a ways southwest of the intersection of Oneonta and Stonebrook
25 and was probably what is now called a vernal pool, something that appears for a short time each
26 year which is a thriving habitat for red-winged blackbirds and frogs. Our neighborhood kids loved to
27 float rafts and play there when it filled with water and pollywogs each spring. Because these kind of
28 "frog ponds" are hard to see and identify when they dry up seasonally each year, the vernal pools
often disappear when new roads and developments are built.

²¹ Vicki says she recalls seeing mostly big minnows and crowdfads in Adobe Creek while "creek
walking" barefoot through the water and picking blackberries along its lush banks, before the Army
Corp of Engineers moved the creek and lined it with cement in its route through Foothill College.

1 GINGER: Wow. That was a pretty nice experience for kids growing up there, wasn't
2 it?

3 REX: Yeah. The other thing at our place, there was no water. You know, no City or
4 County water. It happened that what we called "the Mansion"²² up there, they had a
5 Guest House down below.

6 GINGER: Morgan Manor?

7 REX: Right. Which was – the guest house down below was the one that Bill Simrell
8 lived in that home, which was at the upper end of Oneonta [and Stonebrook Lane], and
9 there was a water line that went from – what do you call it? I called it the Mansion.

10 GINGER: I called it Morgan Manor.

11 REX: Morgan Manor. Yeah, the name has changed over time.

12 GINGER: Yes, it has.

13 REX: Anyway, there was about a 5" pipeline, I think it might have even been 6", that
14 went from the creek – there was a pump down at the creek – where – right at one
15 corner of the Foothill College parking lot, this pump [was] there, and that pump – there
16 was a signal when the tank got low. The tank was up there at the Morgan Manor, a big
17 tank, and that tank, when it got low, the pump down below in the canyon, would get the
18 signal and pump.

19 GINGER: Right.

20 REX: No, there was no signal. People had to *watch* the water level in the tank. Yeah,
21 that's what it was. And I'd get a call and John Ford and I would go down, or I'd go
22

23
24 ²² Ford Country Day School at the time was also called "The Castle" by the neighborhood kids,
25 today it's also known as the Morgan Manor, built by the Morgans. My daughter Vicki believes the
26 Guest House should also be identified as a Historic Home, because The smaller home was also built
27 by the Morgans for the Morgan seniors - his parents – and while smaller, it was also a beautiful
28 home, in a wonderful location. An original photo, with the senior Morgans, is in one of Florence
Fava's photo albums now archived at the Los Altos History Museum. Town Founder Bill Simrell's
family lived in the smaller (Morgan) home, before the Murray family bought it. Bill was an architect
who appreciated fine architecture and history. He also built the Vincenti home and helped with the
first Town Hall for Los Altos Hills.

1 down, actually it was me most of the time.²³ I'd go down and put - typically what would
2 happen is, they would run out of water, but also sometimes the big 10" wide belt that
3 drove the pumps would come off the shaft and the pump wouldn't work. So I'd have to
4 go down and shut everything off and put the belt back on. And I did that I'll bet a
5 hundred times. And John and I must have met fifty times to repair the pipe. Because
6 somebody would turn the - some idiot would turn the valve off up above, and the pump
7 would be trying to pump water, and it would break the pipes somewhere going up the
8 hill. So we'd have to go down the line until we found the break and then repair it.

9 GINGER: Phew. Right.

10 REX: And John Ford and I repaired and did a lot of that.

11 GINGER: I think that that pump station is just at the corner where El Monte goes
12 around Foothill College right now. And it's quite a dilapidated old pumphouse.

13 REX: Yeah. It's very small little building.

14 GINGER: Yes.

15 REX: And all it was - and you and I could probably go in there now and take a look at it
16 - it was just about a 4' opening, an opening about 4' in diameter, that went down and
17 was all dug out, and the creek would flow through there and the pump would pump out
18 of that opening. That opening would be -

19 GINGER: Right. So you were getting water from the creek.

20 REX: Yeah.

21 GINGER: Or was it from a well?

22 REX: No, from the creek.

23 GINGER: Down below.

24 GINGER: Wow! Okay.

25 REX: Yeah. That's where that pipeline went from. We were always repairing. We had
26 to get - put steel pipe - steel clamps around it and - yeah.

27
28 ²³ Vicki also says she still remembers walking with me to fix the tank and pump, and she recalls we
sometimes had to clear out dead birds or other small creatures that had drowned in the tank,
although I don't remember that.

1 GINGER: Wow. Because that Adobe Creek comes, well, sometimes it's not very
2 reliable. It has a pretty low water level these days. In the summertime sometimes it's
3 dry. You had more water then.

4 REX: Well, we always had water in the wells [tanks]. We never had a problem.

5 GINGER: Okay.

6 REX: But again, there was nobody up here using the water, either. Just a few people
7 like me. In fact, I used too much. I put in a huge lawn, finally decided that wasn't a
8 good idea, but –

9 [Laughter.]

10 GINGER: Right. It always is a good idea, until you find out much water it takes and
11 how much works it takes to maintain it.

12 REX: It was the work, yeah. We just didn't need it.

13 GINGER: Now Hidden Villa was just up the road from you. Did you ever do any
14 things over at Hidden Villa or with the Duvenecks?

15 REX: Yeah. With – we tried to get Frank Duveneck to join the Town. In fact, I was,
16 again, sent up to see Frank Duveneck. And I said, "Mr." – well, I knew him, because
17 he'd drive an old, beat-up station wagon, and he drove it down El Monte and into Town
18 [Los Altos], and I'd gotten to know him in Town, you know, as you'd sit – you know, it
19 wasn't a very big Town – and so I went up and I said to Mr. Duveneck, "We're thinking
20 of forming a Town and the Committee would like to have you join the Town. We'd like
21 to have your property as part of the Town."

22 GINGER: Yes.

23 REX: Because you are rural, also.

24 GINGER: Yes.

25 REX: And he said, "Well, I'm sorry, but I'm going to donate this land to the County, and
26 I'm going to –" I think he said - I'm not sure that he told me - that he was going to have
27 a place for people to come up and do the things they do now - whether he told me that
28 then or not, and he may have. But anyway, the basic thing was, he said, "I'm going to

1 donate my land to the County. So I'm sorry, but, you know, you'll have to exclude me."

2 So we did.

3 GINGER: Oh. Right.

4 REX: So that's why Duveneck's property was not on, not included.

5 GINGER: Okay. But they were consulted and –

6 REX: Well, consulted - he was asked! And he said, "No, thank you."

7 GINGER: Right.

8 REX: Very courteous. He was very nice, not like the nasty Nearys. He was a very nice
9 man.

10 GINGER: Yes, he certainly was. Now, what about the Byrne Preserve or the
11 Westwind Barn?

12 REX: They didn't exist.

13 GINGER: Didn't even exist then – was the barn there?

14 REX: I don't know. I've wondered. I don't think it was. My impression is it was built
15 later. I've thought about that and I think I remember it being built.

16 GINGER: Right. Okay.

17 REX: No, I don't think it existed.

18 GINGER: Well, the Town has changed dramatically. You were mentioning that you
19 drive up now it's a different place than when you were here and forming the community.

20 REX: Well, I'd say, yes and no. There are more people.

21 GINGER: Right.

22 REX: Remember, there weren't many people.

23 GINGER: Oh, yes.

24 REX: And when I drove up the road to get here - and I used to drive that road I think to
25 take my granddaughter or stepdaughter²⁴ to school – it hasn't changed. No. Except
26 that, you know, there's more people.

27
28 ²⁴ It would actually have been with stepdaughter Kathleen or daughter Vicki.

1 GINGER: Right. And fences. You were mentioning that it's closed up a little bit.

2 REX: Well, that's the thing that I said to Jitze, that just struck me, I think the City
3 Council ought to outlaw fences and any fences that exist should be given ten years and
4 then have to be taken away, because otherwise it's going to completely ruin the Town.
5 The openness, the feeling, is going to disappear. It's already, from what I saw, you
6 know - like our house [on Oneonta]. A fence all the way around the property. Come on!
7 You know.

8 GINGER: MmHm. And when you first moved into Town and when I first moved
9 into Town, the Eichler style house with lots of glass, flat roofed so that it blended into
10 the hillside, that was sort of the character of the Town. Because so many of the houses
11 were small and have that feeling.

12 REX: You didn't build big houses.

13 GINGER: No.

14 REX: Maybe somebody did. I don't know anybody that did.

15 GINGER: Uh-huh.

16 REX: Sprague McCandless – Charles McCandless – when we were forming, when we
17 had the Committee?

18 GINGER: Right.

19 REX: We went to a group of people to compose what we were trying to do, I guess
20 people in the city. And I remember I was standing at one level and Sprague
21 McCandless²⁵ - he went by Sprague – he was a civil engineer, became Town Civil
22 Engineer. He was already Civil Engineer for a town up in Northern California, a little
23 town. Sprague, who became a very good friend of mine, was sitting on a chair, for
24 some reason it was on a higher level - I don't know where we were – slightly higher.
25 And we were making a presentation, Sprague and others, about a town, and there was

26
27 ²⁵ Charles "Sprague" McCandless (Civil Engineer), who lived on Prospect, and Bill Simrell
28 (Architect) who lived on Stonebrook Lane, combined their talents to build the first Los Altos Hills
Town Hall, a modest structure that has since been replaced by the current one. Sprague's wife Jean
was a local painter, pretty well know in that time.

1 a fellow who was on the opposition. And I mentioned how – well, he was saying how
2 bad the County was, how terrible the County was, and all, you know, and for some
3 reason because of all this, he was against the City [of Los Altos Hills], having a City.
4 That doesn't make sense, but anyway, he had this thing against the County, and he
5 made me very angry. And were both supposed to have 10 minutes presentation and he
6 took 20 minutes. And finally I said, "I'm sorry, but I think that, you know, I should have
7 some time." And McCandless spoke up and said, "Yeah." And so, he listened to the
8 presentation. And he [Sprague] totally agreed. He agreed to be Civil Engineer for the
9 Town. And he was the one we asked about roads.

10 GINGER: Oh, excellent.

11 REX: And he was the one we asked about roads.

12 GINGER: Right.

13 REX: And he said – Well, the County had told me that "All you have up there is oil and
14 screenings." I said, "What's that?" He said, "You just lay down oil, than we sprinkle
15 sand over it, that's your roads." And he said, "Also, you get slides."

16 GINGER: MmHmm.

17 REX: So we knew we would have some problems. But Sprague said he would be
18 willing to be the Town Engineer. I don't know whether he ever became official Town
19 Engineer or not. He may have.

20 GINGER: We can look that up.

21 REX: But he was an excellent man. Very, very bright. Very – just a terrific guy.

22 GINGER: Well, I think that the Town was blessed, when it started, that we had some
23 very dedicated, capable, bright people to establish the Town and to see it through the
24 first formative stages to get the a lot of the Ordinances in place that we're still working
25 with today.

26 REX: You know, you could disincorporate and start over.

27 GINGER: No thanks.

28 [Laughter.]

1 GINGER: Now, we've been talking for a long time.

2 REX: I know.

3 GINGER: But, one of the things that I would like for you to go into, because you
4 spent 10 years in Los Altos Hills and then you [moved], but your business was in the
5 Town of Los Altos, so you have a lot of memories of just the Town of Los Altos.

6 REX: Oh, incidentally, even though I left the Town [of Los Altos Hills], my family was
7 still there.

8 GINGER: Okay, so you really straddled –

9 REX: My [ex] wife and [four of] my kids were still here.

10 GINGER: Right. So you have a familiarity and acquaintance with both Los Altos and
11 Los Altos Hills. Lots of activities. Now what were some of the activities that went on the
12 Town that you just remember, that are standouts for you?

13 REX: You know, it didn't have things like you have today with – most towns – with big
14 events. I don't think we had those kind of things at all, an event that the City put on.

15 GINGER: Right.

16 REX: I don't recall – again, I'm 91 years old next week so I could be wrong, but I don't
17 recall the City put anything on. Later on, after I left, I know the City did have affairs on
18 Foothill Expressway [which took out the railway line], that place where you can have,
19 the City would have –

20 GINGER: The Town of Los Altos Hills has picnics, and we have a lot of activities that
21 are town wide, and now we have a lot of activities that are going on up at Byrne
22 Preserve. Those are our two. And we have many things going on here in [and] at the
23 Town Hall, but there are many activities for families where Los Altos and Los Altos Hills
24 both participate. Some of the things that were very important for my family were like the
25 Festival of Lights Parade, or the Pet Parade, those type of things.

26

27

28

1 REX: Well, remember, my family – my first wife – continued to live here. She didn't sell
2 the place until about 10 or 15 years ago.²⁶ And we - remember I told you that I paid
3 \$3,200 for the lot? And she sold it for \$1.35M.

4 GINGER: Oh!

5 REX: Which would probably be a couple million now, or more.

6 GINGER: Yes. That's changed quite a bit, hasn't it? They were figures that were –

7 REX: And remember, all this goes back to my driving down the Peninsula, down to
8 King City, noticing all of the different climates: Los Gatos, which gets hot, and Redwood
9 City, that gets windy, Palo Alto is nice, and you know, this, *this* would be a nice place to
10 live. So that's how I went in to talk to Hut and he said, there are only two little
11 subdivisions.

12 GINGER: Right.

13 REX: So [in 1950] I got the acre, got my Eichler home, and tried to pay the mortgage,
14 and that was it. And then, it wasn't until a long time – well, five years later, we decided
15 to become a real town [in 1956].

16 GINGER: Well, in retrospect, that was a pretty good decision, don't you think? This
17 is a good location. This was a good place for you to settle down.

18 REX: Oh, yeah. I've - If I'd still been married, I would *never* have sold the place.
19 I mean this, to me, could still, to me, climate-wise, a lot of people don't – well, a lot of
20 people have come to realize it. This is prime location.

21 GINGER: Yes.

22 REX: I mean, the weather is nice, you get a sea breeze in the afternoon – hey!

23 GINGER: We were lucky. Well, I've been talking for a long time. I just want to
24 express my enormous appreciation and thanks to you for your foresight and all the

25
26 ²⁶ In fact, my ex-wife, Phyllis, continued to live in the Los Altos Hills house for at least 50 years, until
27 shortly before she sold it in 2003 for \$1.353M, when she moved to live in the Napa-Solano area.
28 The original Eichler house was bulldozed and replaced with a far different house by new owners.
Phyllis herself passed away in 2011 in Napa, California. My daughter Vicki (a Paralegal and a
Realtor) confirmed that the newer house, built in 2005, sold in 2012 for \$3.6M. And Vicki
remembers the Pet Parade was a big deal in those days! She has scanned those photos to share.

1 energy and the effort that you put in to, first of all, selecting this area, and second, doing
2 all that you did to preserve it and to put it in place. We owe you an enormous debt of
3 gratitude, and thank you very much!

4 REX: Well, let's see, a thousand bucks would be okay.

5 [Laughter.]

6 JITZE: Let me just check this further.

7 GINGER: I'm just going to turn this off.

8 [End of Interview, with one brief "P.S." to follow.]

9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

1 “P.S.” The following brief discussion was recorded after the main interview regarding
2 other details of the original incorporation of Los Altos Hills, as follows:

3 REX: On the incorporation, why did we incorporate? And what were we, or more
4 importantly what I’m trying to say is, what – there were two prime considerations in
5 forming the Town, and one was *no* commercial enterprise and – what the heck was the
6 other one?

7 GINGER: One acre zoning?

8 REX: Pardon?

9 GINGER: Yeah, you’re right. The one acre minimum zoning.

10 GINGER: Right.

11 REX: Those two things, one acre minimum zoning, like Bill Simrell said, “Hey, that’s
12 what we should have,” and no commercial enterprise, which meant ultimately we had to
13 get rid of Adobe Creek Lodge.²⁷

14 GINGER: And the quarry. Now, had you heard any talk of there being potential
15 commercial development in Town? Is that what sort of raised the red flags, or were you
16 just saying, “Well, maybe down the road somebody might think of that.”²⁸

17 REX: Well, [Florence] Fava goes into length and says that – I think it was Fava – that
18 I read, maybe it was something else – that Los Altos might want to take over the Town,
19 that Palo Alto would take over the Town. Remember my original conversation with
20 Simrell was, “Hey, Los Altos had 1.1 – a quarter acre minimum, and we should have
21 100 – [I mean,] a 1 acre minimum.

22
23 ²⁷ I also recall one fellow had an acre in the lower area of the Hills, where he had a little paving
24 company, but as I recall he quietly closed down and moved away.

25 ²⁸ Remember, I grew up and went to school in San Jose, and returned there to attend San Jose
26 State, after attending Texas A&M while serving in the Army during World War II. So I grew up in
27 San Jose and graduated from San Jose State. I was employed in Santa Clara Valley the '50s, when
28 the bulldozers came in to the Valley, which was gorgeous in the Springtime. The bulldozers started
tearing down orchards and putting in streets and houses. And when the bulldozers came in to the
Valley, everything changed. That's certainly what I did *not* want to have happen to Los Altos Hills.
So watching the bulldozers tear down the orchards also helped motivate me was to protect the Hills.

1 GINGER: Right.

2 REX: And that led to us forming a Committee which formed the Town.

3 GINGER: Right. I just wanted to capture your comments about commercial
4 development.

5

6 [End hour and half interview.]

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27 *Transcription by Vicki Gardiner Taylor.*

28 *Footnotes courtesy follow-up research and discussions with Rex Gardiner.*