



MARGARET (PEGGY) MCDONALD

Interviewer: Regina Kong

Others Present: N/A

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“It was totally different from anything I’d ever done.”

-born Reno, Nevada July 1, 1957. Father was attorney and mother raised them. “He married my mom just before WWII and he was actually stationed in the Aleutian Islands. He was in the Army Air Corps.”

-[2:17] Childhood. “My dad was a real outdoorsman. He took us on adventures. We would go out to Lake Tahoe. He loved to fish. We did family trips that were pretty hilarious. The carload of kids and whatnot. We lived out of town. We had 5 acres so we had all different kinds of animals around. Just played a lot outside in the sagebrush. And we had forts. I went to Catholic. The neighbor kids didn’t go to Catholic school so it was always fun to hang out with them. We did a lot of swimming...In high school I chased boys just like everybody else. I still have friends from back then that I still stay in touch with. It was a great place to grow up. We had a lot of freedom. I would call it benign neglect. We’d pretty much go outdoors and it was a lot of fun.”

-[3:53] College at Berkeley. “That was the final landing. When I started out at the Claremont colleges. I went to Scripps and that’s because I was chasing a boy that went to UCLA. That did not work out. I was miserable down there. That was when the smog was really bad in Claremont. A lot of the girls had gone to prep schools...I left and then I went to Colorado and was a ski bum for a while. But the great thing about going to Scripps was that I went to Summerstock Theater. I took one theater class and my friend talked me into going to the Summerstock program in Santa Maria at Allen Handcock College. We were just techies, backstage. It was a lot of fun and I made a lot of friends there. And that got me into theater. I ended up being a set designer in the theater. That was my first real exposure to it. One of the guys I met at Summerstock was going to school at Berkeley—Dennis Sanchez. He took me for a tour at the theater at Berkeley and I was like I want to go here. So I transferred. In those days they let everybody in. That’s how I got in...Then I studied theater there and took set design and lighting design and costume classes. After that I went around the Bay Area and started getting little gigs. So I started working in the theater in San Francisco and Berkeley. There were all these little theaters—The Berkeley Stage Company and the One-Act Theater Company. I worked at the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival. I started getting real jobs. I assisted people but then I started getting my own jobs. I lived in Oakland and then I lived in San Francisco.”

-[7:21] What Berkeley was like in 70s “It was wild. It was really fun. It was the late 70s. There were still people protesting on campus. There were a lot of old hippies on Telegraph and they were always handing out flyers. There were crazy people, ex-LSD people wandering around. It was fun. There was Fondue Fred’s was a place we would always go to. I lived on the North Side. There was a movie theater there. I had a boyfriend who had a long ponytail in the middle of his back and an earring. And I was terrified to bring him home ‘cause I knew my father would hate him. Which he did. I stuck it out with him for a few years and then that ended. I moved over to San Francisco and got an

apartment with a girl. Eventually Jane Button became my roommate, and I knew Jane in high school. We met in ninth grade. She was great. She's really funny so we laughed a lot. I've always enjoyed her humor so we bonded over that. We stayed in touch over time...She got a job with the University so then she came down and moved in with me. We always laugh because Jane's very Type A. And I'm not. I'm like Type Z. I was always making her crazy. She said at the end that she was getting more sloppy and I was getting more tidy."

-[9:52] Planning on doing set designing. "I got a couple of Bay Area Critic's Circle Awards. I was getting tired of San Francisco. It was just getting too much. I was ready for a change. And then this guy blew through town...And that kind of changed a lot in my life..."

-[10:25] Meeting Dennis. "My sister lived in San Francisco and she was married to Joe. And Joe and Dennis grew up in Portland. They went to high school together. Dennis stopped in to visit Joe with Bobo on a motorcycle trip. They were going to drive motorcycles to Mexico and they got as far as San Francisco...My sister called me and said, 'Hey, I've got a problem. Joe's friend Dennis is here and he's kind of rattling around in the house. Do you have any time? He just came in the house and went to Joe's dresser drawer and put on some clothes.' They lived together at one point so he felt comfortable doing that. So I said, 'Okay I'll come down and I'll take him out for a drink or something and we'll go wander around.' And I said, 'I actually have to take a few photos of a set design right by your house.'" 'Cause I'd done this play in the back of a church for the Lorraine Hansbury Theater. And it was a choreo-poem so there were all these dancers. I thought I'd take him in there. I don't know if I was messing with him or not...We just walked because he's pretty kinesthetic type person. We walked down to the church and we went in there. There were all these black dancers, these male dancers, and they were checking him out. And he was really cute. He was like, 'Hi I'm Dennis Montgomery.' And they were looking at him thinking he was kind of handsome. And he had no clue at all. He didn't get it at all. I didn't say anything. We had a cocktail at the bar...My radar was really turned off because the dating scene there really wasn't good for me. I was not doing well. So I had just kind of given up. I wasn't paying any attention to him at all. You know, he was handsome but I was like, 'He's an Alaskan fisherman and I'm in the theater in San Francisco. This just isn't going to happen.' I didn't even think about it. Then he went to Mexico with Bobo. Then they came back and he called...Two hours later he showed up at my house with leftovers. He had walked all the way over to my house. So that's where it all started. Then he felt my leg. And that was on another time we went out. He ran his hand down my leg. And I was like, okay this is real then. It's not just my imagination. So anyway then he said I'm interested. So then we got together. We out and whatnot. He said I have to go home but I'll call you at eight o'clock tonight. He had his motorcycle. I was like yeah right. But at eight o'clock my phone rang and I was like, I'll be. No one did that then, you know. I was shocked. I was like at least he's honest...That was in February of '84"

-[16:10] Going up to Alaska when Dennis invited her. "So I did Summerstock Theater and in August I came up here. I had worked in a design studio in the office and that was the only phone. I came him that phone number so every once in a while the phone would ring. And he would call on the radio through VHF and you could talk. And he had a really bad radio...Of course everyone teased me about it...I got into a plane and flew into Elfin Cove and I was just like what the hell am I doing? And I landed and he was there tied up. He had a boat called the Salmon Bay. It was a 1929 tug boat and it was painted in bright yellow. He said did you bring boots. And I said yes my father took me to the store in Reno and he got me these boots. And they were hip waders. I had them on. He said, 'Don't get off the boat in those. Take those off. You're going to embarrass me.' Then he walked me up to the store and we bought these black boots. And then he said, 'And now we're gonna go fishing.'...Then we went to the Hobbit Hole and I had no idea what to expect. We came in the gut, get off the docks. There were all these little boats tied up. Bobo and Debra were there,

and Ron Kreher was there. Kim Ney was there. Taiga was there, he was three. We did the introductions. Everybody had little projects going on. Debra was always working in the strawberry garden. Somebody was always doing something on their boat. And then I met Greg. Everybody kind of checked me out. The person that was really nice to me was Taiga. He was like, 'Do you want to see my fort? I want to show you my secret hiding place.' So he was taking me around the woods, showing me around. We went and picked blueberries. He was just really sweet. He was really funny. I do remember a venison roast that Ron cooked that was really delicious. I was only there for two weeks. So there was a party or something and everybody was drinking beer or whatnot. I was looking out the window of the house. Everybody was playing volleyball and all that and I just started crying. Fred was there and goes, 'Uh, are you okay?' And I said, 'Yes.' And he said, 'What's wrong?' And I go, 'I just think I'm going to have to come here every year for the rest of my life.' And I started crying. I knew I got hit very hard. I got very concerned because it was not in the plan of my life. And Fred was my comfort. And then to Dennis I said, 'I want to talk about our relationship.' And he goes, 'Ah no.' And he ran off and didn't want to talk about it."

-[21:26] What hit Peggy about the Hobbit Hole. "It was communal. Dennis was in his element and he was very vivacious. It was beautiful. I grew up in a family we were outdoors a lot. Fishing all the time with my dad. It was just quite stunning so I was just overwhelmed. It was just different. And I think in the theater you're in a communal environment. Everyone has a job. So that was familiar to me. I felt some comfort there, but I didn't know all the rules yet. The one thing. I think I offered to cook something. I was making a cabbage dish. I said I can cook something. They said look in the pantry and see what we have. And I think there was a cabbage in there. I got the Betty Crocker cookbook out, looked up a cabbage recipe. I pulled a couple onions out. One of them was all moldy and gross. I threw it in the compost bucket and Greg saw me do it. He walked over, he reached in, and pulled the onion out and he said, 'You'd never make it here in a winter.' He chopped it and peeled all the rotten stuff off and threw it in the compost and threw it at me."

-[23:30] Peggy's second summer at the Hobbit Hole. "The next summer I came up on the boat with him. I came up on the Salmon Bay from Port Townsend. And we got into some weather and it was crazy. The boat just gets overloaded...I didn't know anything. I was like, 'What's the matter, there's water.' And he goes, 'Oh shit.'...And that was when they were fishing humpys seriously over at North Island...This one time we were out there. A huge westerly. These giant swells. You disappeared. You couldn't see the horizon. And he was just motoring. You'd call it getting into the trough. I couldn't do it. I came in and said I can't do this I'm dying...We came in and the Marmite was in...So I got on the boat and I was just like, 'Oh my god.' And Dennis called over at the Hobbit Hole and asked for someone to come and pick me up at Elfin Cove. We were riding in. I was with George Mills, one of the hands on the boat, and was a native from Hoonah...George was back there and he's a lot like Fred, a man of few words...On the table there was something. I said, 'What's that. He said 'gum boots.' I go, 'Oh what are those.' He says, 'Try one. They're in seal oil.' So I ate a gum boot and it was like, 'Oh thank you.'...Then I got into Elfin Cove. Ron picked me up, took me back to the Hobbit Hole. That was when Doris and Bob were visiting. Doris was sitting on the floor with her legs spread eagle with an old braided rug. She was repairing it, working on it. I came in. Doris had a very high voice—oh hello, how are you? I'm okay. I think that might have been the first time I met her so I introduced myself. You're with Dennis right? I said yes I was getting seasick out there. I really wasn't having fun. She said oh yeah Dennis—Greg what was that girl's name that fished with him that one time and you never saw her, she was just handing sandwiches to him? 'Cause he had a little boat. And then Greg said, 'Your boyfriend's a fishing machine.' And then he went upstairs. They all were very sympathetic with me. I got to hang out on the beach. I think I slept on the couch or something but then he finally came in in a day or so."

-[29:22] Keeping in touch with Dennis. “He used to write me letters and he’d call me. He’s not very good on the phone. And it was hard to call then because you had to go through the marine operator and everyone could listen in. You’d turn to channel 26 and everyone could hear your conversations. So if you were bored out fishing you would turn on the radio and you could only hear one side of the conversation. It was pretty hilarious. That summer also we fished for humpys and that’s just really hard work. They’d get up at 3 and fish until 3. You’re just pulling them in one after another. I was his deckhand. I remember Kim and I. We got back in. Your arm gets so sore. We were laying on the deck. It was kind of rainy. Then the sun came out. We were just laying there right on the front porch there. All of a sudden a cloud moved in and it started raining and we didn’t get up. We just laid there and Greg just walked by with a blanket and threw it on us. We just laid there. We were so tired. It was totally different from anything I’d ever done. And it’s great. You’re fishing and the whales come by and eyeball ya. There were all kinds of stuff going on up there. Lot of funny stuff that happened. But it was very hard work and that’s when they were cleaning them to. And his hydraulics were weird on one side. When he would run his side he would run it really fast. When I was doing it by myself I was doing it at my pace. But he would do it really fast. And I was like, ‘He’s trying to make me fish faster.’ And I got really mad. And then finally I said, ‘Why are you doing that?’...We realized that that was the problem. There were times when it was not fun. There was one time when I cried and told him I hated him...” Explains that story.

-[33:16] How Peggy describes Dennis. “He’s a very honest person. He’s very hard-working. He’s a very physical person. His comfort is when he’s doing things. He’s always got something going on. He’s a very passionate person in the sense that he has a big heart and he’s sensitive. He’s just a really good person and he’s really loyal.”

-[34:11] Peggy and Dennis engagement story. “I was kind of going, I uproot myself. I asked him, ‘If I asked you to marry me would you marry me?’ And we were digging out on his property. He goes, ‘Well yeah.’ I go, ‘Will you marry me?’ He goes, ‘Well yeah.’ And I said, ‘Okay then, I’m in. Otherwise I’m not. This isn’t just for sport for me you know.’” They met ’84, got engaged about a year later and married in Port Townsend November ’86. Dennis had a “shed-boy shed” in Port Townsend.

-[37:07] Peggy got an internship in Seattle and was doing design work there.

-[38:06] Dennis wanted kids right away. “On the fourth of July of ’87 he came in and kind of tried before that but that was fourth of July in the guesthouse. We tried again and after that, I was sick. I felt terrible. I had this bronchitis cough. I go, ‘God I just feel terrible.’ I said, ‘I can’t I’m sick I gotta go home.’ Well I was pregnant. I had to call him, said it definitely worked. So then I went down to Port Townsend. He was building the house. The house that Fred lives in now was the house that we rented...We lived in a little trailer up there on the property. He was working on the house and we had this little trailer. So he was working on that all winter and I was pregnant. So that would’ve been ’87. We’d only been married barely a year and I was pregnant. Then he bought this new boat...It had a California troll permit so in the spring he took off and did that. And I had a 6-week old baby and he left me with that. I moved into the house. I came back up that summer but I did not live at the Hobbit Hole. I rented a house out at Elfin Cove.”

-[41:04] Why Peggy decided not to live at the Hobbit Hole. “There was no place for me to stay and he was fishing and I didn’t want to raise my kids in a commune. I think having a baby is a really private little thing. When you have an infant. They cry and keep everybody awake. It was really personal for me. There wasn’t really any choice, I felt. So we found this house and rented it. Annie was three months old when I came up and we were in Elfin Cove. And that was really fun. And I met a bunch of other women. My friend Rosemary Enderly had Holly. So we were prowling around. And then this other gal moved in next to me and she had an infant too. It was fun considering everything else. That summer and the following summer I lived in Elfin Cove.” Rest of the year,

went back to the unfinished house in Port Townsend. When Annie got older, Peggy went back to set designing again.

-[43:00] Going back to the Hobbit Hole. “We bought a floathouse...We moved back over there and Dennis drug the floathouse over there and we had it on the beach at the Hobbit Hole. And then Dennis’ sister came and fished with him...That year she brought her kids out. Annie must’ve been 3 or 4. That’s where she met Ron...We had the floathouse on the beach over there and it was just kooky as hell. It was pretty rough. The floathouse was pretty funky. One of those years the floathouse was over at the Enderly’s beach and that was a terrible thing because there was so much surge at the beach that the floathouse was always getting banged around when the tide came. So I stayed in that house for two years then we went over to the Enderly’s beach for one summer then we took it to the Hobbit Hole again.” Jennifer and Peggy were both pregnant together.

-[46:30] Story about Jennifer giving birth to Eric Stromme. Steve Stromme couldn’t get back because of fog.

-[48:11] Raising a family at the Hobbit Hole. “It was a communal thing so any kind of activity like disciplining or if your kids are screaming or being little brats. Everyone thought they could intervene their opinion about child-rearing. Not in a negative way. I just felt uncomfortable. I wanted more privacy. So the next summer we tucked that floathouse and towed it to the back harbor by where Bobo and Debra live. It got out of hand there at the end because there were so many people there. And all the original Hobbits, originally they had their little boats and it would be just them and there’d be a communal dinner. Everybody got bigger boats and there’d be deckhands. Some nights there were 30 people in that house. It was a lot. Some people paid or didn’t. I remember we did the big shopping thing. All the food was in the woodshed. You’re trying to make people give money. I started like a grocery store in there. And everyone told me to shove it. No one wanted to do the grocery store scene. So everyone ended up contributing some money for all the produce and groceries and everything. It just got way out of hand. It was too much...Everybody kind of wore out there welcome, but everybody contributed like when there was a big project...Expanding the house...the hydro...They would sit around and talking about their fishing gear. ‘What hoochie did you use? Oh I got these black ones really good for cohos.’ They’d made the hoochies themselves...I remember Kim Ney and I. Oh god here we go again. On and on and on about their fishing gear. So it was funny. But it was a lot. But you have a lot of kids running around....And people won’t go to bed early. I was struggling enough as a parent. I didn’t need another layer. I felt it wasn’t appropriate for me to be there. And then like, doing laundry. It was a lot. In Elfin Cove they had the laundromat.” Peggy thinks other parents at the Hobbit Hole didn’t feel the same way. “Their parenting style was very different from mine, which was fine...I was more private in my child-rearing. Twins is a lots. It’s nuts.”

-[54:44] Story about Peggy and a friend taking their boat to the Hobbit Hole from Elfin Cove. “We were really careful. We checked the tides. And we left from Elfin Cove and went over to the Hobbit hole through South Pass. And oh my god we had so much fun. I think Lynne was the cook then. Visiting with her. She was very hilarious and crazy and funny. She used to be a stripper in Seattle so she always had these stories. And she’s this big, beautiful woman. She was funny. We’re visiting and she’s sewing and we’re picking berries. And Debra comes in. ‘Cause we were like oh we got to go. And she was on the radio...Then she came in and Bob-o came in and were like oh it’s blowing out there. And we didn’t know what the hell we were doing. Someone else came in. I think Greg even said you got to spend the night. So they decide Ron you get in your skiff and lead them over them...It was just huge waves. Rosie was in the front with the girls. I was driving the boat. Rosie, in her Texas accent, was like, ‘Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream.’...Finally we get over and he peels out and drops us. And we get over to her house and we made it. And you have to haul your skiff over to the line and then you have to hike through the woods and there we’re all sopping

wet and the kids are tired. We get to her house and I just said, 'You don't have any liquor here, do you?' And she said, 'Well I just might have something underneath the sink.' She pulled out some nasty old bottle of bourbon or something and we both had a shot. Ah shit that was scary. Fortunately the engine didn't die. That was kind of crazy stuff that we did because you're just like I can't sit here anymore. I need to go to the mall or something."

-[58:35] Fun things Peggy and kids would do. Camping by Magic Beach. Elfin Cove was very foggy. Started Gull Cove 1996. "Until then we were kind of gypsies in the summer. Moving that dumb floathouse everywhere. Here and there, back again."

-[1:00:34] Story about halibut fishing with Dennis. "I made these little signs that said 'port' and 'starboard' in the wheelhouse. We fished. Finally he was in the wheelhouse and saw those. 'Take those down.'...One time we were going halibut fishing, before I had Annie and before Dennis and I were married. They used to do 24, 36 hour halibut openings...You're getting close to time when you can go. And Bobo was having trouble with his boat...It wouldn't start...Finally he's freaking out 'cause the tide's going out and you gotta get out of the gut...The boat keeps going straight and runs right into the beach...Taiga and I were on the Salmon Bay and they forgot all about us. They were fishing and Taiga and I were on the boat for like 4 hours. He was like 4 and he was hilarious...But we were just there and then someone was like oh we forgot about them."

-moved to Reno to take care of parents then to Truckee

-[1:08:42] Today, run outfitter business in Gull Cove.

-[1:09:37] Value of raising children here. "We had a guest here last week. He was from Florida and he said, 'I must say that I'm very impressed with your daughter and her friend. They're very outdoors, they're very willing to help. They're comfortable outdoors, they're very self-reliant. There's been a lot of negative things about millennials and I find these girls to be quite refreshing.' My girls are very self-reliant. They know how to change a tire, they know how to drive a boat. In fishing, and also in this, you have to act quick. You have to think on your feet. Things happen and you got to really act. And my girls have really developed that skill. You have to problem-solve on your feet. They're not afraid of change. They can react. So I think that's one of the best qualities they've gotten. I didn't try to instill it. They just had to learn it... You have to be able to problem-solve because you're in a situation that could turn bad really fast. Those are things I think that they developed. They don't listen when you...My kids learn trial by fire pretty much. That's how they learn survival skills. Dennis isn't a good explainer...So they have had to learn. He's not good at showing you how to do something. I think those are great things they've learned."