

SONOMA BAYLANDS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

SWAMP & OVERFLOWED LANDS



including indexed transcripts

Arthur Dawson, Baseline Consulting



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OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Sonoma Baylands Oral History Project was to collect, transcribe and present oral histories relevant to the diked historic Baylands and adjacent uplands of Sonoma County and vicinity for use in capturing a landscape and way of life that is in transition, informing conservation decisions, interpretation and education.

METHODS

Through personal and professional contacts, I identified a number of people who had a deep and long-lasting familiarity with the Baylands. Because a major goal of the project was to capture as many viewpoints as possible, I endeavored to interview a cross-section of people with agricultural, recreational and government agency experience in the Baylands, as well as someone from the native community. The list of potential interviewees was divided up into categories (government agency, agriculture, recreation, native community), and prioritized. Several potential interviewees were contacted; those who expressed interest were sent a letter confirming a scheduled interview and a list of questions. These questions provided a loose framework for the interviews, but each elder's unique knowledge and experiences also guided the conversations in whatever directions seemed most interesting and fruitful.

I made substantial efforts trying to recruit one or more members of the native community, but was ultimately unsuccessful. Consequently, the native viewpoint is not represented in this project. There are probably several reasons why I was unable to find any willing participants, including a long-standing distrust of the dominant culture. Another may be that in pre-contact times, human presence *in* the Baylands appears to have been quite temporary and fleeting; just like today, people lived near the Baylands but not *in* them (see "Native Era" section in "Detailed Findings"). Hence, tribal memories and traditions associated with the Baylands may not have been as durable as those in other realms. This oral history is also, regrettably, missing the voices of women. As with the native community, I made contact with a number of women elders, but was unable to find a willing participant. Most said that their experience in the Baylands paled in comparison to the men. This is probably true in a general sense. The people who have spent the most time in the Baylands worked in agriculture or used the them as a place to hunt and fish. These pursuits have been, and remain, heavily dominated by males. Even so, there are women who have spent substantial amounts of time in the Baylands and it is unfortunate that none of them are represented here.

The interviews lasted about an hour and a half. Half were conducted at the elders' homes, one was conducted at the Sonoma Land Trust's Baylands Center, another on an elder's agricultural property, and one at the Gilroy Public Library. After an interview was conducted, the work of transcription began. Translating spoken words onto the page was often tricky—I kept editing to a minimum, aiming to create a readable text that preserved the feel of the conversation. While the grammar (including my own) is often imperfect, I believe the unique texture of each person's speech was an important part of what was communicated. People who've known this place over many years have a way of speaking that gives us a glimpse of their lives and into other eras. Six Interviews were conducted, one each with Mike Cullinan, Sam Jones, Jim Haire, Newton DalPoggetto, Paul Sheffer and Norm Yenni. Their knowledge of the Baylands totals more than two centuries of personal experience. In addition, all but one have family connections with the Baylands going back as much as four generations, to late 19th-century.

Once the transcriptions were complete they were given to the elders for comments and corrections. As the interviews were a joint creation of myself and the interviewees, we both signed release forms gifting the material to the public domain. The interviews were indexed under both specific topics, like 'Pickleweed,' and under more general ones like 'Agriculture.' Indexing allowed all comments about any topic to be easily compared, and general trends and conditions to be identified and written up in the sections which follow (a simple word search works well for specific subjects, but not for complicated subjects—e.g. 'Public Perception of Agriculture'.).

Finally, the oral histories were distilled into the 'Detailed Findings' section and the maps contained in this report. For readability, some quotes in the body of this report have been edited slightly from the version which appears in the transcripts.

THE ELDERS

Mike Cullinan was born in 1948. Initially leasing the land, his parents bought what is now known as the Cullinan Ranch property in the 1950s. While the family lived in Sonoma, Mike and his family spent a lot of time on the ranch. His parents grew hay and pastured cattle there. The ranch initially covered about 3000 acres; but in the 1950s, a large portion was sold to the Leslie Salt Company. The Cullinans also leased land to the Kiser family. In his teenage years, Mike worked for the Kisers, raising hay and grain on the ranch. He also enjoyed hunting and fishing on the property. Cullinan Ranch was acquired by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in 1991 and now is the site of major marsh restoration efforts.

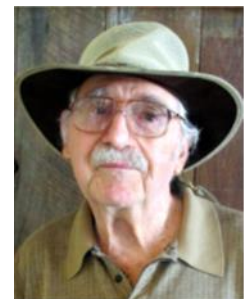


Newt DalPogetto was born in Sonoma in 1922 and has spent much of his life in Sonoma Valley. His grandfather arrived in the area in the 1870s. Newt's experiences in the Baylands go back to his early childhood, when his father took him bass fishing on the sloughs. Newt also knew Greg Jones, grandson of Senator Percy Jones, the man who bankrolled much of the Bayland reclamation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Newt participated in the Golden Gate Bridge's opening day ceremony in 1937, marched across it with the Sonoma High School band. Still a practicing lawyer, Newt is a keen observer of people, wildlife and local politics.

Jim Haire's is the third generation of his family to farm their Skaggs Island Ranch. His grandfather started farming Skaggs Island in 1939, three years before Jim was born. Jim's grandmother worked as the cook for the work crew on Skaggs Island. Jim has worked in agriculture most of his life, raising hay, grain and grapes. After many years of negotiations, Jim recently sold his Skaggs Island property to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. At the time of our interview, he had planted Skaggs Island for the very last time and the end of his family's long involvement with the property, was coming to a close.

Sam Jones is the great-great grandson of Senator John Percy Jones, the man who bankrolled much of the reclamation of the Sonoma Baylands beginning in the late 19th century. In addition to knowledge gleaned from family members, he has done extensive research into the Senator's many business interests, of which the Sonoma Land Company was only a small part. Sam has vivid memories of his grandfather, Greg Jones and could recount many details of the operations of the Jones Ranch not available anywhere else.

Paul Sheffer worked for the Soil Conservation Service from about 1970 until 1990, then took a position with the Southern Sonoma County Resource Conservation District for many years. Paul's work brought him into close contact with the agricultural community; there he was well-respected as someone who could work with ranchers and get things done. The projects he worked on included: animal waste systems for dairies, riparian restoration, and flood mitigation. He has worked in Marin, Southern Sonoma and Southern Napa counties. He retired from the Resource Conservation District several years ago.

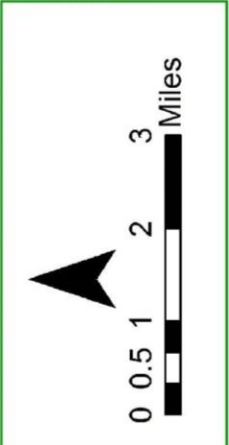
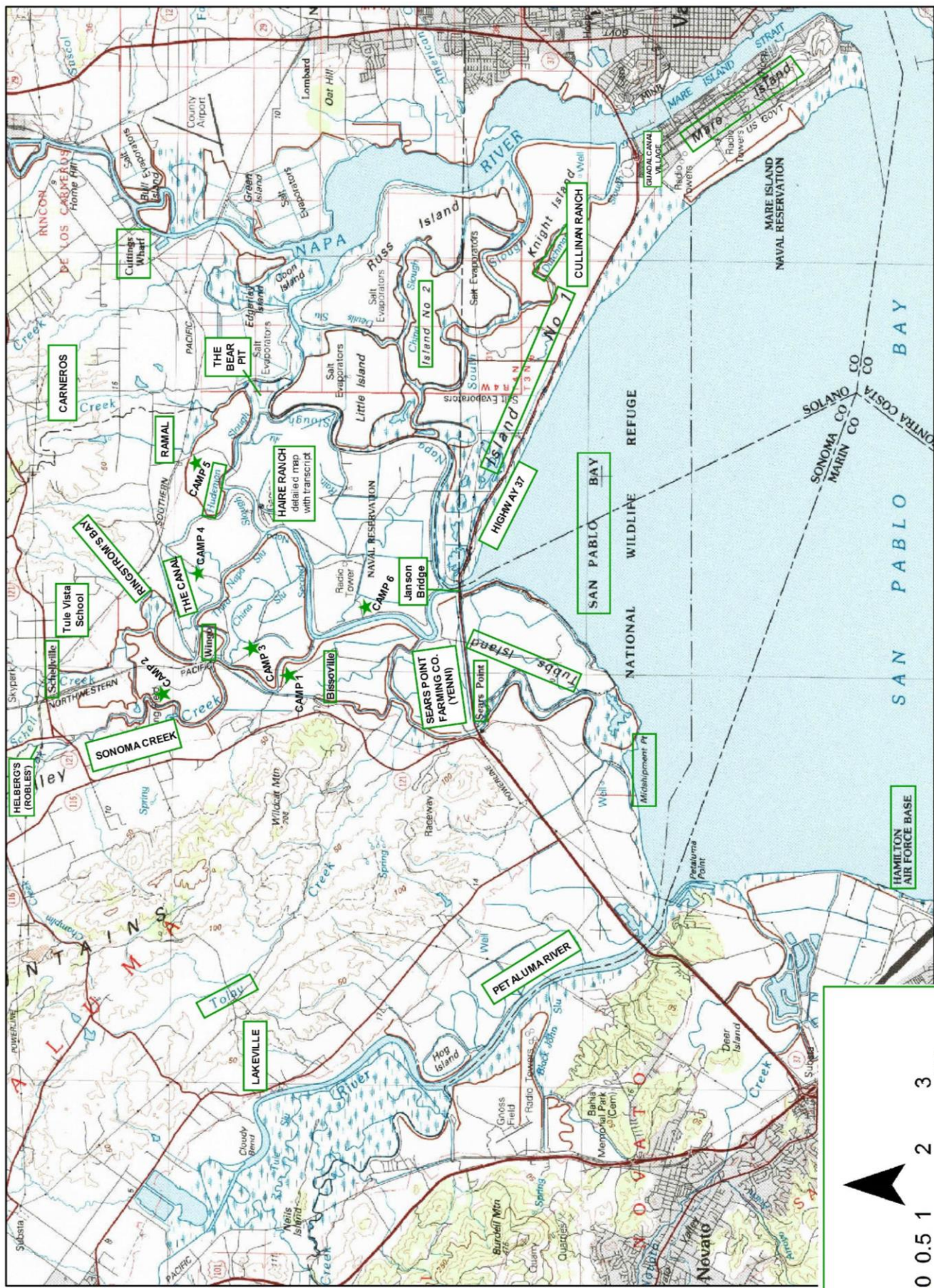


continued

Norm Yenni has been involved in agriculture his whole life. His family settled in the area in the late 1800s and his father started farming oat hay on Tubbs Island nearly fifty years ago, in 1969. This is the same 2300-acre property that Norm farms today. He grows primarily hay and grain, but experiments with other crops as well. Norm has served as president of the Sonoma County Farm Bureau and continues to serve on its Board of Directors. He has also served on several technical advisory committees for regional efforts such as the Sonoma Creek Sediment Source Analysis and the Highway 37 Stewardship Study.



BAYLANDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT AREA. Green boxes and stars indicate selected features, sites and places names identified by elders.



INTRODUCTION

Ten thousand years ago there was no San Francisco Bay. Instead, there was a valley, ringed by hills and mountains, greened by innumerable creeks and dotted with the villages of the First Peoples. An enormous river carrying half the runoff of California flowed west across the valley. Standing at the Golden Gate, you would not have heard the sound of breakers because the ocean was still twenty-seven miles away, beyond some hills we now call the Farallon Islands. But you would have heard a tremendous roar as that river flowed through the Gate over a series of cascades and waterfalls.

With the end of the ice age, sea level rose and the ocean began to move inland, slowly covering the land with salt water. Eventually, that inland valley became San Francisco Bay. Pickleweed, tules and other salt-tolerant plants colonized the water's edge and formed vast tidal marshes. The rich habitat of those marshes attracted fish, birds and mammals in great numbers. By necessity, the region's First Peoples moved to higher ground, but stayed near the marsh because it was such a good place to hunt and fish.

When the Spanish arrived in the late 18th century, there were villages all along the edges of the Bay. With such an abundant and reliable food supply, the population density here was higher than anywhere in North America outside of Mexico. Villages along the marsh edge and elsewhere began losing people to the missions; some were taken forcibly, others looked at the limited options and chose to leave. Introduced diseases, against which the First Peoples had little or no immunity, also took their toll.

In the mid-19th century the pace of change quickened. Following the Bear Flag revolt in 1846, California was annexed by the United States. Two years later, gold was discovered in the distant Sierra Nevada range, setting off the California Gold Rush. The impacts of that event rippled through the Bay. For awhile, the population of San Francisco doubled every two weeks. Market hunters began bringing marsh birds, tule elk, oysters and other wild game to sell in San Francisco. After the 'easy pickings' of gold were exhausted, hydraulic mining was used to wash down whole hillsides. The sediment from that practice, equivalent to the amount excavated for the Panama Canal, washed all the way down to the Bay. As it settled out of the water, it raised the bottom of the bay three feet.

Under Mexico, the government had deeded land grants to well-connected settlers. These properties could be huge—General Mariano Vallejo's Rancho Petaluma covered about one hundred square miles. Expansive as they were, the boundaries of the land grants usually stopped at the upper edge of the tidal marsh. Anything lower than that was considered of little or no value. With the notable exception of the City of San Francisco, which expanded by filling in tidal marsh, this attitude continued under the Americans.

After the federal Swampland Act of 1850 provided an incentive for individuals to drain lands below the high tide line, the edge of the bay began retreating seaward again. At first, people built levees by hand to dry out the land and plant crops. By the late 1880s, the task was being mechanized and steam dredgers doing the 'work of a thousand men' were building miles of levees around the tidelands. Ditches and floodgates were also constructed, and pumps were brought in to aid the enterprise. Senator John P. Jones, with the fortune he'd made in the Comstock Silver Lode of Nevada, bankrolled three dredgers. Eventually about 15,000 acres (25 square miles) of Sonoma Valley's tidelands were 'reclaimed' and turned into agricultural land.

Jones set up six 'Camps' with bunkhouses to accommodate the workers on his ranch. As many as two hundred horses were used to work the land; they were housed in huge barns. It was not an easy place to

farm—horses got stuck in the mud if it wasn't dried out enough. It was also one of the first places to use 'continuous tread' tractors, the precursor to modern Caterpillar machines. According to one story, one of these tractors sank into the mud and disappeared without a trace. The most suitable crop on the reclaimed marsh turned out to be hay and enormous warehouses were built to store it. At first, barges hauled the hay across the bay to San Francisco and elsewhere. Later, railroads were used. In the days before the automobile, the City needed thousands of tons of hay per month to fuel its horse-drawn transportation. Just as we now rely on fossil fuels, the Baylands served as the 'Middle East' of that era.

While now mechanized, the annual rhythms of agriculture in the marsh have changed little in 125 years. What used to require twenty or thirty men and teams of six or eight draft horses can now be done by just two or three individuals. Plowing and planting hay begins in late October or November, after a little rain has already fallen. Cutting hay begins after the weather has begun to dry out in late May or June. Once the hay is cut, it needs to be dry before it can be baled. Because of the moisture coming off the bay, this can take two weeks or more (as compared to six to ten days for nearby farms that aren't quite as close to the water). Baling is the next step. In the early days, the hay was brought to a hay press and made into bales. Today mechanized bailers with air-conditioned cabs and auto-steering systems are used. Besides hay, some grain is also grown on the former marshland.

Other than the farm laborers, very few people lived on the reclaimed marsh. There wasn't much of a real community. People who lived nearby did use it for recreation, especially hunting and fishing. Duck Clubs were built and served as temporary gathering places. Hunting was so popular that the duck population was virtually wiped out by the 1920s and didn't really begin to recover for a few decades afterwards. Richard 'Fresh Air' Jansen was one of the few true marsh residents. He lived on a beached barge and made his living from fishing, renting out rowboats and carving duck decoys. His decoys are now famous among duck hunters. Like the residents, roads across the tidelands were few and far between. Highway 37 started as a rough dirt track with a toll taker at the Sonoma Creek Bridge.

Several small, more permanent settlements did exist in the marshlands. Wingo grew up at the spot on Sonoma Creek where ferry passengers from San Francisco would disembark and board trains for points north. In its heyday it consisted of several small cabins and fishing shacks. Another settlement, a little downstream, was Bissoville. The Bisso brothers built several houses on barges and rented them out. Norton Buffalo, a well-known harmonica player, lived there in the '60s or '70s. On the eve of World War Two, the U.S. Navy built a facility at Skaggs Island. While its purpose was top secret, it is now generally believed to have been a listening post for communications between China, Russia and other places. To support the 400 men who served there and their families, the Navy built a little town of sixty or eighty homes along with a bowling alley, swimming pool, movie theater, gas station and general store. This was the biggest settlement built on reclaimed marsh. The facility was decommissioned in 1993 and no one lives there now.

As the tidelands dried out and the organic material in them decomposed, they lost as much as eight feet in elevation. In addition, they were no longer being replenished with sediment. Winter rains water the dry farmed oat hay, but also cause more flooding than they did in the past because the levees now prevent the water from spreading out. The first recorded flooding in the Schellville area occurred shortly after Jones' dredges completed the first significant levee along Sonoma Creek in 1890. Keeping Bayland farms dry has always required active management of a system of pumps, levees, ditches and floodgates. This same system, run by private landowners, normally keeps Highway 37 dry. However, a huge winter storm at the end of 2005, caused a levee breach that flooded 10,000 acres, including sections of the highway.

Over the past few decades, proposals for a new town, a ferry terminal and hotel, an airport, and a casino have surfaced and failed because both farmers and conservationist recognize the value of this “empty” landscape. In addition, there has been a growing awareness of how climate change is beginning to affect the area. In the past, hay farmers in the Baylands would often start baling at two o’clock in the morning; now, with warmer temperatures, the air usually has too much moisture in it to allow night baling. Sea level rise, another effect of climate change, threatens to erode the levees that protect the ranchers’ fields. The combined effects of sea level rise and subsidence have made the floodgates in some places obsolete. Places which were once easily drained now require pumps to physically remove it from the land. Sea level rise also threatens to eventually flood Highway 37 and studies and public forums have been held to look at the options.

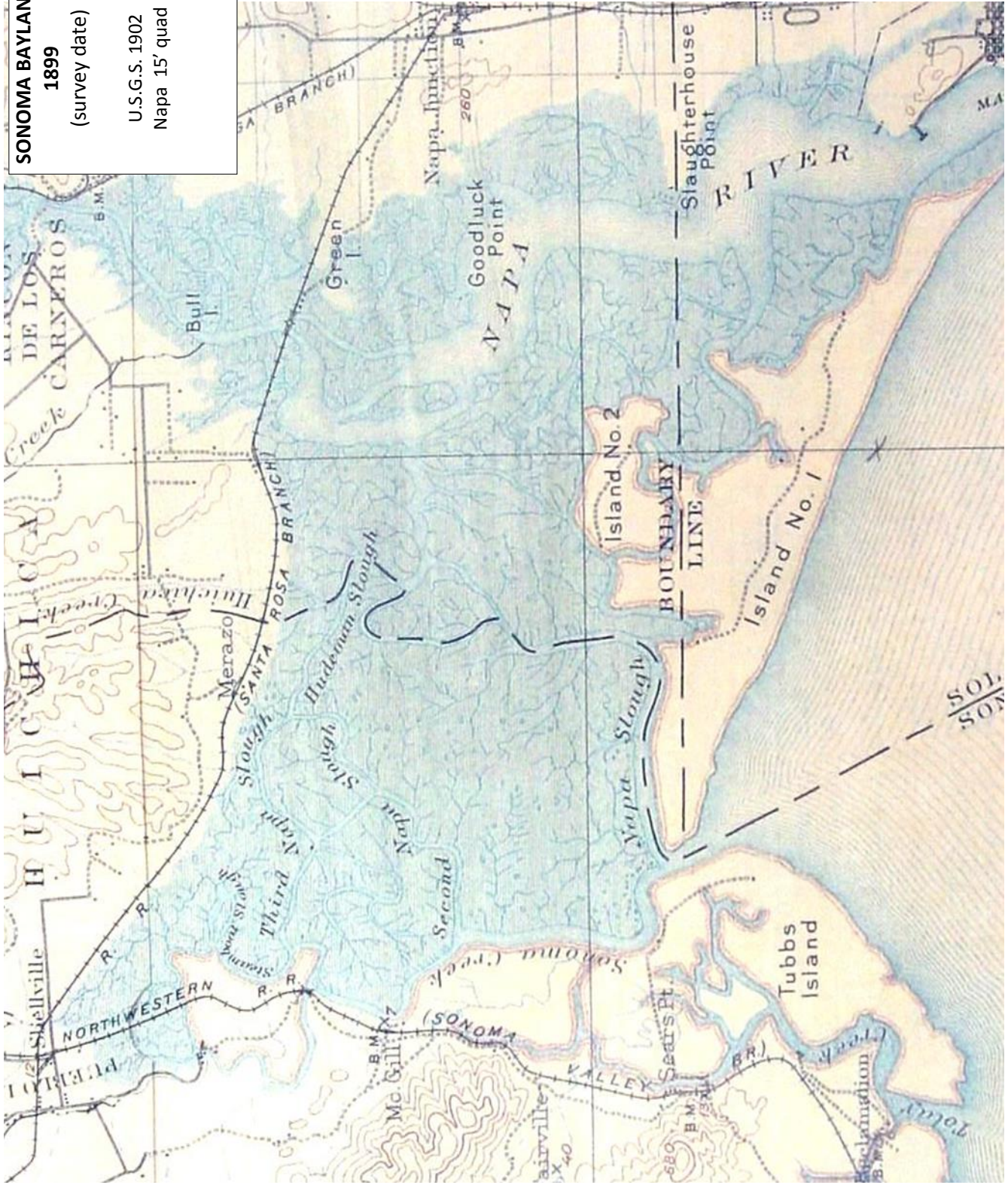
Farming in the Baylands has become more difficult as the years go by and its decline is seen as inevitable by many. The younger generation of many ranching families is not interested in working the land. Even for working farmers, making a living off agriculture alone is not really viable anymore. Ranchers are turning to supplemental sources of income such as leasing out sites for cell towers, taking in bio-solids from nearby urban areas, or renting out housing or large-vehicle parking.

In the late 20th century, ranchlands began being converted to conservation uses, which includes restoring habitat for ducks and other game birds. Major efforts are now underway to convert much of the area back to tidal marsh. Besides creating habitat, marsh restoration also buffers some of the effects of climate change. It protects populated areas from sea level rise and, as the weather becomes more extreme, provides a place for flood waters to go. Since the 1960s, thousands of acres along Highway 37 have been restored back to marsh. Today the Baylands are undergoing another big transition. Marsh restoration, proceeding at an increasing pace, continues side-by-side with farming and ranching as well as increasing interest and opportunities for public access along the Bay. As they have always done, the Baylands will continue to change and evolve, and the people who live in and near the marsh will adapt once again.

SONOMA BAYLANDS 1899 - 1983

SONOMA BAYLANDS
1899
 (survey date)

U.S.G.S. 1902
 Napa 15' quad



SONOMA BAYLANDS

1914

(survey date)

U.S.G.S. 1916

Mare Island 15'quad



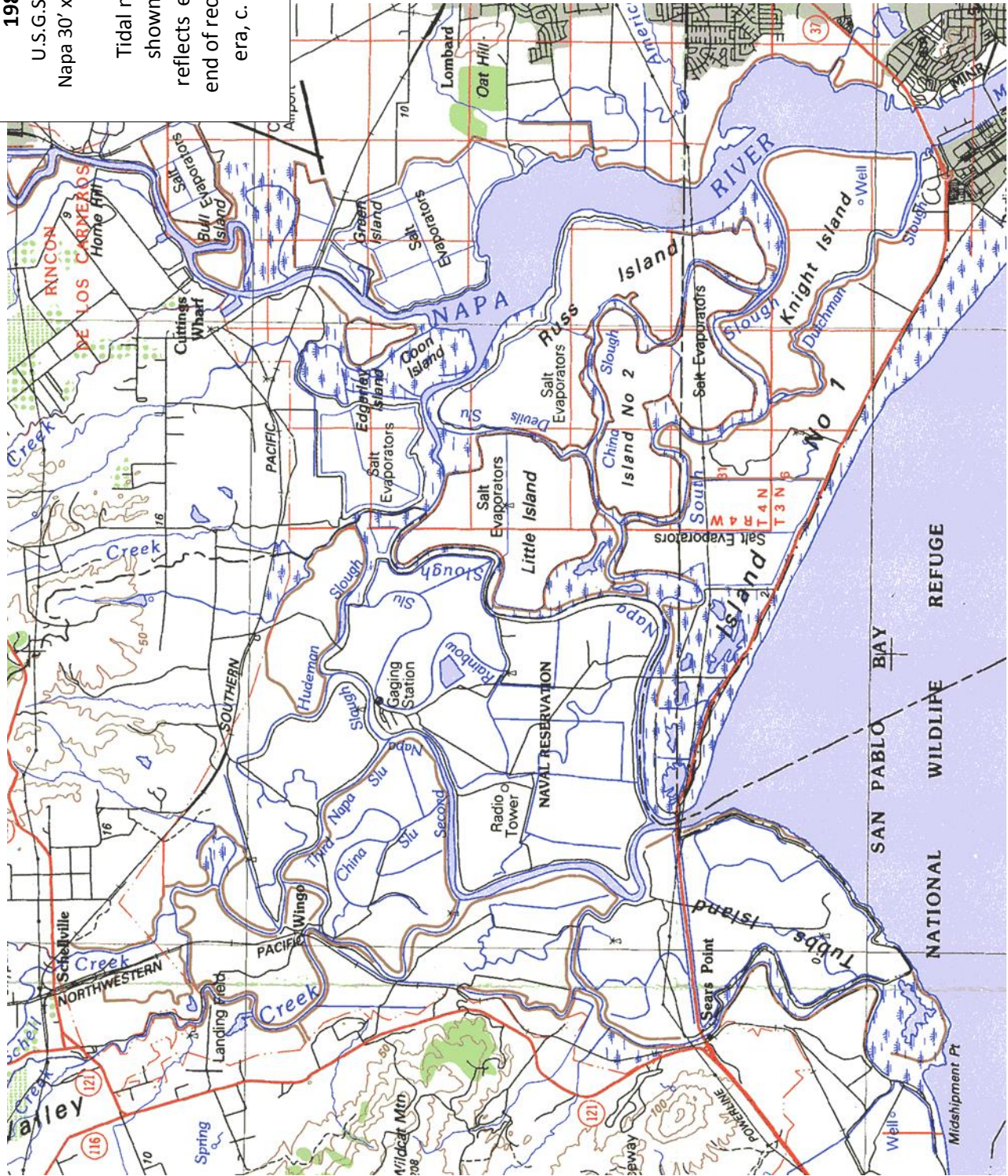
SONOMA BAYLANDS

1983

U.S.G.S. 1983

Napa 30' x 60' quad

Tidal marsh shown here reflects extent at end of reclamation era, c. 1935.



DETAILED FINDINGS

NATIVE ERA

“I’ve never seen any hard evidence that there were any Indians down here to any extent,” said Norm Yenni. “They might have come down here and did some hunting. But I don’t think the Indians were so foolish as to live down here.” He reasoned that mosquitoes would have made life near the marsh very unpleasant for much of the year. Likewise, Mike Cullinan has never heard of, or seen any signs of native people living in the marsh. He has heard of native people living near the Sonoma Mission, “but not down here.”

Jim Haire was the only elder to have seen evidence of native people in the Baylands. One day his plow plugged up between Appleby and the Pump Field (map on page 106). As he was digging it out, he found a light-colored, teardrop-shaped stone. “You don’t find rocks...down there. There’s only rock that somebody’s hauled in,” he observed. “How the hell it got there I don’t know.” Speaking of how it was shaped, he said, “I’m assuming that didn’t happen while it was in a waterway. I think someone made it.”

Jim noted its resemblance to another stone he found “just off of Ramal Road by a little spring” a little inland from the historical marsh. Similarly shaped, it was made of darker rock and had a hole drilled in it. Jim showed it to Buck Sangiacomo, whom he said has one of the largest collections of native artifacts around (Sangiaco Ranch is on lower Broadway, a little inland from the former marsh edge). Buck told him it was “a fertility charm that the medicine man would hang around a woman who was trying to get with child.” Thousands of similar objects, often called ‘charmstones’ have been found just a few miles away on the former lakebed of Tolay Lake.

The elders’ observations of the sparse presence of native people in the Baylands corroborate maps drawn by early 20th-century anthropologists. These maps, based on the memories of surviving tribal members, show most village sites at some distance from the marsh. *Petaluma* was about two miles from the tidal marsh along the Petaluma River and *temblek* was about the same distance from the marsh in lower Sonoma Valley. *Olompali*, on the lower Petaluma River, was only about one-half mile from the marsh, but situated well above it (more than 100 feet in elevation).



TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan: 99-103

Haire: 18-24

Yenni: 11-16

OTHER SOURCES

Barrett, S.A. 1908. *Map of the Territory of the Pomo Linguistic Stock and Adjacent Territories of Other Linguistic Stocks*. University of California.

MARSH RECLAMATION

Under the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act of 1850, wetlands below the high tide line could be claimed by private individuals if they were drained and made cultivable. This meant dredging channels, building levees and developing drainage systems. As Jim Haire explained it: “You put a plan together—like in our case, Senator Jones did...Part of what you had to have to be able to utilize the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act was a legitimate dredging company.” The Sonoma Land Company was the corporate entity Jones created to reclaim marshland for the Jones Ranch.

Norm Yenni mentioned an additional reason for reclamation: “If you would alleviate the government of this terrible mosquito problem out here, you could reclaim this land, start paying some taxes on your income and produce a usable product...So it was a win-win situation. That was how most of these ranches got the enticement to be formed.”

While inexpensive by the acre, reclamation on any scale required substantial sums of money for labor and equipment. Nevada Senator John “Percy” Jones had made a fortune in that state mining the Comstock Silver Lode. According to Jones’ great-great-grandson, Sam Jones, the senator invested his considerable wealth in a variety of business ventures: “The family holding company was the Ramina Corporation,” which included “at least thirty different entities...from wholly-owned businesses to simply partial investment.” Besides mining and agricultural enterprises, they included “an ice machinery company...investments in railroads” serving the Panama Canals and “the Treadway Goldmine up in Alaska.” Most of these businesses were “very capital intensive.” Senator Jones was also one of the founders and developers of the city of Santa Monica in southern California, beginning in the 1870s.

Around 1890, the Sonoma Land Company acquired two new dredgers for the job of reclaiming the tidal marshes along San Pablo Bay. One was named the *Sonoma*; the other was called the *Nevada*, perhaps to acknowledge the source of Jones’ wealth. At some point the dredger *Eureka* was also put into service and there were “three dredgers working almost around the clock.”

The Reclamation Process

Reclamation of Sonoma Valley’s tidelands began as early as the 1860s. Relying on “hand labor with pick and shovel” at first, levee building proceeded slowly. Jim Haire pointed out a short, straight channel off Skaggs Island called ‘China Cut.’ He heard it was dug by Chinese workers “after they came off... building the transcontinental railroad.” Sam Jones observed, “The land was pretty poor. It was tideland and a bunch of people took a stab at it and couldn’t [make it work].” His namesake, great-great-great uncle, and Percy’s brother, Sam Jones, scouted it out the area and concluded that they could “run some horses there, some cattle, some sheep and begin a farming operation, reclaim the land and do something with it until we can develop it.”

According to Jim, the technology of the sidearm dredge was being developed during the late 19th century. By the time Jones bought dredgers for his Land Company, the *Sonoma Index-Tribune* boasted they were “capable of doing the work of 1,000 men.” Both Jim and Mike Cullinan recalled visiting dredges when they were young. Mike has “just a little remembrance of walking across a plank to get onto the dredge...It was at night; they ran twenty-four/seven with the tide.” He said they couldn’t do much work at low tide in small channels like Dutchman Slough because there wasn’t enough water to float the dredge. He guessed a half-dozen men worked on the dredge he visited.

Jim Haire was on the *Alameda*. “It was one of the smaller ones... [and] the first dredge that ever had a steel hull. All these things were wood. So we had them do this piece of levee for us and I stayed on it one afternoon. They call it a wheelhouse, but there was no wheel. There was literally two big two-by-fours that were about from here to the wall [eight or ten feet] long. The operator stood up and pushed on these.”

“A side-arm dredge doesn’t swing its boom” he explained. “It does it with water that’s in the barge itself. It sloshes and that’s what tips it. So one [two-by-four] would close and open the bucket and the other would raise it and lower it. When they set a load on the levee, they would set it down, wait for this thing to slosh. When it started back the other way, then they would open the bucket and it would come back. “

Jim also described seeing freshly-reclaimed marsh on the Fillippini property when he was young. Once it dried out, there were cracks in the ground “big enough to hide a cow.” Eventually these were filled in and leveled enough so that it could be disked.



The dredge *Sonoma*, c. 1900.

Drainage Systems: Levees, Ditches, Pumps & Floodgates

Once an area had been encircled by levees and sealed off from the tides, it still had to be managed for drainage. Levees keep water out, but they also keep water *in*. Rain collects inside the levees and some salt water also seeps in. For this reason, reclaimed tidal marsh requires a system of ditches, pumps and floodgates to keep the land drained for agriculture.

In the early days, Norm Yenni said, the levees “were not very tall at all. They didn’t need very much levee. They could drain the whole ranch with flood gates at the time...The floodgates were used for standing drainage. When the tide was low enough, the water level in the bay was low enough that the water would rush off the land and into the bay. When the tide came up, the floodgates would close and the water wouldn’t come back in. So twice a day you’d drain the land.”

“Over time,” Norm said, “as the ground got dry and it shrunk down a little bit, and I guess wind erosion, the land subsided. Now we have to use pumps and physically remove it from the land.” The floodgates became “non-functional.” Norm said that pumping water was already going on in the 1930s and ‘40s.

As Mike Cullinan described the situation on his family’s ranch in the 1950s and ‘60s, “They’d have to pump in the wintertime, since it was below sea level. They had a couple big pipes right there near the headquarters, near the end of these drainage ditches that were throughout the whole ranch. They’d bring a CAT in there and use the drive off of that to pump, because there was no electricity to pump the water out when it was raining. Otherwise it would pretty much flood. Fill up. No place for the water to go.”

The drainage system on Skagg’s Island is similar, with ditches running the water to pump stations. “These are big pumps” said Jim Haire. “The navy has one that’s 42-inch probably, 25,000, 28,000 gallons a minute. They have another one that’s diesel powered, it’s a little smaller than that. Ours is an electric one,

it's 24-inch, it pumps about 16,000, 17,000 a minute. So these are the three pumps that keep Skagg's Island in a farmable range."

Mike said that the pumps at Cullinan Ranch would "run twenty-four/seven" in the winter. "They'd have someone down there, staying in this little shed with the cat to make sure something didn't break...[the ranch] was a business for them...that's how they made their living."

At least occasionally floodgates were used to bring tidal waters back into reclaimed areas to attract waterfowl. Mike Cullinan said, "We called these dead sloughs. There was a gate right here and they'd open this up and bring water in. This would be all be dry, you know. Then the ducks would come in...the geese would come in. I've seen the ranch just covered with geese."

Changes

Many things have changed since the Baylands were first reclaimed. Recalling shifts he's seen in the last 50 years, Norm Yenni said, "When we first came here in 1969, we drained the entire ranch from one location. As time went by, whether it was further subsidence or just wanting to do a better job, we've developed two pumping locations. So you can a little more accurately control your water level. We've tried to deepen the ditches. We've put in some new ditches. It's like any other business, as you go through time you try and do a better job. Try and have more consistent crops and just a better quality."

Keeping the levees functional has been a big challenge for landowners in the former marsh. Subsidence and sea level rise from climate change are both taking their toll. Just as the financial backing of Senator Jones' huge fortune was essential to the reclamation of the area, maintaining levees over time also requires substantial investment. Newt DalPoggetto described some of the efforts to fund levee maintenance for the Sonoma Creek watershed:

"Congressman Hubert B. Scudder from Sebastopol...made a career out of bringing Corps of Engineers people up to Sonoma Creek. We had a Soil Conservation District Board here, which consisted of Wes Haire, Dewey Donnell, Vic Leveroni, the Maffei brothers, and other farmers who were trying to get federal money to keep their lands from flooding. Scudder would bring in the Corps of Engineers people and try to get federal appropriations. He kept getting reelected around here on his efforts to do that, among other things. Only he never was successful. Finally the Corps of Engineers told him...'Oh cut it out. That's not a navigable waterway, there's nothing there any more, you're not going to get any federal funds. If you farmers don't want to spend the money to build up the levee to protect your lands, then it's your ball first and ten.' And nobody's ever done it. I remember the Bisso brothers complaining bitterly about that, because by that time they were on the scene."

Things turned out differently in the Petaluma Creek River watershed. Speaking of Clem Miller, who succeeded Scudder as Congressman, Poggetto said:

"It was Petaluma Creek, until Clem Miller got it and named it a river. Clem Miller was a very bright guy and a friend of mine. When he got back to Washington, he found out that if you would change the name of a stream to a river, creek to a river, you qualified for the Corps of Engineers' budget. Spending money! So he got Congress to change the name of Petaluma Creek to Petaluma River. They qualified then to dredge it and get federal funding and to build levees. Whereas Sonoma Creek didn't get anything."

The Petaluma River is actually a slough, “but” explained Poggetto, “they had the grain mills over there and the chickens. So they had much more to export and to import. The grain came in on those barges.”

Beyond the direct costs of levee maintenance, Norm Yenni also detailed the regulatory burden now required to do that work:

“Nowadays we have endangered species—I don’t want to harm any endangered species—and there’s the interests of fish, we don’t want to harm the habitat for the fish. In our latest levee maintenance permits I think we have seven or eight different agencies we had to go through. They don’t always agree on what they want to do. Sometimes one has to wait for the other one to say what they want before the first one’ll say what they want. They kind of go back and forth. They ask some pretty onerous requests of us. I was talking with a Fish and Game fellow about some of these requests and he says, ‘You know, we’ve never really had a levee permit request from a guy just doing it for farming. Most of the levee maintenance permit requests we get is from like homeowner’s associations where they’re preserving millions and millions of dollars of homes.’”

Norm and Newt DalPoggetto both noted that in some places the tidal marsh has been restoring itself. Newt said, “I went down to Hudeman Slough a couple weeks ago and it’s only half as wide as it was...You can see where the banks were, the original Jones Ranch banks, which didn’t have tules in them originally ‘cause they dug out those sloughs and built the levees. There was much less tules when I was a kid than there is now.” Likewise, Norm acknowledged “all the Baylands that have been lost to reclamation since the 1880s,” but would like to see that balanced by “a study on how much Bayland has been created from natural causes” such as siltation. He has noticed that the distance from the Highway 37 bridge over Sonoma Creek to the open water of the bay has increased substantially since he was a kid. “The bay is thousands of acres smaller than it was.”

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan:	19-26, 56-57, 111-112
DalPoggetto:	42-45, 58-61, 67, 81-82, 87
Haire:	5-10, 38-48
Jones:	2, 3, 26, 28
Sheffer:	32-34, 70-71, 77
Yenni:	23-27, 97, 138-140

AGRICULTURE

“The thing about that marsh,” said Mike Cullinan, “when you had the right rains, you’d have hay that’s five feet tall. It was just incredible. The production was just amazing.” Successfully farming in the old marsh is all about timing; learning how to work with the conditions and seasonal cycles.

Mike praised the Kisers as being “probably the best farmers in the marsh.” In the fall, they would always wait until there was some rain before they’d start plowing. That way the weeds would be sprouting when they started to work the soil. “They’d always plow and then disc and then plant...Of course it would make it a little tighter in a wet year. But Kisers had the cleanest oat hay around.” Mike said “they were farming close to three thousand acres there. They had to get going when the getting was good. They’d get everything planted...they’d have it all done by January. Usually. Then get some good rains and wait until—probably May is when they started” harvesting.

Most of the year, it was just the family, “the three brothers and Ferd” that did the work. Mike said, “They’d hire guys like me for the summer. And they’d hire people to drive tractor, plowing and disking and all that. Mostly part-time help...Usually by September it’d be done. September is usually the lag time...until those first rains” returned and the yearly cycle started again.

Norm Yenni described a similar schedule followed by his Dad when he started farming Tubbs Island in 1969: “He would start planting sometime between Halloween and Thanksgiving ...I know he used to figure on trying to get through by his birthday, which was in early February.” Norm mentioned that when he started managing the property, he “got into planting little bit later to try and get the better quality hay.”

By late May and June, Norm is usually “really, really busy with hay cutting.” Occasionally cutting goes into July. Once the hay is cut, it needs to dry before it can be baled. “I’ve baled hay in as little as six days,” said Norm. “But down here we have so much moisture come in off the bay and just the cool climate. At night it gets cold, the fog often comes in...It’s a pretty good rule of thumb that you want to figure about two weeks. I’ve had some stuff that’s been out three, three-and-a-half weeks and still isn’t really dry enough to bale. Because it’s just been too damp, too cold.” Most years he’s done baling “in July, maybe the end of July.” Some years, he’s “gone into August with baling hay.”

Assessing the right time for baling hay requires a lot of knowledge and patience. As Norm described it,

“I’ve gotten in a lotta trouble over the years baling hay when my neighbors up the road ...[were baling], they’re just not on the bay...they don’t get quite the moisture I get and they can bale in six days pretty regularly or maybe ten days...If I do that I can get moldy hay.

“I just have to say [to customers], ‘I know you wanna get going. My employees want to work, I want to get the stuff done, I want to make the best product we can. We have the machines ready to go, we have the men ready to go. Don’t. OK. All the neighbors have six-day hay or ten-day hay, they’re ready to go, they’re making nice-looking bales with good color.’”

But “down here in the marsh, if we’re getting cool like that, hold off! ‘Cause the quickest way to ruin your reputation is to get moldy hay. It’s spreads like wildfire. If you got good hay, this guy’ll tell that guy and slowly it’ll spread around. You get moldy hay, everybody knows about it.”

After the fall harvest, “the wintertime would be the slowest part of the year,” said Jim Haire. “That’s when the equipment is moving through the shop.” It’s a time for repairing machinery and getting ready for the next growing season.

Early Agriculture

Before mechanization, Norm estimated that farming his Tubbs Island property required “twenty or thirty people” as well as teams of work horses. Jim Haire said he was told the work crews “ate three big, big meals a day...But in between those were two more big meals. So they ate five times a day. That was how hard they were working... physical labor was much, much greater” than it is today. Likewise, Norm imagines that “a fair amount of the hay they grew here had to go back to the horses. Those horses needed...a lot of energy—so probably a lot of oats too. You can’t get a lot of work out of strictly feeding just forage. Like any other athlete, they need some energy.”

According to Sam Jones, the Jones Ranch had about 200 draft horses up into the late ‘20s and early ‘30s. “In that marshy ground,” he said, “they would have to run six or eight horses across to be able to pull plows through that ground...in boggy ground, two, three, four hours with intermittent rests was all a horse could do.” The Jones Ranch grew mostly hay, but also alfalfa, barley and oats. They also ran cattle and occasionally sheep. The Jones Ranch was so big that it was divided into six camps that ranged in size from less than 2000 to just under 4500 acres. Jim said, “Camp Six...was the biggest of the Camps...It’s right across the slough from Camp One, which was Headquarters...Jones built a bridge across there, so they could go back and forth.” (see Appendix for descriptions and a map of the camps.)

“They had bunkhouses on some, if not all of the camps, where the men would stay,” said Newt. He recalled seeing the workmen being hauled from place to place in flatbed trucks. To feed the men, “they had the cookhouses they’d move from camp to camp,” said Mike Cullinan. He recalled one the Millerick family had that “looked like some old gypsy wagon.” Jim Haire’s grandmother “was the cook down on Skaggs Island for a while,” before he was born.

Teams of horses pulled the equipment needed to plow and disc the soil, and plant the seeds. For harvesting, rather than the equipment being moved to the crop, Jim recalled how the hay was moved to the equipment. Walter Crivelli “had a hay press that was called a ‘Junior Monarch.’ They were called ‘Five Wires’ and they were huge bales. They set up in a place and then the buck rakes brought the stacks of hay to them. Then they would move and do the same thing.” (Jim’s information in the preceding two paragraphs is corroborated by Farm Collector.com 2004.)

Jim pointed out two large buildings on an aerial photo of his Skaggs Island property. One is a warehouse that he built. “The other,” he said, “was built by Jones” and is “about a hundred and six or seven years old. They stored hay in it. All of their hay came off of here in boats...So they would take the materials [hay] from here [warehouse] in a wagon and then...put it on with a ‘stiff leg’ onto the boats.” Newt said, “the Jones Ranch had two or three docks built, piers built out onto the water and they would bring the hay bales.”

As a kid, Newt was fascinated by grain threshers: “They would have a pretty large crew of a dozen or so guys that would run the threshers there for maybe a couple of months in the summertime cutting the hay and threshing it out.” The threshers “chopped up the hay and spewed out the grain. It would come out in sacks on the side and then they would bale the hay, and hay bales would come out the other end.” Mike

Cullinan said “they’d actually have someone sewing the sacks up...all day long sewing hundred-pound sacks of oats.”

Changes

Once agriculture became more mechanized, “a handful of guys could do what a big crew did, said Mike Cullinan, “It was a lot easier.” Jim Haire farms “a little over a thousand acres with myself and two others.”

Jim described how the Holt Tractor Company (now the well-known Caterpillar company) started in Woodland: “They were the ones that came out with...an internal combustion engine in an iron tractor. There’s a story, I can’t tell you if it’s true or not...that they brought a couple of those to demonstrate on Camp Six. Camp Six was the last of the Camps, so...the internal combustion engine was pretty much foolproof. One of them supposedly got stuck and by the time they got enough horses and mules and the other ‘cats’ there to get it, it had sunk.”



As for his personal experience, Jim said, “Farming when I was a kid, the equipment wasn’t as far along technology-wise as it is today, but it was...basically the same thing. You were a dry land farmer, there was no irrigation...The stationary hay presses were gone. You cut the hay and put it in a row rather than in a shock. Then you drove your machine and it picked that row up and put the bale out.”

As a teenager, Jim “drove a small truck that held about ninety bales. It had a chute up the side that as the truck went along... you steered it in so the bale would come into the front of this thing and it elevated it up so you didn’t have to pick it up...you loaded it on the truck one bale at a time. Then you drove it to wherever the stack was going to be...[then you] take it off one bale at a time...then you had to come back and pick that stack up and put it in a barn....You moved it a lot.”

“Bales go through what they call a ‘sweat,’” said Jim. “That’s when spontaneous combustion would occur, if you get them trapped in a barn, when they were still [sweating]...and burn everything down. So then you come back and pick it up...and take it to the barn and put it in one bale at a time...When you did it all day long, be it hot or be it cold, it was a miserable job. “

“Now,” he said, “the harrow bed makes the stack, it’s highway legal as far as the ties go for CHP. The computer does this. You take it to the edge of the field again or wherever you want it. It picks itself up, hydraulically pushes itself away and the stack just stays there. Then you come along with a thing called a ‘squeeze,’ which is like a big forklift but instead of the forks being like so, they’re sideways. They squeeze the bottom bales. They pick the whole thing up and put it on a truck. I loaded a truck yesterday going to Petaluma, to a dairy. Twenty-five minutes, loaded twenty-seven tons.”

“It’s not the business that it was a hundred years ago,” said Norm Yenni. “We have a lot of high tech stuff.” He described how a mechanic plugged his laptop “into a portal on the side of the tractor to diagnose what was wrong with it.” He also talked about using auto-steering systems: “It sounds kind of spooky.” Some of his older drivers say, “‘I can drive a tractor, I don’t need a computer to steer the tractor.’ The thing is, if you’re out there with a forty-foot-wide piece of equipment, if you can hold it at 38 or 39 feet all day, which is what I aim for, your efficiency is pretty good. If you’re steering by hand and you can get to 35 feet all day, you’ve got to keep craning your neck all day long and that gets hard. The best of

operators doing it by hand are not going to get much better than 35-foot accuracy. With the steering mechanism you...just push the button and I can call people up on my cell phone...it makes life so much simpler.”

Norm said even the older drivers eventually realize that “this stuff is pretty good. It increases your efficiency and saves fuel...It’s also more professional. I really like the idea of going out across a field and I can see these lines are perfectly straight. I think that’s just taking pride in workmanship...I don’t have the overlap when I’m seeding so much. And the other thing is, with ag chemicals, lower spraying. Other than the wheel marks of the tractor, the booms sit thirty or forty feet out there, so how do you know where you’ve sprayed? You can’t tell...But this sucker it puts you dead on. So environmentally I think it’s a very good thing.”

Economics

In contrast to the former Jones Ranch and adjacent lands, the Cullinan Ranch was managed for “mixed use.” When his parents first leased the ranch in the early 1950s, they used it to pasture cattle and also to grow hay. After the cattle market crashed in the early 1950s, they leased it to Ferd Kiser and his sons.

“I like telling people,” said Norm, “that there’s a little secret about farmers: We don’t farm just because we like it. We don’t do it just because that’s what we know. We do it to make money. And people say, ‘What do you mean you do it to make money?’ I say, ‘We have to feed our families. If we’re not making money at it, we can’t afford to do it.’ I know it seems very basic, but we have to make money at this deal.”

Economics have played a big part in shifts in land use and ownership in the Baylands. While much cheaper than purchasing upland property, the reclamation of the Baylands was an expensive undertaking. All of the big players in that undertaking, Senator Jones, the Tubbs family, and the Skaggs family, had substantial fortunes to invest.

Newt DalPoggetto described the next big transition: “At the beginning of World War Two, the Sonoma Land Company, which the 12,000-acre Jones Ranch became, was a corporation.” Greg Jones, “the grandson of Senator Jones, was the manager of it.” Greg “lived in Marin when I was a small boy” and “didn’t really move up here until after the war.”

“Greg managed the place, I guess, all of his adult life. So his father before him must have had something to do with it, but I didn’t know him. But they failed, they went broke...He couldn’t make enough money on it from hay. There was no real demand for it and they couldn’t grow anything else. They could grow a little grain, but that was poor land compared to the quality of land up the valley—That was very marginal soil.”

New said one of the economic effects of the Second World War was that the Jones Ranch “sold grain to the army.” He “met an Army captain who was in charge of buying the hay there, and I think grain.” The army needed it to feed their horses: “At that time we still had a little cavalry left!”

That government business is probably what kept the Sonoma Land Company solvent during the war years. But afterwards, as Newt described, it went bankrupt. At that point the 12,000-acre Jones Ranch was split up and sold: “The Maffeis bought Camp One when it came up for sale. Leveronis bought Camp Four and the government bought Skaggs—Camp Six. Ig Vella’s father owned a piece of ground down there,

probably on Camp Two along with Ben Behler and Rico Gallo; they owned a part of Camp Two...Wes Haire's father[Jim's grandfather] bought the east side of Skagg's Island."

The current shift in ownership of the Baylands has been underway for at least 25 years. Several of the families who bought pieces of the Jones Ranch when it was split up, have recently sold their large properties. Most of these sales have been to conservation organizations and agencies. Cullinan Ranch was acquired early on in this transition; in 1991 by the National Fish & Wildlife Service. Haire Ranch is a recent acquisition, purchased in 2013 by the Sonoma Land Trust.

Tubbs Island, a detailed account

So far, Norm Yenni has resisted this trend and managed to navigate an ever-changing market. Norm described how his family came to farm Tubbs Island: "When I was born, my parents had a small dairy" that was "not making much money...In 1969 my Dad had the opportunity to partner with two other fellows to come down here and farm on Tubbs Island. Dad was scared to death of it. He'd never farmed this many acres. Not that he didn't think he could do it, it was just such a drastic change. He'd have to get rid of his cows—and he loved his cows—and go to full time farming."

So Norm's dad "partnered with two other fellows. One that owned a feed mill and the other was an investor in a bunch of agricultural endeavors. With the money man, the sales/marketing man and the farmer, that being my dad, that's how they put the partnership together and it worked out pretty well for some time. Over time, the other two fellows went by the wayside and my Dad ended up with the entire business."

But times are different now. Norm said that making a living off agriculture alone is "not quite reality anymore." It requires finding supplemental sources of income. For Norm's operation, these include leasing out the sites for two cell towers and taking in bio-solids from the cities of Santa Rosa and Vallejo; "It's fertilizer coming in that fashion. That's a tremendous advantage." He said some ranchers generate income from farm worker housing or renting "space for somebody to park their trucks. It seems like nowadays that's what you have to do to really make the deal out here."

Norm believes, "the use of bio-solids on the land is becoming more accepted...It's taking what is otherwise a waste and making a beneficial use of it. Along with the bio-solids, they put lime on, which makes the soil such that it can use the nutrients. That, in time, develops the land into something which can grow some alternate crops, some higher value crops potentially. So that's good. There is a real stigma in the agricultural community, as well as the public, about using poop...So you have to make sure you represent it appropriately. I know that the people I'm dealing with, whether it's Vallejo Sanitation or the City of Santa Rosa, do everything by the book...I have looked through the regulations and we are so far in the safe zone—we're multiple multiples of where we need to be as far as toxicity. So I think that's an important thing we can provide for the future."

Another way Norm has kept going is through diversification: "Some years the market is better for the grains. That being the wheat and the barley. Other years it's better for the hay. Right now, you're happy to be in the hay business. I am not making near as much money on the grain. But that can change in a heartbeat. That's the nature of farming. So I always keep things diversified." Norm has tried garbanzo beans and safflower, and has heard that kidney beans have been tried. It's been suggested that tomatoes and sugar beets could be grown in the marsh. Norm is willing to try some experimental crops, but realizes he would need some advice on how to grow and market them.

In Norm's experience, "this ground seems suited to small grains." He's been "experimenting with some new University of California varieties of oats. The oats that we've been using out here, somebody told me they were developed during World War Two. They've been serving us quite well. I believe all the other farmers around here are using that era of oats. These UC oats were invented in the 2000s...they're very high-priced oats. But looking down the road, maybe somebody better take this silver bullet, if it's out there, better take it and run with it. So that's what I'm looking at. But with real expensive seed I'm only taking so many silver bullets!"

Jim mentioned how "the market for rye grass has been hot the last few years. It's been highly desired." This is due to the rapid growth of the equine industry: "since it doesn't have the nutrient value of the oat hay or any of the other grain hays, it was not nearly as desired when it was predominately going to cows. But for horses, they want something, number one, that they will eat, number two, that doesn't get them too fat. Course if you're raising cows you want to put some weight on them. Because that's the thing, put the energy in the cow where you're going to get milk out of them or get meat out of them. It's a business deal. Whereas the horses, a lot of horses just stand around. So you have to cater to the market, where you're playing to."

"Cows are ruminants. They aren't as affected by moldy hay. It isn't good for them. But they aren't going to roll over in colic and die like a horse. When I'm catering to the horse market, it's gotta be that better stuff. So quality is a big deal. That's why we plant later in the spring, that's why all this deal has to come together. It's kind of what we had to evolve into to keep the business alive." He also said that, "organic is something which has, probably, a lot of potential for the area."

"Summing up his experience in agriculture, Norm said, "I don't go to Reno and gamble. When the gambling in farming pays off well, it feels very, very good. When it doesn't, it hurts a lot. It's the lifestyle that I've had. I guess you could say that fulfillment for me, the enjoyable part, is satisfied customers. I like the idea of being out here. I like working by myself. I'm kind of addicted to all this wonderful machinery I have out here. Farming twenty-three hundred acres and four, five, six employees depending on the time of year. I really like to drive a tractor. I don't like to be the boss, I don't like to make out bills. I like to drive the tractors."

The Future

Climate change is another force shaping the future of the marsh. Jim Haire noted the impact that the drought has had on his operation. Norm detailed how higher temperatures and humidity are now preventing him from baling hay at night, which was standard practice a few decades ago (details in Section 12).

Jim Haire talked of recently planting his last hay crop on Skaggs Island: "So now I'm just grapes. That's all I'll have planted after this year." Paul Sheffer predicts "the Baylands are all going to be underwater eventually." As Mike Cullinan said, "Once they start breaching the levees, then you'll just have tidelands...the farming is going to die out, which it is now anyway. It'll just turn into mitigation ground, which would turn it back into marshland...It'll be a huge, massive habitat area. I don't think that's a bad thing."

Norm recognizes that "the other big potential future here for the marsh is restoration for habitat for endangered species or just wildlife. As a farmer I've been really resisting that, mainly on the idea that I don't want to be forced off the property. If I can go out in my own time and my own style that's one thing,

but I don't like being thrown off the land that's been here for a hundred-and-some years...If you want to take it away from us or buy it from us, do it on a fair market basis. Don't regulate us off the property. Make me a reasonable deal or show me how to do something else. I want to continue farming, but I can't be stupid about things."

"The amount of farming that was done, in the whole scheme of things," said Mike, "will probably end up being a short period in its total history." "I'll be sad to see the ranchers leave," said Paul Sheffer, "but I'm afraid that's inevitable. I was glad I had the chance to get down here and work with them and be here when it was here."

Looking to his own future, Norm still sees possibilities: "the Black Point Pheasant Club has expressed interest in buying my property. If they do, they'd let me stay on as the resident farmer. Some of their hunting takes place in agricultural fields. So that idea really appeals to me...My son is not interested in being a farmer...So what's going to happen to the farm when I pass away?...Is the government going to gobble it up and flood it out? Are they going to buy it at a fire sale because my wife needs it for medical costs or something? So the whole concept of selling it to a business that wants to keep it in agriculture, that's become pretty desirable. And if they want to hire me back to maintain it, that'd be pretty cool."

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan:	5-7, 35-44
DalPoggetto:	43-56, 91
Haire:	9-16, 39, 64-71, 76, 110
Jones:	2, 3, 14, 16, 26-30, 37, 38
Sheffer:	55
Yenni:	17, 18, 27-34, 59-70, 73-83, 132, 135-137, 140-146

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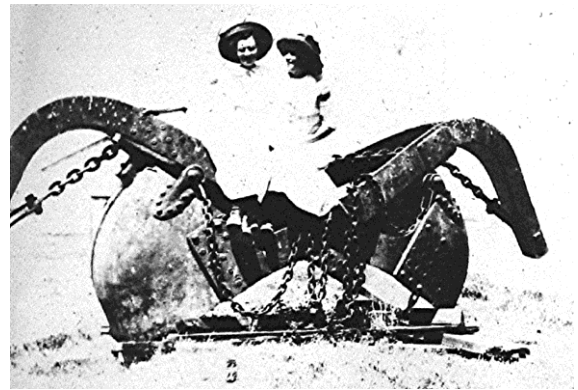
THE HUMAN COMMUNITY

“There weren’t many people down there,” said New DalPoggetto. “It’s a big blank.” Even in Wingo, “there wasn’t really anybody who lived down there permanently except the bridge tender.” Of the 10,400-acre Jones Ranch, which took up most of the former tidal area of Sonoma Valley, he said, “nobody lived there, even the Joneses lived in San Rafael until after the war...they were sort of an absentee ownership.”

“I never got a sense of any real community,” observed Mike Cullinan. “There were only a handful of people” and those folks were spread out on large tracts of land. “You look at Kisers—they farmed two ranches...and there were only four of them.” In addition, the Marsh was not a great place to live—“you’ve got that constant wind, you’ve got mosquitoes, you’ve got crappy water.” Like many who made their living from the reclaimed marsh, the Kisers lived elsewhere, commuting down from Sonoma to work their property.

As Newt mentioned, Sam Jones’ grandparents, Gregory and Harriet, lived in San Rafael for many years while Greg managed the 10,000-acre Jones Ranch. “My grandfather came into the picture in about 1921 or 22” said Sam, to help his uncle, the elder Sam Jones, who “was pretty old at that time and I think...not in the best of health.” The Joneses “tended to call on other family members to step in and help” when it was needed. In fact he remarked that the initial “enthusiasm for project was largely due to Sam Jones.” Sam “was the one that said, “Hey, we can run some horses there, some cattle, some sheep and begin a farming operation, reclaim the land and do something with it until we can develop it.” The Kisers, Yennis, Haires, and even the Bissos also seem to have relied on a strong sense of family solidarity to make a living from the reclaimed marsh. The four Kiser brothers and their dad all worked together; Norm Yenni and Jim Haire both worked the land with their fathers; and the Bissos were a team of two brothers.

As Jim Haire described it, his parents didn’t socialize a lot outside the family, but there were connections: “The places were large enough that you were kind of on to yourself. Not that there weren’t friends. Like my mom and dad would have a Christmas party usually every year. Thanksgiving and that type [of holiday] was just family. We were together then.” He mentioned that a lot of farmers still congregate in the morning at the coffee shop by the Schellville Fire House and added that place was originally built for the crews from the hay presses.



Young women sitting on a dredge scoop
c. 1900

Norm Yenni did express a sense of shared interests and expertise among those who worked in the Marsh, even if they didn’t see each other socially: “I’m very confident that if I need some help with something... much as I can I would help Kisers or Jim Haire and those guys would help me...I have a couple other fellows that I more socially work with, but we have similar concerns, similar issues. We work together on some of the land use issues...So there is a real strong sense of community there.” He said he’s learned “a lot about farming practices” from his neighbors. “I say rather than look over the fence, look over the levee. That’s where I get my best information about what new farming practices are going on. Just look over the levee.”

Little knots of people formed here and there for various periods of time, either to work or play in the Marsh. “When we came here in 1969,” said Norm describing Tubbs Island Ranch, “there was a bunkhouse [and] there was the main house where probably the caretaker lived, the ranch foreman...they probably had twenty or thirty people here.” Newt DalPoggetto described a similar situation at the six ‘Camps’ on the Jones Ranch: “The men would stay and work the ranch. They would plow and disc and plant seeds and eventually harvest the crop.” Sam Jones remembered “a gentleman by the name of Axel Christiansen that worked for my grandfather for years, [who] lived in the bunkhouse out on Camp 1.”

It required the efforts of a number of people to support those crews. Sam Jones’ grandmother would get “up at five in the morning and make box lunches for us. I’d never seen so much food. But when you’re working twelve hours a day bucking hay, you’re burning some calories. Jim Haire’s grandmother was a cook on Skagg’s Island—the cookhouse she worked in was later moved to the Fillippini Ranch and converted to a house. Other cookhouses were mobile. Keeping the camps supplied required the efforts of various railroad and boat crews; these also carried the agricultural products, like hay and grain, to market. Milt Castagnasso (interviewed in 2001 for the Sonoma Creek Oral History Project) remembered being employed to haul fuel to Skaggs Island in the mid-1930s.

Groups of people also congregated for recreation at hunting clubs. Mike Cullinan thought they had their heyday from the 1920s through the 1950s. Next to his family’s ranch was the “‘Can Duck Club’ . . . They had a big lodge with bedrooms and this big Great Room with a fireplace and a kitchen. They had a little inlet where you could park power boats that would come up through the Bay and then up Dutchman Slough. That must have been developed in the ‘twenties and ‘thirties . . . It was private.” There were even “a couple graves there.” By the 1960s there was an access road and people could drive in.

While there was not much overall sense of community in the marsh, Mike remarked that “there were little settlements all over.” He described one as being “three cabins” near his family’s ranch. On Tolay Creek south of the highway, he remembered “an old time convenience store. They sold bait and beer and soda and everything. There were people living there, they had houses.” Sam Jones remembered what may have been the same place: “There used to be a little Flying A gas station right across from Sears Point. It’s just a wide spot in the road now...but there was a café there when I was a kid, and a two pump gas station...it was gone by about 1960, ‘61 maybe.”

It’s not that connections between the people who work, live and play in the Marsh didn’t exist, but the area is so large that there is little or no casual interaction between them like you’d find in a small town. People rarely see each other by chance; there has to be a reason for them to come together. Within the Marsh, people associated mainly with their relatively small and immediate circles of co-workers and family.

Settlements & Institutions

Wingo

Newt DalPoggetto recalled Wingo in the 1930s: “There were shacks there and there were people fishing there. Some people that worked on the Jones Ranch lived there. There may have been a few people that worked on the NWP Railroad, maybe...We had a fellow here who was born and reared there, who died a few years ago. He lived all of his life in Wingo. On his car he had a vanity license plate that said, ‘Wingo’ on it. Nobody knew where that was.” Newt thought his father had been the bridge tender at Wingo. Mike Cullinan recalled how in the 1950s and ‘60s, “Wingo was a thriving community...There were a lot of

houses...they were just little fishing cabins.” It was “into the ‘seventies when it started that decline” and eventually “there wasn’t much left.”

Skaggs Island & Guadalcanal Village

Norm Yenni and Mike Cullinan recalled the community which existed on Skaggs Island to serve the military community there. Mike, who visited a few times, described it as a “miniature little town.” Norm never visited, but he did go to school with “a bunch of kids from Skaggs Island. They told him they had their own bowling alley, swimming pool, movie theater, gas station and general store. It was “a little town of sixty or eighty homes. Some of the homes, especially the commander’s and the like, were very nice homes. The enlisted men had more basic, utilitarian homes. But they were all functional...They had a livable life out there.” Mike described it as “pretty self-sufficient,” adding that “of course that was during the Cold War.”

Norm described Skaggs as “top security...Both entrances had a guard sitting there twenty-four hours a day. When you came on the property or off the property you’d have to get checked in. They would deny entry to people that weren’t supposed to be there.” Mike was able to get in because he knew Jim Millerick, who had retired from the military. Jim was able to get a pass to go on the base; he invited Mike to join him a few times.

While the purpose of the facility at Skaggs was secret, Norm said, “It’s pretty well known now that that was a listening post for the communications going back and forth between China and Russia and whatever else. The Middle East or Asia or wherever else.” He said that “when they took the place apart, there was some pretty remarkable stuff. Building 21, which is the huge white [one]...had walls like eighteen inches or two foot thick.” He guessed it was built “just prior to World War Two.”

Further east, in Napa County, was the Mare Island Naval Shipyard and Guadalcanal Village, which also housed military personnel and their families. “During the war, and after the war,” said Mike Cullinan, “there were thousands of people living there.”

Bissoville

Another community of sorts was Bissoville, named after the Bisso brothers who owned it. As Newt DalPoggetto described it: “they filled in Sonoma Creek. They took some old barges and stuff and built houses on it. That was Bissoville. No permits, no nothing, no sewer... [straight] into the creek! That was Bissoville. You might call it an extension of Wingo.” Norton Buffalo, who later became famous as a harmonica player, lived at Bissoville for a while.

Tule Vista School

Jim Haire described going to the one-room Tule Vista School: “My first grade teacher was a lady by the name of Mrs. Umbel. That’s the only one I remember. She was one teacher and eight grades.” He said there were about three students in each grade, so there might have been twenty-five students in the whole school. There were two other students in Jim’s graduating class, Ellen Flood and Larry Mazzanata. Larry’s family had a dairy. They were the last class to graduate from Tule Vista. Jim went to high school in Sonoma

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan:	2, 5-7, 27, 28, 35-37, 69-72, 86, 87, 96-98, 113-122
DalPoggetto:	52-54, 65-67, 84, 85, 96, 97, 112-122
Haire:	13, 28-31, 51, 52, 57-61, 73-76, 93, 126, 127
Jones:	14, 28, 29, 32, 48
Yenni:	11-14, 59, 60, 69, 104-109

INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

The Baylands attracted a diverse mix of individuals, from loners like Richard Janson, to wealthy investors and land-owners, to hard-working ranchers. The comments below provide varying degrees of detail and context for some of the people associated with the Baylands.

Large Landowners & Investors

Senator John Percy Jones

According to his great-great grandson, Sam, John Percy Jones “was born on the Wye River and he was fifth of thirteen children.” The family emigrated “in the 1840s from Wales to Cleveland, Ohio...” Sam described his ancestor as having “a real interest in machinery.” In 1850, John and his brother Henry embarked on the *Eureka* on a 9-month voyage around the Horn to San Francisco.



Senator John Percy Jones

When they arrived in California, “they worked the mines in the Marysville area, the Yuba River, and didn’t have much success there....[so] they moved up to Trinity County.” John “was elected Sheriff of Trinity and Shasta Counties...Then he ran for the state legislature and served a term or two in the state legislature. He ran for Lieutenant Governor for the state on a losing ticket. Then he moved to Nevada.”

Sam said that “The real money was made in mining, largely in the 1860 – 1874 time frame, and then again for a brief time around 1890. Most of this was gold and silver on the Comstock.” Jones “and Alvinza Hayward, of Hayward, California fame, ended up buying the Crown Point Mine. Hayward got out of it and Jones ended up owning the Crown Point Mine, which “produced about \$29 million dollars” over the years.

In 1869, the Crown Point was part of the Yellow Jacket Mine fire,” considered to be one of the worst mining disasters in Nevada history. Dozens of miners died. Sam said, “the fire blew through several properties and the Crown Point was the hardest hit...Jones went into the mine himself and saved some people. He became quite a popular figure, both for his prowess in the money he made, but also because he was one of the working people. He ran for the United States Senate and won and served...a total of thirty years in the Senate.”

Sam said that “not only was the Senator involved in a lot of businesses, but that most were very capital intensive.” There were investments in “railroads, building the wharf at Santa Monica,” agriculture, ice machines and oil drilling. He also “got in a rate war with the Big Four over whether Santa Monica or Long Beach should be the Port of Los Angeles; Long Beach prevailed.”

The Senator “acquired a 75% interest from the Bandera family,” the original Mexican landowners, and “laid out the City [of Santa Monica], donating large tracts of land for the railroad, the Veteran’s Home at Sawtelle, school sites and church sites.” He built a sixteen-bedroom home there for his mother and extended family to stay at.” Jones lived in Washington D.C. during much of his thirty-year senate tenure.

Sam described Senator Jones as “very benevolent. He came by the money through hard work and a lot of luck, and maybe some political maneuvering, but he was very generous. There were never less than sixteen to twenty people living in that house. The Senator was writing the checks for the whole thing.”

The family holding company was called the Ramina Corporation, which included “thirty different entities...from wholly-owned businesses to simply partial investment.” Sam Jones said the “ranch in Schellville was wholly owned until my grandfather [Gregory Jones] took in a partner in the late 1930s, M.B. Skaggs, the founder of Safeway. The Ranch was Sonoma Land [Company] and the business of growing primarily grain crops was called Producers Hay Company.”

According to Jim Haire, Jones, “used the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act...Before he did this he was in the Delta on Upper and Lower Jones Tract and Empire Tract. The Empire Tract was named after the dredging company. Part of what you had to have to be able to utilize the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act was a legitimate dredging company. Either a hired one or in his case, one that he created. He was there first and then he came back down here...Up there they’re called Tracts, I don’t know the reasoning. Down here they’re called Camps.”

Sam Jones said the Jones Ranch “was reclaimed in large measure by dredging and building levees that often needed repair. There were three dredgers working almost around the clock. On top of that, farming, as it became more mechanized, required large amounts of capital. They did run some sheep and cattle to supplement the crops, but mostly for their own labor crews’ food.” Senator Jones’ brother Sam (see below) managed the Jones Ranch for many years. Later he turned it over to Gregory Jones (see below). John Percy Jones passed away in 1912 .

Sam Jones*

Sam Jones was one of Senator John Percy Jones’ twelve siblings. Like his brother, he emigrated to the U.S. as a young man. He was described as “the younger brother who dedicated himself to helping his brother. He never married.” Sam helped John run their Nevada mining enterprises. After John was elected Senator, Sam oversaw many of his investments while John was in Washington D.C. from 1872 to 1902. Sam eventually turned over the mining operations to a nephew and moved to the Bay area, where he “was developing lots in San Francisco.” “The enthusiasm for project was largely due to Sam Jones.” He scouted out the area and convinced John that “we can run some horses there, some cattle, some sheep and begin a farming operation, reclaim the land and do something with it until we can develop it.” They bought the Jones Ranch “in 1878-1880 with the long-term goal of developing it. They never got around to doing that. Farming was a way to produce something on the land in the interim. The first use of the reclaimed land was a horse ranch” and “in 1891 the first crop was planted.”

Around the same time, Sam briefly returned to Nevada. “A lot of the investors had lost interest” in the mine “and moved on to something else.” But “Sam went back and was able to extract another \$5 million worth of ore in about 1890 with the help of Harry Gorham,” his nephew. Senator Jones died in 1912, but Sam lived until 1926. Gregory Jones, Sam’s grandnephew, came to help manage the Jones Ranch “about 1921-22. Sam was pretty old at that time and...not in the best of health.” This followed a common pattern in the Jones family of stepping in when called to help other family members with running their many business enterprises.

*Great-great granduncle of the Sam Jones interviewed for this project. All quotes in this section are from the younger Sam Jones; to avoid confusion, he is not cited in the body of the text.

Gregory & Harriet Jones

As described by his grandson, Sam Jones, Gregory Jones was a “very quiet, very well educated man...he was methodical in some respects, very detail oriented, almost painstaking in the way he went about things. But he loved the out-of-doors; he was a very good athlete.” He grew up in Santa Monica “with a lot of money” from the family fortune. Gregory “went away to Exeter at 13 and then to Harvard after that. His grandfather was in Washington DC, his father was busy trying to take care of family things, and so for him, he kind of grew up by himself.” He was “a first lieutenant, later a captain in the First World War, stationed in France. He was in charge of getting troops to the front.” Returning home, he tried selling cars for a while, then bought a pear ranch near Tehachapi. When that didn’t work out, Greg moved north, eventually taking over management of the vast Jones Ranch from his uncle Sam. In contrast to his early years, in Greg’s later life, “he had to really, really work for it. He was kind of saddled with the business that he got into.”

Sam said his grandfather wasn’t really “a hard-core business guy...If he hadn’t farmed, I think he would have been a college professor. He knew Latin inside and out, read some Greek. He would have been a history professor. But the family just had all these things to deal with and rather than just let them go, people made an attempt to salvage them or make them work.”

“I knew,” Sam said, “even as a kid, talking with him and riding in the hay trucks with him, it was poor land to begin with. He inherited the property, but he inherited it with all the debts. He lived by the barometer every morning. He would go outside and look about for rain. About every fourth or fifth year the levees would break and salt water would get into the crop and then he couldn’t sell the crop. It was enough to get by but it was never super successful. I’ve read some of his old ledgers. During the war, my grandmother was keeping the books. There was one year when he said, “My income this year was \$600 and I don’t have the money to pay Harriet anything.” In reading through those ledgers, the largest bill was to Marsh McClennan for his insurance. And that was about \$1200 a year. It’s funny looking back on those things, looking at a \$2 donation to the Boys Club. Those were real dollars when you made \$600 in a year. During the war, Harriet had also worked as the cook at Camp 1.

Newt DalPoggetto was a kid when he first met Gregory. He remembered how “Greg Jones didn’t have a gate there then, so you could go right through [onto the Jones Ranch]...We would go fish in the little canal there...Greg would come patrolling by and say, ‘This is private property. You can’t fish here.’ Of course he knew my father and he wouldn’t kick him out as readily as he’d kick us out. So I met him actually through my father when I was probably seven or eight years old, fishing down there. Greg would come by. He was a nice gentlemanly guy and told us that this was private property and he didn’t want people down there. Which was normal.”

Newt said Greg and Harriet moved up to Sonoma after World War Two. They bought and restored an old adobe at 143 West Spain Street (currently the tasting room and offices of Three Sticks Winery). Sam said his grandmother, Harriet, “spearheaded that effort. She did all the research and tried to make the thing as authentic as she possibly could. She did a heck of a job.” He described her as “a very, very outgoing, dynamic woman who had lots of friends.” Both Greg and Harriet were very generous with their time: “In addition to [donating to] the Boys Club and Hanna Boys Center,” said Sam, “both my grandparents were on the Sonoma County Grand Jury. They were just good people and very committed to the City of Sonoma and to Schellville.” Gregory passed away in 1978 at the age of 82. Harriet, continued to live in the adobe for many more years before passing away at the age of 99.

Skaggs Family

Jim addressed the confusion about which Skaggs the island is named for: “All the paperwork says ‘M.B. Skaggs’ and ‘E.I. Skaggs.’ Then there’s mention of an ‘O.P. Skaggs’ which was M.B.’s brother. These two competed in business with the small stores. ‘O.P.’ was his brother; they both did the same thing but they were competitors with each other.”

Whichever Skaggs it was, “Safeway was one of his startups. He would be a venture capitalist of today. Other than putting money into something, he also put himself in control of it, on boards.” Jim also mentioned that Skaggs Drugs was the forerunner of Payless.

“Skaggs, when the government took three-quarters of the island away from him, filed suit on them...They [still] have three-quarters of the island and I could keep them from doing anything with it, through that court judgment that Skaggs got. Skaggs is the one that did it, we didn’t.”

Tubbs Family

Speaking of the history of his ranch, Norm Yenni said he heard “that this was reclaimed by the Tubbs family about 1885, 1890, somewhere along in there. That is the Tubbs family which has since gotten out of the drayage business and gone into cordage. In fact if you buy rope you’ll see ‘Tubbs Rope.’ I believe that’s the same family.”

Ranching Families

A number of ranchers and ranching families have been involved with the Baylands over the years. Besides the Cullinans, Haires and Yennis, there was Fred Dickson, who sold his property to the Sonoma Land Trust in 2004; Rich and Bill Kiser and their late father Ferd; Bob Leveroni and his late father Vic; the Meyer and Millerick families; and Jim, Jack and Bill Bisso .

Other Individuals

Mr. Farrell

Besides the Wingo bridge tender whose son had the ‘Wingo’ license plate, Newt DalPoggetto also remembered a family connected with the bridge over Sonoma Creek where Highway 37 now is: “About 1930...my father took me down to the mouth of Sonoma Creek to go fishing. There was a new road that we could get out there to Sonoma Creek. That was a private road and good old Mr. Farrell...was the toll taker on the Sonoma Creek bridge, because it was a toll road. Private road and eventually, maybe by the late ‘30s or 1940, the state of California bought it. It was a narrow, two-lane highway over the mud flats.”

Richard ‘Dirty Dick’ Janson

“‘Dirty Dick’ was a retired merchant seaman, bachelor,” remembered Newt DalPoggetto. “He lived about a half-mile up from the bridge, on the west side [of Sonoma Creek]. And he had a little ‘ark’...he floated the ‘ark’ into the tules in the mud and settled there. To get to his place you had to “walk out on his redwood-plank walkway maybe 150 yards or so...he had his little wharf out there where he would fish day and night. Just leave the line out and he’d catch fish. He lived very modestly.

“He had a little [hand-cranked] phonograph that he would play. And with this little hatchet—he had a little workbench outside and he made decoys. He sold them for fifty cents apiece...He had a little dock outside and he had two or three rowboats that he’d rent out for fifty cents a day. I would go up with my fifty cents and get the boat. I remember Dale Farrell [toll-taker’s son] came with us once and he said,

'Jesus Christ! Who the hell is this guy? How can a guy live here?' He was really, really pretty crusty. I don't think he ever had a bath. And he had a beard and a cap.

"He made these decoys as a pastime. He was very skillful on the decoys. He made them out of redwood... He has a lot of fame in duck circles now. He was a real craftsman. He didn't have much to say but he was steady. He lived there for years. I think he lived there through the World War Two years and maybe a year or two thereafter. I lost track of him because I wasn't here. When I came back [to Sonoma] he was gone."

Walt Crivelli

Jim Haire remembered Walt Crivelli and his brother, Till. They had a dairy where Duhig Road come out on Highway 12/121. Walt "had the hay press. So he did work, not every year for my father, 'cause sometimes he was booked and they would get the Kiser press to come in and do it."

Axel Christiansen, Walter Hildebrand & others at the Jones Ranch

"Joe Keechler was the overall foreman" of the Jones Ranch, said Sam Jones. "The labor down there, when I was a kid and earlier, were a lot of northern Europeans, Swedes and Danes. A lot of them were single. All the way back to my grandfather's tenure." He recalled two men in particular. One was "a gentleman by the name of Axel Christiansen that worked for my grandfather for years." He "lived in the bunkhouse out on Camp 1. In later years my grandparents took care of him. He lived upstairs in the El Dorado Hotel when it was still kind of a boarding house." The other was Walter Hildebrand, whose nickname was, 'Missouri'. Gregory Jones also covered his board at the El Dorado in the last years of his life. Sam said, "'Missouri' was a heck of a teamster. He was one of the head guys driving the teams. I'm sure Axel was a teamster as well. He was one of the holdovers towards the end because he was still working for my grandfather until he couldn't do it anymore."

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan:	31, 87, 88, 96
DalPoggetto:	41-48, 89, 90, 92-104, 116-119
Haire:	6-9, 15, 16, 27, 28, 36-38, 95, 112, 127, 128, 131, 132, 135
Jones:	1-3, 8-14, 16, 19, 20-25, 28, 30-38, 41, 45-52, 60, 61
Sheffer:	74-76
Yenni:	22, 51, 52

TRANSPORTATION

Few people have ever lived in the Marsh, but many people have passed through it. The very first form of transportation in the Baylands, going back to native times, were tule boats. Watercraft continued to provide the main way to access the area through the 19th and early 20th century. Speaking of the early days of agriculture there, Newt DalPoggetto said, “On the sloughs, the Jones Ranch had two or three docks built, piers built out onto the water and they would bring the hay bales and barges would come up and they’d barge it away.” From there, Sam Jones said, they would “barge the hay down Tolay Creek and Sonoma Creek across the bay and unload it” at “a warehouse down on Third Street in San Francisco, right about where the ballpark is. “As Mike Cullinan observed, “they didn’t have the trucks or the road infrastructure to handle it” in those days.

Over on the Petaluma River, Newt recalled how when he was a kid (c. 1930) every day “an egg boat would go down from Petaluma, loaded with eggs to San Francisco. A shallow-draft boat that was full of eggs. Then they would turn around and they’d bring up hay and grain feeds for the mills in Petaluma. That was a very busy trade at the time. I remember as a kid seeing the egg boat quite frequently going down to San Rafael.”



Hay Barge being loaded on Sonoma Creek,
c. 1900.

Speaking of the seamanship required to navigate hay barges across the bay, Norm said, “I think those people probably knew the tides...and worked with them much better than anybody does now.” A mistake could send them out into the Pacific Ocean. “But...those old boys were pretty darn sharp. When the tide’s going out, they could get out there. And then the incoming tide would push them right back around to the Ferry Building.”

Shipping by water on Sonoma Creek was pretty much finished by the late 1920s. As Newt, who was born in 1922, recounted, “By the time I became aware, everything went out by railroad. Trucks were not much yet...the railroad was the main method of shipping.” Several railroads served the area: “Ignacio was a pretty good-sized railroad yard and of course Napa Junction over on the other side. Schellville was kind of the middle ground because at Schellville was where the NWP [Northwestern Pacific] and its predecessors came from Sausalito up. And SP [Southern Pacific] came over from Napa and went up to Santa Rosa. NWP and SP, both of them met at Ignacio. Then there was the old Santa Rosa-Petaluma Railroad.”

Newt’s mother used to take him to Schellville to watch railroad cars being switched. At that time, steam locomotives were still in use. “I was just fascinated by it...I could watch the trains in Schellville all afternoon,” he said. “It was fairly active down there.” While the railroads served the Baylands, they were built along its periphery. Other products besides hay and grain were also shipped out by rail. Jim Haire described how “Along Ramal Road there was a stop for the train. There was a dairy on Camp Four...and there was a railcar that was...set to the side of the track and the train would put water in there. That was their water for the dairy...And there was a siding there, they would also pick the milk up every morning.”

Roads are the most recent addition to the transportation network in the Baylands. Like the railways, they were initially on the periphery; USGS maps from 1899 and 1916 show virtually no roads within the

historical extent of the marsh. One gets the impression that it was just too big to span. By 1930, it was possible to drive the precursor of Highway 37 across the Baylands. Norm Yenni heard that originally “it was seasonal. You could drive through in the summertime but not in the wintertime. And then somebody developed it into a toll road.”

Newt recalled that around 1930, “my father took me down to the mouth of Sonoma Creek to go fishing. There was a new road that we could get out there to Sonoma Creek. That was a private road and good old Mr. Farrell, Dale Farrell’s father, was the toll taker on the Sonoma Creek bridge, because it was a toll road...eventually, maybe by the late ‘30s or 1940, the state of California bought it. It was a narrow, two-lane highway over the mud flats...it was dangerous even then. People would have a lot of head-on collisions. They had no place to go. It was kind of a dangerous road to travel. It still is.”

Of course, when roads and railroads cross navigable water, drawbridges are needed. The bridge across Sonoma Creek on what is now Highway 37 was originally a drawbridge. Norm Yenni recalled seeing the remnants of that bridge in 1969 when his father bought their Tubbs Island property. On his family’s ranch, Mike Cullinan remembered “an old drawbridge—it’s gone now--that was right near the headquarters where you went in. It was a little wooden drawbridge that they could raise up. It was in pretty bad shape when we were kids. They hadn’t used it for years.” That drawbridge crossed Dutchman Slough.

Railroads were an efficient way to ship out hay and grain from the Baylands and they remained the dominant mode of commercial transport for a long time. Eventually, as Newt said, “trucks started to take over” and by the ‘50s “they took all the business away from the railroads.” By that time, the old toll road from Sears Point to Vallejo had become a full-fledged state highway. “Even back then,” according to Mike Cullinan, “there were a ton of cars going back and forth on it.”

Looking to the future, “Highway 37 is going to be in trouble,” said Paul Sheffer. “You take out the levees, it may help the flooding in Sonoma but...you have a high high tide with the wind blowing this way and the storm coming down that way—there just isn’t enough room. You’re going to have flooding and that’s it.” Norm described how along the edge of his property on Tubbs Island, “Highway 37 is the levee...right now the weakest part of my entire levee system, on the ten miles of levee, is Highway 37. That’s the first place the water will come over the top of the levee. Because Highway 37 is the levee.” According to Paul, Highway 37 floods “every two years. That’s the way it is.”

A few years ago, Norm spent many months on the Highway 37 Study Committee, examining four proposals:

“First proposal, which I thought made some amount of sense, was we’ll widen it to four lanes, build it up higher, and go all the way to Vallejo, from Sears Point to Vallejo, with four lanes...Just a raised roadway. Just fill it in. Millions of tons of material for that.”

The second proposal was to put in a causeway like “the Yolo causeway. Put it up on stilts, at least part of it up on stilts. Because that way it would be better for the tidal action to get through. You could restore the marshes on the other side. That made a lot of sense too.”

The third proposal was to “just abandon Highway 37, move all the traffic onto 580 down at Richmond or Highway 12 over here in Schellville. If you’ve seen what Highway 37 looks like Friday afternoons, you will know why that can’t hardly work. Because Highway 37 at two lanes is already

plugged up. Highway 12 is already plugged up. 580 is probably not far behind it.” Norm was skeptical that this idea could work.

“The fourth idea was let’s just not disturb the environment at all, at least on the surface, let’s put a tunnel from Vallejo to Novato. Under the bay. Who’s going to fund that, how it that going to work? What’s the safety implications of a tunnel like that?”

At the very last meeting the participants were told that it would “probably be twenty years before we decide on a project and then we’ll get started with the implementation after that.”

Norm also mentioned the suitability of the area for airports; “If you look at where all the good airports are, the planes come in over water so that if a plane crashes you don’t kill that many people...One of the best spots in the north bay for an airport was over there at Hamilton, but Marin County did not want it. I thought that was the waste of a great asset. In the event of a major disaster like an earthquake that knocks out the Golden Gate Bridge, the Richmond Bridge, we have no major airport up here for getting relief supplies in. That’s politics for you. I don’t know if I’d want to see it here, but I could see it being a reasonable use.”

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan: 39, 40, 76, 107-109
DalPoggetto: 43, 56, 57, 61-67, 81-84, 106-109, 112, 122
Haire: 16, 50, 126
Jones: 16, 17
Sheffer: 32, 35, 36, 78-83, 90, 93-95, 125, 128, 146, 147
Yenni: 39-50, 85-93, 98, 121, 136, 137

RECREATION

Hunting

"I grew up at a time, said Newt DalPoggetto, speaking of the 1920s and '30s, "when hunting and fishing was for food as well as for recreation. It was both." Going even further back, to the days when very little of the marsh had been reclaimed, Norm Yenni recounted stories he heard from a great uncle: "In the early 1900s he said that it was so rich with ducks that the sky would darken at times when the ducks would all take off. My great uncle supposedly was such a good shot that at times he could make six shots and down eight birds. He'd get two of them lined up."

Newt's father, who was born in Sonoma in 1896, was also hunting in the early years of the 20th century. He "grew up down there. He was an avid fisherman and duck hunter. Especially he liked duck hunting in what he called 'the sloughs.'" Newt recalled, "I didn't go duck hunting with him until I was about out of high school [c. 1940] because in his early years, he and his friends had shot all the ducks...By the time I reached seven or eight years old [c. 1930] his duck hunting days were over. There weren't any ducks down here. It was really sort of terrible."

Newt said "they didn't really come back in hunt-able amounts until the late '30s. Even then it was sparse... He followed the principle that there isn't a resource we can't destroy... He did his share with ducks. He loved duck hunting." The period from 1890 to 1935 also encompasses the peak years for marsh reclamation, so overhunting and rapid loss of habitat were probably both factors in the decline in the duck population.

The duck population seems to have recovered somewhat by the time Mike Cullinan was growing up in the 1950s and '60s: "when I was a kid, I remember my dad and uncle coming back with a gunny sack full of ducks." The Cullinan Ranch was right next to the Can Duck Club, which actively worked to attract ducks. Pointing out the location on a map, Mike said, "They would flood this one right here--we called these dead sloughs. There was a gate—they'd open this up and bring water in...This would be all dry... Then the ducks would come in there. Oh man, they'd come back with just a massive amount of ducks."

While ducks were the most popular, hunters also went after doves and pheasant. Newt remembers planting "some pheasants here in 1932. My father was part of the group that planted them. We planted them first down at Leveroni Ranch, to the east. So they kind of meandered into the sloughs, bay lands area."



Duck Hunter, c. 1900.

Hunting took place both from blinds and boats. Newt mentioned having his own "duck blind in Leslie Salt pond" [Napa River area]. Mike Cullinan spoke of making a kayak in his high school wood shop and using it to go duck hunting. Hunters also used natural cover—Newt half-jokingly referred to hunters "behind every bunch of tules," so many that "you'd take your life in your hands" to be down there during duck season.

For many people, hunting and fishing were social activities. Paul Sheffer mentioned how the ranchers would invite their friends to hunt doves and ducks on their land. Mike did a lot of his hunting and fishing

with his high school buddy Hugh Buttrum (who later became a Fish & Game Warden). Newt talked of “getting two bits worth of sardines” for bait and going down to the Wingo area with two or three friends to spend the afternoon fishing. Hunting clubs served the same purpose in a more formal way and many were established in the Baylands over the years. Describing the Can Duck Club next to his family’s ranch, Mike said,

“They had a big lodge with bedrooms and this big great room with a fireplace and a kitchen. They had a little inlet where you could park power boats that would come up through the Bay and then up Dutchman Slough. It was right off Dutchman Slough and it was this covered area. They just pulled the boats in. But people would just drive in when we were there. That must have been developed in the ‘twenties and ‘thirties. These were old buildings. I don’t know what happened to Can Duck Club. It was private.”

As for other duck clubs, Mike mentioned some buildings that can be seen when you’re driving along by Sears Point; “Those were all duck clubs.” Jim Haire mentioned the Gebinoni Duck Club, next to China Cut off Skaggs Island. Paul Sheffer and Norm Yenni mentioned the pheasant club on the former Dickson Ranch, which is still there. On the Jones Ranch, “they never had any formal duck clubs,” said Sam Jones. But “they allowed people to shoot ducks out there. It was a pretty good flyway at one time.”

Fishing

Like many others of their generations, Newt and Mike enjoyed fishing in the Baylands. “Striped bass were the main thing,” said Newt. “I guess striped bass were introduced here round about eighteen-seventy something [and]...really proliferated in San Pablo Bay and in the sloughs and up the Sacramento River.” Mike Cullinan also primarily fished for striped bass, in Dutchman Slough by the Cullinan Ranch. The Can Duck Club “had stripers that were captive. They’d pump them in—they’d pump the water in and then pump it out. But the fish wouldn’t go out. So you’d get some good stripers in there. It was shallow water. They’d actually jump out of the water. It was good sport fishing for that. Most of the time we turned ‘em back. We had a freezer full of stripers and my mom said, ‘Hey, that’s enough!’”

As for other fish, Newt said, “We’d get an occasional flounder in the sloughs...we’d also get sand sharks and leopard sharks, which we didn’t keep.” He also mentioned “a lot of carp...in salt water in lower Sonoma Creek.” In late spring, Newt would fish for trout smolts, which are “on their way out to sea.” The place he liked to fish, called Helberg’s and then Roble’s after the landowners, was at the upstream edge of tidewater. “There was about two feet, three feet of tidewater there,” said Newt. “So when the tide was out that was the best time to fish.”

Just as the hunters did, fisherman pursued their quarry from boats and from shore. Newt’s father kept a small boat at Ramal. Mike’s aunt and uncle liked to set up chairs on the bank of Dutchman Slough and throw their lines in from there.

A local economy grew up around serving recreational hunters and fishermen. As Mike Cullinan described it, “There were little settlements all over...Guys would sell bait and beer and sodas and stuff.” Perhaps the quintessential example was Richard Janson (‘Dirty Dick’), who lived on a beached barge upstream from the Sonoma Creek bridge. According to Newt, “he had two or three rowboats that he’d rent out for fifty cents a day.” Janson also made and sold wooden duck decoys for a few dollars each. In addition, he “always keep a fishing rod going,” making some of his living directly from the water (for more on Janson see ‘Individuals & Families’).

The Future

Today, “hardly anybody goes hunting down there,” observed Newt. “I think we have as much or more bird life now...than we did. Now I feel guilty if I shoot anything. I quit duck hunting. I felt badly about it.” As times have changed, so has the nature of recreation. There are fewer hunters but far more hikers and birdwatchers than there used to be. And where access to the Baylands once was dealt with through casual agreements, things are becoming more formalized. As more land comes under government control, land-use and management priorities shift. “Government agencies have a different agenda than farmers,” said Norm. “They want to have unlimited public access.”

One of the big problems, according to Norm, is that the public is becoming “further and further removed from its agricultural roots”:

“I have trouble with a lot of public access because the public doesn’t understand the ways of agriculture...To somebody just driving by...without the dialogue to explain what’s going on, it becomes very difficult...

“When you have a crop duster, a 600-horsepower airplane, flying along at a hundred miles an hour, if you’re standing on top of a levee and that pilot is coming at you at eye level, it’s pretty intimidating! It’ll scare the crap out of you. That’s where the guy has to be to get proper application of that pesticide. That’s his job.

“We spray all Category Two and Category Three, which are not terribly toxic. He keeps his buffers of course. But some people will get sick not from the pesticide but from the rush of the air and psych themselves into being sick. They’ll get dizzy because they’re scared. It is intimidating. If it were explained to them, they’d just stay the heck out or have some dialogue to learn what’s going on, it’s not that bad.”

Looking to the future, Norm said, “Black Point Pheasant Club has expressed interest in buying my property. If they do, they’d let me stay on as the resident farmer . Some of their hunting takes place in agricultural fields. So that idea really appeals to me. That could work out pretty good.”

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan: 19-26, 56-57, 111-112
DalPoggetto: 42-45, 58-61, 67, 81-82, 87
Haire: 5-10, 38-48
Jones: 27
Sheffer: 32-34, 70-71, 77
Yenni: 23-27, 97, 138-140

WILDLIFE

Birds

Birds have always been the most noticeable and abundant wildlife in the Marsh. “Back in the early 1900s,” said Norm Yenni, recounting a story told by one of his great-uncles, “it was so rich with ducks that the sky would darken at times when the ducks would all take off. My great uncle supposedly was such a good shot that at times he could make six shots and down eight birds.” In those days far less of the Marsh had been reclaimed, so there was still lots of intact habitat.

Mike Cullinan talked of seeing “just a massive amount of ducks” on his family’s ranch in the 1950s. He said geese used to come in large numbers as well: “I’ve seen the ranch just covered with geese. You couldn’t see the dirt, it was covered with geese.” He said there were several species, including “lots of honkers” and “amazing amounts” of snow geese. “You could just look up in the sky and see wave after wave of ducks and geese coming by,” he said. “They’d start probably late September and...probably by Christmas they were done. They were getting to where they needed to get. But for about a month there it was pretty neat.” He said the flyway was “right over Sears Point.”

As for other water birds, Newt DalPoggetto said, “one of the great sights on early December mornings ...[is] seeing about 40 to 80 white pelicans floating by, right on the edge of San Pablo Bay...They’d come through Carquinez in the early morning sunlight. God they were a magnificent sight. I counted as many as 80 of them, anywhere from 40 to 80.” Newt also mentioned mud hens in the sloughs and egrets nesting at his duck club on the north side of Highway 37. Norm Yenni also mentioned seeing egrets and said they were a recent arrival in the Baylands.

Raptors were described as present in modest numbers. Norm noted, “there’s a few eagles and hawks around.” Jim Haire said the hawks he sees in the vineyards upland from the old marsh are “mostly red-tail.” Newt also mentioned red-tail hawks, as well as kestrels and sparrow hawks. In addition, he said, “there’s a lot of owls...my duck blind was a haven for barn owls. When duck season was over they had the place to themselves for months. They would hatch their eggs and nest. They caught a lot of field mice down there, that’s the main food supply.” Paul Sheffer also mentioned the presence of barn owls. In the past he recalled seeing burrowing owls; “It was funny to see them pop up.”

Paul Sheffer has seen “a few” of the endangered clapper rail. Other resident birds mentioned were sea gulls, “coveys of quail,” killdeer, crows, ravens, and “millions of blackbirds.” Wild turkeys, pheasant and chukars, all exotic species introduced for hunting, were also mentioned (for more details see ‘Changes in Wildlife’ section). Norm said the hawks are benefitting from the introduction of chukars, getting to “clean up what the hunters don’t get.”

Mammals

“There wasn’t much in the way of water for any wildlife,” observed Mike Cullinan. “It was all salty.” Norm Yenni voiced the same idea: “They’ve got to be pretty tough animals to be drinking that brackish water we got out here.” Where birds can fly to fresh water fairly easily, other animals have to travel overland.

“The only mammals I saw,” said Paul Sheffer, were “red fox, maybe a coyote.” Norm Yenni also reported “some foxes” in the Baylands as well as coyotes: “In the last fifteen or twenty years, there’ve been a lot of coyotes. They’ve moved in.” Jim Haire concurred that coyotes are a recent arrival and abundant. Some of the foxes mentioned may be gray foxes, which are native. Red foxes have been introduced.

Jim Haire mentioned jack rabbits “here and there.” In contrast, Newt DalPoggetto said “there was a lot of jack rabbits. I used to hunt jack rabbits a lot.” Newt also said there were a lot of raccoons, a lot of ground squirrels and “quite a few mink” in the sloughs. In contrast, Mike Cullinan said he never saw raccoons in

the Baylands. The smallest mammals mentioned were mice, rats, gophers and voles. Newt tied the abundance of mice and rats to the significant number of owls in the Baylands. Only Paul Sheffer reported seeing the endangered native salt marsh harvest mouse. There are probably both native and introduced mouse species in the Baylands; the rats are probably black rats and Norwegian rats introduced from Europe.

The biggest animal reported in the Baylands were deer. "There's some pretty fair-sized deer out here," reported Norm Yenni. He "talked to one guy who, years ago, shot a real nice, about 130-pound buck out here...he said the meat was no good. It was drinking salt water." Jim said that after the military left Skaggs Island, a herd of thirty to forty deer migrated in. They were there for a number of years until "the drought happened and the only water they had was Rainbow Slough and the tributary ditches." Then they disappeared.

Fish

Newt DalPoggetto, who has many decades of experience as a fisherman in the Baylands, reported several species of fish: "We'd get an occasional flounder in the sloughs...we'd also get sand sharks and leopard sharks...From time to time the stingrays would come in and dig all the way through the sloughs. I think they must have eaten shellfish and stuff. They dig great big holes which you see at low tide." Newt also said that the presence of sturgeon in Sonoma Creek was "sort of a myth" when he was growing up.

Paul Sheffer recalled seeing salmonids in Sonoma Creek and the Petaluma and Napa Rivers. Newt used to fish for trout at the upper edge of salt water, a little above the Highway 121 bridge, where there was "about two, three feet of tidewater." He got them in "May and early June" when they were making the journey back to sea as smolts.

As with birds, several exotic species of fish have been released over the years to benefit the fishermen. "I guess striped bass were introduced here 'round about eighteen-seventy-something," Newt said, "as I recall from reading." Newt mentioned seeing catfish spawning right at the Sonoma Creek bridge at Wingo in late May and early June. "They were plentiful," he said. "My Dad would come home with like twenty of them."

Invertebrates

A few invertebrate species were mentioned, including mosquitoes, formerly very abundant, and mussels.

section continues on following page

Changes in Wildlife Populations

<u>Barn Owl:</u>	Abundant. No reported change.
<u>Burrowing Owl:</u>	Decline since the late 1980s.
<u>Catfish:</u>	Steep decline or disappearance since the 1930s.
<u>Chukars:</u>	Introduced. No reported recent change.
<u>Clapper Rail:</u>	Present. No reported change, but endangered and far less abundant than historically.
<u>Crows:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Coyotes:</u>	Abundant since about 2000, uncommon or non-existent before c. 1970.
<u>Deer:</u>	Increase in recent years. Herd living on Skaggs Island between 1993 and the current drought.
<u>Ducks:</u>	Abundant c. 1900. Sharp decline to about 1930 likely due to hunting pressure and loss of habitat. Rebound beginning in the late 1930s, continuing to 1960s. Decline reported after that date with possible recent rebound.
<u>Eagles:</u>	Present in modest numbers. No reported change.
<u>Egrets:</u>	Little or no presence until c. 1995. Now noticeably more abundant.
<u>Flounder:</u>	Previously occasional. Current status unknown.
<u>Foxes:</u>	No reported change. May include both introduced red fox and native grey fox.
<u>Geese:</u>	Decline.
<u>Gophers:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Ground Squirrels:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Gulls:</u>	Abundant c. 1970s and perhaps later. Recent decline.
<u>Killdeer:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Jack Rabbits:</u>	Formerly abundant, decreased in numbers. May be related to coyotes moving in.
<u>Leopard Sharks:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Mice:</u>	Present. No reported change (with exception of the salt marsh harvest mouse.)
<u>Mink:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Mosquitoes:</u>	Formerly more abundant.
<u>Mud hens:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Mussels:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Osprey:</u>	Recent arrival.
<u>Pelicans:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Pheasants:</u>	Introduced in 1932. Unknown if any were planted prior to this date. "We have a few pheasants down there today."
<u>Quail:</u>	Present. No reported change.
<u>Raccoons:</u>	Variable reports from "lots" to "never saw any."
<u>Rats:</u>	Present. No reported change. All species probably introduced.
<u>Ravens:</u>	Formerly not present, or in very low numbers. Big population growth since c. 2002.

Red-tailed Hawks: Present in modest numbers. No reported change

Salmon: Present. Decline reported in other sources.

Salt marsh harvest mouse: Reported by only one elder. No information on apparent population.

Sand Sharks: Present. No reported change.

Stingrays: Present. No reported change.

Striped Bass Present. No reported change.

Sturgeon: Possibly formerly present.

Voles: Present. No reported change.

Steelhead: Present. Decline reported in other sources.

Turkeys: Introduced since 1969. No reported recent change.

Changes in Attitudes Towards Wildlife

“So we’ve gotten far more ecological in later years than we were,” said Newt DalPoggetto, reflecting on how attitudes have changed. “I grew up at a time when hunting and fishing was for food as well as for recreation. It was both.” He said his father “followed the principle that there isn’t a resource we can’t destroy. He did his share with ducks...Now I feel guilty if I shoot anything. I quit duck hunting. I felt badly about it.”

Norm Yenni described his own ‘live and let live’ attitude: “A lot of people see a coyote, shoot the coyote. You know what? They’re not hurting me. They’re probably keeping a lot of gophers and rodents in check...That’s nature’s way of keeping things on the even.” Even when the wildlife does impact his operation, Norm said he doesn’t harbor any ill feelings. He recounted how his tractor wheel once got stuck in a coyote den and years when the deer trample down three or four acres of grain and he loses eight or tens of production.

Norm also talked about the enjoyment he gets: “I like to see the wildlife out there...it’s so neat watching them go along.” He called egrets “very cool birds” and said, “I just love to watch them out there. They’ll sit there, they look like a statue, and all of a sudden, boing! They get a mouse!”

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan:	56-68, 119
DalPoggetto:	20, 24, 26, 29, 32, 33, 67, 70-75, 80, 113, 115, 139, 140
Haire:	81-84, 88, 89, 117
Sheffer:	15-20, 59-63, 67-69, 99, 100, 103
Yenni:	13, 23, 31, 32, 35, 54, 97-103, 110-114, 117, 120-123, 127-131, 136

STORMS & FLOODING

“Floods were legendary down at Schellville,” said Mike Cullinan. “It would rain a few inches and next thing you know the road would be closed.” He remembers a night spent at what was called ‘Yo’s Triangle,’ at the intersection of Broadway and Highway 121. Working with Rich Kiser, Mike Millerick, a couple of the Sangiacomos and the Yos, Mike helped protect Bill and Dorothy Yo’s restaurant (now the Schellville Grill): “It was a horrible flood—we were squeegeeing the water out. We made it, we lasted all night and the rain finally stopped and the water started going down. At least we kept it out to where it didn’t destroy the place.”

Mike said part of the reason floods there were “just incredible” was because “they had the old metal truss bridge going across the creek right there. All the debris would get piled up against it and start backing the water up even worse. There was a tanker truck got caught trying to go through there once and got caught. That water must have been right at the intersection where that light is right now...must have been four to five feet deep.” Mike said all that water would eventually “just go out through the fields there.”

Newt DalPoggetto said there “was a lot of flooding in the sloughs some winters.” He also said that “Leveroni’s Camp Four, which was well-leveed, became a lake. I used to call it Lake Victoria for Vic Leveroni. Bob [Vic’s son] didn’t like that. He was one of my best friends...They would have a levee breach sometimes...on the north side, which is around from the Wingo side. Sam Jones related how during his grandfather’s time (1920s – 1960s)“about every fourth or fifth year the levees would break and salt water would get in to the crop” and ruin it.

“It was fresh water, so a lot of it must have come from Sonoma Creek...with a high tide in December, if you have heavy rain and your December high tide...it would flood...Lake Victoria used to come into existence every two or three years. And it happened for a long time. Bob Leveroni, after Vic died, spent a lot of money on enhancing the levee, building it up on the north side—I think that’s where the water came from. It basically had to be overflow from Sonoma Creek.”

During the 1986 flood, Paul Sheffer remembered that “Leveroni got flooded, and Kiser Brothers didn’t get flooded. Gary Kiser did get flooded and Bisso got flooded and the one next to Bisso got flooded.” He said the reason was “The levees failed. They overtopped probably, some of them.” Paul said the Mulas Ranch also got flooded that year and floods pretty regularly. “That’s because of Sonoma Creek. It passes right by the winery [Millerick Road] and there’s a big hole in the levee. It goes from there over to his property. He’s tried to get permission to build a levee or something to hold it off. I don’t know what the status of that is.” He said two other places that flooded in 1986 were Sangiacomo’s [lower Broadway] and the airport.

Norm Yenni said that Highway 37 had some water come over the roadway in 2005. At his Tubbs Island Ranch, “We had some water come out over my low point in the levee. Come out, run down Highway 37 and back into my ranch. All that water I had to pay to pump back out. Fortunately there’s enough tidal action there that it only came over for a few hours. But when you look at a river a foot deep and twenty feet wide moving at five miles an hour, that’s a lot of gallons. And to have to physically remove that by a pump, it takes a while.”

“Probably the biggest issue we’ve had as far as levees and pumping and the likes of that,” said Norm, “was in 1998...We’d had a series of big storms. The mitigation site that we spoke of [53-acre lagoon on the southeast corner of Highways 121 and 37]...the levee on that site broke.

“When the government took ownership of the property there, we made it very clear that that levee was in bad shape, it needed to be worked on. Sure enough the levee broke...on a Saturday afternoon about one o’clock. We made a bunch of phone calls, got trucks, got bulldozers, got excavators. We had the hole plugged in twenty or twenty-two hours. It took us another forty days, with our three existing electric pumps and three diesel rental pumps to get the water off the property.”

Whether or not flooding is considered a problem or a benefit depends on where it happens and what its perceived effects are. When a levee on California Fish and Wildlife property broke and flooded Norm Yenni’s fields, he was told, ““We don’t mind if our land is flooded. Our land can flood any time.”” Norm replied, ““But yeah, it flooded my land.”” He said, “That cost us—we had eighteen hundred acres under water, we lost everything that was planted at the time. We took a pretty good hit that year at the hands of our government.”

The Mulas Ranch also flooded in the big storm at the end of 2005. There was conjecture that the flooding in his field reduced flooding in the town of Sonoma upstream. Paul Sheffer disagreed: “I question whether that would have affected the flood in Sonoma. Right there is a bottleneck and that cuts off the water and backs it up. Until you clean that out, you’re going to have that [problem]. Highway 37 and 121 flood every two years.”

Considering the big picture, Paul said, “You take out the levees, it may help the flooding in Sonoma but I don’t think it is. Because all that land is underwater anyhow and you have a high high tide with the wind blowing this way and the storm coming down that way—there just isn’t enough room. You’re going to have flooding and that’s it.”

Looking to the future and the likelihood that flooding is going to increase, Norm said, “If they’re going to talk about global warming and sea level rise, hey we’re doing what we can to address it based on the levees. We’re not putting pavement out there, but we’re building the levees up.”

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan:	89-94
DalPoggetto:	84-86
Haire:	50
Jones:	25
Sheffer:	53, 54, 78-83, 94-97,144-150
Yenni:	39-41, 49, 50

RESTORATION

Mike Cullinan talked of creating waterfowl habitat, at least temporarily, on his family's ranch, "We'd flood just this little slough area. The geese would come in. I've seen the ranch just covered with geese. You couldn't see the dirt, it was covered with geese. ...there were snows. Yeah there were just amazing amounts of them."

"I think the Baylands are all going to be underwater eventually," said Paul Sheffer, referring to sea level rise. "All the levees are going to go." As Mike Cullinan described it, "the biologists are running the show...and they want to turn it back to what it was in the 1800s, which was true marshland. I think that's where it's going. There's nothing else you can do with it. The farming is going to die out, which it is now anyway. It'll just turn into mitigation ground, which would turn it back into marshland...It'll be a huge, massive habitat area. I don't think that's a bad thing."

While there seems to be a consensus that eventually much of the Baylands will eventually be converted from agricultural lands back to wetlands, the ranchers are critical about the way this process is being carried out.

Both Norm Yenni and Jim Haire, whose lives are directly connected to the fate of the area, view the situation from a different angle. While acknowledging that a "big potential future for the marsh is restoration for habitat for endangered species or just wildlife," Norm articulated what that means for him personally. "As a farmer I've been really resisting that, mainly on the idea that I don't want to be forced off the property. If I can go out in my own time and my own style that's one thing, but I don't like being thrown off the land that's been here for a hundred-and-some years."

Jim Haire thought the speed of land acquisition for conservation should more closely match the pace of restoration. He noted that more land gets taken out of production than can be restored in the near future: "Why don't you take...a piece of ground...restore it to what you're talking about and move on to the next one? Why do you take five or six and just take them out of production?" Those lands could be feeding humans or livestock. The answer was, from one guy who I never ever saw again, 'We wanna buy land when it's cheap.' So when I put a price on ours, I took that into consideration."

Paul acknowledged the conundrum faced by the ranchers and the agencies: "The problem is, if they sell out tomorrow, they'll get [a] ... 'reasonable price'—six thousand or two thousand an acre. When they see land, of course it's grape land, going for forty or fifty thousand dollars" the ranchers are reluctant to sell their land so cheap. Paul believes that once they're offered "a more reasonable price, they'd sell out tomorrow."

Norm concurred: "If you want to take it away from us or buy it from us, do it on a fair market basis. Don't regulate us the hell off the property. Make me a reasonable deal or show me how to do something else. I want to continue farming, but I can't be stupid about things."

Norm brought up several other aspects of the situation. Mentioning an article that recently appeared in the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, he said, "I believe there's more horses now than there were cows years ago. They eat a lot of oat hay. That's what we grow here. The more of this land you take out of production, the more hay you've got to haul in from further away—increasing the carbon footprint. You have to balance that with the value of restoring the habitat."

Norm suggested that a closer partnership between ranchers and conservation organizations and agencies could have value. Norm was surprised at how much money was spent during a seismic retrofit on the Sonoma Creek bridge to clear “an area under the footprint of the bridge with the idea that there could be some endangered Salt Marsh Harvest Mice down there.” He suggested to one of the agencies that offering farmers an incentive to create habitat and ranching for mice could be to everyone’s benefit. “They all thought it was a good joke and maybe it was a good joke. I still don’t know.” Whether or not Norm’s suggestion was taken seriously, ranching for conservation and profit is already being done in Sonoma County. The Sonoma Mountain Foundation is using cattle grazing on Sonoma Mountain, in combination with fire, to restore native grassland.

Norm questioned whether the dynamic processes of the Baylands were being fully taken into account, noting that, “If you drive out Highway 37 over the Sonoma Creek Bridge and look out towards the bay and see how far out it goes before you get to the open water; it wasn’t like that when we came here in 1969. The bay is thousands of acres smaller than it was...there’s all these statistics they like to tout about all the Baylands that have been lost to reclamation since the 1880s. That’s true, but I’d like to see a study on how much Bayland has been created from natural causes.”

Everyone agreed that the implementation of restoration plans has been less than perfect. “I’ve learned that the idea of restoring a marsh, the whole practice is still in its infancy,” said Norm. Referring to a lagoon immediately southeast of the intersection of Highways 37 and 121, he said it was created as a condition for one of the levee permits. “We had to agree to mitigate for the loss of habitat that was done when the levees were created...over a hundred years ago.” “When they restored that piece of property, that fifty-three acres, they told me that it would be intertidal. High tide it would be underwater, low tide it would be out of water. When the project was done it was a lake.” Paul Sheffer confirmed that Norm had to give up the area “to mitigate for the levee program.” and that “It was not too well made, but it was planned.”

Norm explained that one of the problems with this particular project is that “the levee is two feet higher than Highway 37 is. If you look at that area out there, for a good portion of the distance, Highway 37 is the levee. Highway 37 keeps that water from rushing across and going further inland.” When he asked , “What went wrong with this project? Why is the highway two feet lower than it was supposed to be? They told me, ‘The water is the correct level, the ground around it is too low. The earth sank.’ I said, ‘The earth sank?’ They said, ‘Yeah.’”

Mike’s friend Hugh Buttrum, who is a warden with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, was “not a big fan” of breaching the levee at the former Cullinan Ranch. He thinks they should have just left it alone, left the habitat the way it was. What you see now. I agree with him. Turn it into pickleweed.”

“What’s supposed to be on Skaggs Island,” said Jim Haire, “are two to three big channels that would be tidal, for the salmon and the steelhead.” Speaking of the restoration plans, he added “Material that comes out of those channels would be made into hundreds of small islands that would be out of the high tide. So the nesting birds could stay there and be protected by the water around it. Then [there would be] hundreds and hundreds of acres of mudflats that I call ‘The Feeding Ground for the Long-Legged Birds.’”

Though he has conflicting feelings about it, Jim Haire would like to live long enough to see what happens “to the land that’s been in my family for over seventy-five years.” In Mike Cullinan’s assessment, “The

amount of farming that was done, in the whole scheme of things, will probably end up being a short period in its total history. Once they start breaching the levees, then you'll just have tidelands."

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan: 13, 46, 47, 57-59, 130-131
Haire: 116-119
Sheffer: 96-98, 144-149
Yenni: 36-41, 98-103, 136-139

LAND ETHICS, STEWARDSHIP & REGULATION

Paul Sheffer, who worked with ranchers for many years, summed up his view on the attitudes of the landowners and the relationship between them and the agency folks who work in the area: “They love the land and they’ll do anything to save it. They’re not averse to environmental [thinking], for doing things that help the land. But they feel sometimes that the people that come out to help them have only their own interests in mind...Some of the restrictions are illogical and counterproductive. If they listened to the ranchers a little more—I mean the ranchers aren’t always right, but the environmentalists aren’t always right either...One person I remember was from Water Quality...He listened to the ranchers, the ranchers listened to him, he showed them respect and they showed him respect. And then they got things done.”

Norm Yenni firmly believes that “we need to work together” through the conflicts that arise between farmers, the public and government agencies. He described some of the difficulties with public access, levee permits and crop dusting and said “You know, all we’re trying to do is protect the property we had...But the vast majority of farmers are very conscious of what they’re doing, they don’t want to make any trouble. They’re just another businessman doing their thing and trying to get along.”

A rancher’s livelihood depends on the sustainability of their practices, which translates into a practical sort of stewardship: “There was definitely a practical part of it as far as Kisers farmed,” said Mike Cullinan. “They were excellent farmers. You wanted to make sure the levees were maintained, those kind of things. They’d have to pump in the wintertime, since it was below sea level...Otherwise it would pretty much flood. Fill up. No place for the water to go.” Jim Haire described it simply as “Protect what you have. That was it.”

Norm described how during the drought in the 1970s, “we had an old fellow working for us. His philosophy was, ‘If you own the land, by golly you farm it.’ You’re paying taxes on it, don’t go throwing it away. So there’s some areas on the edges of the fields that we’d never farmed before. And he plowed right up to the edge of the ditch. He plowed up some god-awful salt grass and sod. It probably hadn’t been farmed in forty years. For the next two or three years we worked that stuff just trying to get it to where we could farm. On the wet years we couldn’t get in there, we’d get stuck.

“I came to the conclusion that that ground doesn’t want to be farmed. It’ll take quite a while to get it back in shape and some years we cannot farm it. So let’s just stay out of there. That’s my nature preserve. Some years I can make money on it, some years I can’t. It’s a pain in the butt. The environmental concerns don’t want me out there and I don’t want to make a big mess. I stay out. It’s a win-win deal for both of us.”

As Norm put it, the basic problem is: “the government agencies have a different agenda than the farmers.” He advocated dialogue as the best way to bridge the gap. “If people are talking to me...we can put it in reasonable terms. I can explain what I’m doing and why I’m doing it.”

Sometimes ranchers have been stuck with mitigating for habitat loss that happened a century or more ago. This strikes Norm as wrong since “it was carried on at the request of the government to drain this property in the first place and put it into production.”

Taking the global view, Norm noted the booming equine industry in Sonoma County. Horses “eat a lot of oat hay. That’s what we grow here. The more of this land you take out of production, the more hay you’ve

got to haul in from further away—increasing the carbon footprint. You have to balance that with the value of restoring the habitat.”

As Paul Sheffer says, “Sometimes they [the ranchers] have to do the learning and sometimes the agencies have to do the learning. In the long run it works out, if they want it to.”

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan: 110, 111
DalPoggetto: 58-61,140-142
Haire: 105, 106
Sheffer:74-77, 138-143
Yenni: 35-40, 137, 140-144

THE FUTURE

"I guess I didn't want to think that our weather could be changing," said Jim Haire, "because of mankind and its fossil fuels, burning the forests and all of this, but something is going on." He said, "Last year was pretty bad." In 2013 Jim's main irrigation lake for his grapevines, which holds sixty acre-feet of water, nearly dried up.

While Norm Yenni is "not a big advocate or fan of global warming," he has noticed "some amount of climate change" over the last 45 years. Norm spoke in detail about how his own hay operation has been affected: "When my dad was here, we used to do a lot of baling at night...Thirty years ago the conditions were correct—typically we'd start at two a.m. Very often we would be up right from two a.m. right through, we'd shut down about...maybe ten a.m. or noon."

"We literally cannot bale at night anymore. Because after about midnight, there's enough moisture on the hay in a typical night that...the stuff would mold. We wait until the morning when the dew is gone and that might be nine o'clock, it might be eleven o'clock, it might be noon. That's when the moisture level is correct to bale the hay." He has to watch the dew and the humidity to know when the hay can be baled.

"There are still days when we can go out and bale at night," said Norm. "But they're not very many days. Because of that I don't actively maintain all the lighting systems on the tractors and balers. I have one or two tractors ready to go, just in case. But the actual incidence of baling in the dark [is rare]."

While the current drought is a recent and (hopefully) temporary phenomena, Newt DalPoggetto noted that rainfall in Sonoma has actually increased in the long run: "Sonoma, historically, was about 25, 26 inches. We didn't have as much rainfall as we've had in recent years. They've upped the average, the so-called 'ten-year average.' When I was a kid it was 25 inches and we've moved up to just about 30."

Sea level rise, another effect of climate change, threatens the levees that protect the ranchers' fields. The only way to maintain the levee system is to "build them up" higher, as Norm and others do. Complicating this approach is the fact that the land inside the levees is sinking: "The marshland itself is an organic soil and it has subsided," said Paul Sheffer. "I did some casual measurements...there's about three-foot subsidence." Norm had a similar estimate of "two or three feet." The combined effects of sea level rise and subsidence have made the floodgates on Tubbs Island obsolete. At one time "when the tide was low enough...the water would rush off the land and into the bay. When the tide came up, the floodgates would close and the water wouldn't come back in. So twice a day you'd drain the land." Norm said that "over time" as "the land subsided," this no longer worked. "Now we have to use pumps and physically remove it from the land."

Sea level rise also puts the long-term viability of Highway 37 at risk. "I participated in a study a few years back," said Norm and described four proposals that were being considered: "First proposal...widen it to four lanes...on a raised roadway" created by adding "millions of tons of material." The second proposal was similar to the first, using a raised causeway that would allow for tidal action to get through. The third proposal was to "abandon Highway 37, move all the traffic onto 580 down at Richmond or Highway 12 over here in Schellville." The last idea was to "put a tunnel from Vallejo to Novato, under the bay." Norm thought the first two proposals had some merit, while the last two were not feasible. At the last meeting, the participants were told it would "probably be twenty years before we decide on a project and then we'll get started with the implementation after that."

Norm also talked about the idea of building an airport in the north bay: “I think the infrastructure for an airport here could be reasonable. I don’t know if we need it...In the event of a major disaster like an earthquake that knocks out the Golden Gate Bridge, the Richmond Bridge, we have no major airport up here for getting relief supplies in. That’s politics for you. I don’t know if I’d want to see it here, but I could see it being a reasonable use.”

Everyone agreed that farming in the Baylands is becoming more difficult as the years go by. As Norm described it, making a living off agriculture alone is “not quite reality anymore.” It requires finding supplemental sources of income. For Norm’s operation, these include leasing out the sites for two cell towers and taking in bio-solids from the cities of Santa Rosa and Vallejo; “It’s fertilizer coming in that fashion. That’s a tremendous advantage.” He said some ranchers generate income from farm worker housing or renting “space for somebody to park their trucks. It seems like nowadays that’s what you have to do to really make the deal out here.” Another way to survive is to diversify your crops. Norm mentioned growing silage for the dairies, which “worked well for about ten years” but now “that has come and gone.” But “there’s always the potential for some new crops coming in” and “organic is something which has, probably, a lot of potential for the area.”

In addition, “the use of bio-solids on the land is becoming more accepted...It’s taking what is otherwise a waste and making a beneficial use of it. Along with the bio-solids, they put lime on, which makes the soil such that it can use the nutrients. That, in time, develops the land into something which can grow some alternate crops, some higher value crops potentially. So that’s good. There is a real stigma in the agricultural community, as well as the public, about using poop. People poop. So you have to make sure you represent it appropriately. I know that the people I’m dealing with, whether it’s Vallejo Sanitation or the City of Santa Rosa, do everything by the book. There is nothing that’s not according to the regs. I have looked through the regulations and we are so far in the safe zone—we’re multiple multiples of where we need to be as far as toxicity. So I think that’s an important thing we can provide for the future.”

The Cullinan Ranch was sold for conservation about 20 years ago. At our interview, Jim Haire talked of recently planting his last crop on Skaggs Island. Paul Sheffer predicts “the Baylands are all going to be underwater eventually.” As Mike Cullinan said, “Once they start breaching the levees, then you’ll just have tidelands...the farming is going to die out, which it is now anyway. It’ll just turn into mitigation ground, which would turn it back into marshland...It’ll be a huge, massive habitat area. I don’t think that’s a bad thing.”

“The amount of farming that was done, in the whole scheme of things,” said Mike, “will probably end up being a short period in its total history.” “I’ll be sad to see the ranchers leave,” said Paul Sheffer, “but I’m afraid that’s inevitable. I was glad I had the chance to get down here and work with them and be here when it was here.”

Looking to his own future, Norm still sees possibilities: “the Black Point Pheasant Club has expressed interest in buying my property. If they do, they’d let me stay on as the resident farmer. Some of their hunting takes place in agricultural fields. So that idea really appeals to me...My son is not interested in being a farmer...So what’s going to happen to the farm when I pass away?...Is the government going to gobble it up and flood it out? Are they going to buy it at a fire sale because my wife needs it for medical

costs or something? So the whole concept of selling it to a business that wants to keep it in agriculture, that's become pretty desirable. And if they want to hire me back to maintain it, that'd be pretty cool."

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Cullinan:	13, 131
DalPoggetto:	13
Haire:	65
Sheffer:	30, 31, 144-146, 153
Yenni:	25, 26, 41-46, 78-80, 135-139, 146

TRANSCRIPTS

Interview with Mike Cullinan
at the Gilroy Public Library, Gilroy, California
December 2, 2014

M = Mike Cullinan; A = Arthur Dawson

1 A: Thanks for coming today. I appreciate your taking the time.

 M: You're welcome.

2. A: Why don't you start off with a little bit about how old you were when you got to know the marsh and what kinds of things you did when you were young.

 M: My folks leased our ranch from the Irvine Company starting in the late 'forties and then they purchased it in the early 'fifties. So we pretty much grew up going down to the ranch. We lived in Sonoma. We'd go down there and do a lot of fishing and hunting when we were younger. Both my sister and I were exposed to it when we were babies. We ended up selling it in the early 'seventies. By that time I had moved out of the house.

 So, yeah, we grew up around it. Did a lot of fishing and a lot of hunting. My buddy and I did a lot of duck hunting down there. We'd be down there all the time on breaks in high school. Christmas break and Thanksgiving and all that.

3. A: Was that the best time to go hunting?

 M: Duck season usually starts mid-October and goes to the first weekend in January. So we pretty much lived down there. Hugh Buttrum, he was a game warden in the area. Still lives in Sonoma.

4. A: He might be a good person to talk to also.

 M: Yeah I think so. He would be.

5. A: So what were your parents doing at the ranch?

 M: They had livestock on it. My dad and uncle and mom and aunt, when they all four purchased it, they ran livestock—cattle. I think just after the Korean War I guess, that's when the livestock market hit bottom, it was pretty tough. So they sold the cattle and leased it to the Kisers. It was Ferd Kiser and his sons. That was probably 'fifty-three to 'fifty-five, in that range. Kisers leased it for decades after that. Then my

mom and dad were in the real estate business in Sonoma. I started working on it when I was a teenager in high school, in the summertime.

6. A: You were working for the Kisers?

M: Right. I worked for the Kisers. It was Bill and Bob and Rich and then their Dad, Ferd. They grew hay and grain. That was the drill down there.

7. A: You're the first person I've talked to who's mentioned running cattle down in that area. Was that unusual?

M: No, it was pretty common for that area. The whole ranch was pasture when they bought it. Well, when they leased it, it was pasture. The operators would grow hay for the cattle too. So it was kind of a combo, kind of a mixed use type thing. But yeah, they ran cattle. They purchased three thousand acres. They purchased this piece on the map, just north of Dutchman Slough. That was the whole ranch that they purchased from Irvine Company. Then they ended up kind of flipping the thousand acres across Dutchman Slough to Leslie Salt. So it helped pay for the remainder. That was probably a pretty good move.

8. A: Yeah. Irvine, what were they into?

M: They were a large land company down in southern California. They leased it [to us]. I don't know how they [Mike's family] ended up finding it to lease, because Dad and Uncle Morris moved down from Montague near Yreka. That's where they came from. How they found the ranch, I don't know. But they ended up leasing it and about five years later, they bought it.

9. A: Then you said they sold it in the 'seventies to the Kisers?

M: They sold it to some investor group. That investor group is the one who ended up selling it to Fish & Game.

10. A: OK.

M: I think that investor group held it for probably a good twenty years. I'm not sure when Fish & Game bought it. 'Nineties, maybe?

11. A: I'm not sure. It seems relatively recent.

M: That investor group probably held it for twenty, even thirty years before they ended up selling it to Fish & Game.

12. A: That's a long time.

M: There were all kinds of plans. People were thinking it'd be a good spot for a marina, that kind of thing that they were looking at in the 'sixties and stuff. But . . .

13. A: It never panned out.

M: No, that was just you know [dreams]. A habitat area is probably the best [use]. And hay and grain. But obviously that doesn't have much value compared to habitat nowadays.

14. A: Yeah, things are changing.

M: Yeah.

15. A: You mentioned fishing. What would you fish for down there?

M: Striped bass. You'd have stripers in Dutchman Slough. My buddy, Hugh, and I, when we were in high school, we—the Can Duck Club, which is Island Number Two here on the map, we did some maintenance for them in return for being able to hunt and fish on their facility. So we'd just come to the ranch and jump across Dutchman Slough and go in there. They had stripers that were captive. They'd pump them in—they'd pump the water in and then pump it out. But the fish wouldn't go out. So you'd get some good stripers in there. It was shallow water. They'd actually jump out of the water. It was good sport fishing for that. Most of the time we turned 'em back. We had a freezer full of stripers and my mom said, 'Hey, that's enough!'

16. A: She was tired of stripers.

M: Yeah, we had enough. So most of the fishing that Hugh and I did was on Can Duck Club. My aunt and uncle, my mom's sister, Violet Minoni, and her husband, Andy, they'd come down and they were great fishermen. They loved to fish. So they'd pack a lunch and we'd all go down there and fish in Dutchman. I never had a lot of success.

17. A: Would you fish from the bank?

M: Just from the bank, yeah. I mean it wasn't that far across. Dutchman isn't that big of a slough. There's these little areas along there, kind of like little banks. Not on the levee itself, but at high tide, they were filled up, but then the tide would go down and there'd be nice little areas you could put some chairs and throw your line in. I remember going down with them. They'd come down on a Sunday and we'd drive down. They'd be fishing and we'd be just fooling around. That kind of fishing in Dutchman is too boring for me. They had more patience than I did.

18. A: What were the roads like out there at that time? To get out there, what was involved?

M: Same as it is now.

19. A: Drive on top of the levees pretty much.

M: Right. You just drive around on the levees. They had some work done. I remember when we were young kids. Mom and I and Dad and Pat, we went out on one of the dredgers, they were doing some dredging in Dutchman, building the levee up. Then they'd smooth it off a little bit so you could have a road on top. I have just a little remembrance of walking across a plank to get onto the dredge and then the dredger was working. It was at night –they ran twenty four/seven with the tide. So they had to go with the tide.

20. A: Would they get beached sometimes and have to wait for the tide to come back?

M: Yeah. That Dutchman would get so low. High tide's not a problem, but then it'd get to this little narrow channel during low tide, so they couldn't do much work.

21. A: How many guys would be working on a dredge?

M: I don't know. Probably half a dozen.

22. A: They'd do shifts around the clock.

M: Yeah.

23. A: Still steam at that time, or diesel?

M: Diesel, yeah. Right as you're coming over the Napa River on the right-hand side, just as you're starting to come down on the right hand side, there was a little settlement in there. There were little settlements all over because after the war, there were all these little fishing shacks. Guys would sell bait and beer and sodas and stuff. There was a little settlement there. There was a dredger there. There's the carcass of a dredger that's still there maybe. Right when you're coming off the bridge, right on Napa River. On the north side there.

24. A: I'll watch for that.

M: They would park dredgers there when they weren't using them. I do remember that. One of them just stayed there. It wasn't a very big one, compared to some of those big dredgers up in the Sacramento area.

25. A: Sure. Do you remember the Dutras? Did they work on your ranch?

M: They were the Dutras, the ones that were doing it. My sister gave me that book. Had the Dutras in there too. I can't remember the name of it. It showed all the different dredgers, how they reclaimed all the land in the area. It was pretty interesting.

26. A: Pretty big project.

M: Exactly.

27. A: Tell us a little more about that duck club. What was their facility like? Who were the people who'd come up there?

M: They were mostly from the Bay Area. It was called 'Can Duck Club.' I don't know when that was developed. They had a big lodge with bedrooms and this big Great Room with a fireplace and a kitchen. They had a little inlet where you could park power boats that would come up through the Bay and then up Dutchman Slough. It was right off Dutchman Slough and it was this covered area. They just pulled the boats in. But people would just drive in when we were there. That must have been developed in the 'twenties and 'thirties. These were old buildings. I don't know what happened to Can Duck Club. It was private.

28. A: Do you think that big building is still there?

M: I don't know if anybody purchased that, if Fish and Game purchased Can. I don't know. But it was pretty interesting. Had some old buildings around there. The only one these people used when we were involved—this was in the 'sixties—was the lodge. There were a couple graves there. You know, it was a little compound. Probably pretty active in the 'thirties, 'forties, 'fifties. It was easier than in the 'sixties. People'd just drive there. They'd drive down that road that's right along the west boundary there. That road was the access and then they had a caretaker that had a mobile home there and they'd have a rowboat and just go back and forth. So that's how those Can Duck Club guys got through.

29. A: OK. Did you ever hear about or meet a guy named Richard Janson, 'Dirty Dick'? Newt was telling me about him. He lived upstream from the Sonoma Creek bridge. I think he died in the early 'fifties.

M: No.

30. A: Probably before your time.

M: Was he the one that carved decoys?

31. A: Yeah.

M: Oh, OK. I've heard about him but I never met him. I have a big collection of wooden decoys, but none of those. We called them 'Dirty Deeks,' his carvings, but I didn't have any of those. I have some pretty good ones. I have probably thirty of them, original. I've kept them the way I got them. The mud from the marsh is still on them.

32. A: That's cool.

M: Yeah. I might see Hugh this weekend. We were going to go up to an art show at Black Stallion Winery in Napa. Hugh is one of the artists. He does gourds, turns wood. He was a game warden up around Colusa for years, but when his mom was elderly, he was posted back down in Sonoma County. If I see him I'll ask him if he would like to . . .

33. A: Sure, tell him to give me a call.

M: He and I are the ones who did all that hunting and fishing around our ranch.

34. A: You said the Kisers had shared some stories with you. Do you remember some of those?

M: Ferd would tell me stories of years ago. Mainly kind of farming things, what they did and all that. I don't remember any specific stories in that regard.

35. A: Any kind of general things about what farming was like down there?

M: You know, it hadn't changed that much. Hay and grain, it was a lot easier with mechanization. It took a lot of crews [in the old days]. They had the cookhouses they'd move from camp to camp. As a matter of fact, Rose Millerick's family had a cookhouse that was used down there. I don't know whatever happened to it.

36. A: It was on wheels?

M: Yeah. It looked like some old gypsy wagon. So the crews were pretty good size until they got more mechanization and then a handful of guys could do what a big crew did.

37. A: This would be like Camp Six or Camp One.

M: Yeah, they'd just move around to different areas. For the grain, they'd put it in sacks and they'd actually have someone sewing the sacks up on the combine.

38. A: Wow--that's a lot of handwork!

M: Yeah, all day long sewing hundred-pound sacks of oats. Just so much different now.

39. A: Did he talk about how they shipped the hay out at that time?

M: It was on trucks, but no boats. At least he never got into that. He might have. I suppose way back when they might have.

40. A: I've seen some really old pictures [of boats with hay].

M: I've seen that. I have some books of San Francisco Bay that show those old barges loaded down with hay. I suppose way back when, probably in the 'twenties, they didn't have the trucks or the road infrastructure to handle it. So I would imagine that would have been a way to get it out. I think most of that was grain. Of course they needed hay for livestock. I think a lot of that was grain, where they'd ship out the sacks of grain.

41. A: What would a typical year of farming be like, as far as when would you plant, when would you harvest?

M: The Kisers were probably the best farmers in the marsh. They'd always wait until there was some rain. Then they'd get the wild stuff coming up plus any weeds, then they'd start farming. Of course it would make it a little tighter in a wet year. But they'd get the cleanest hay. Kisers had the cleanest oat hay around. I don't think there were any better farmers than the Kisers. Ferd taught them well from that standpoint. So they'd rush to get it plowed. They'd always plow and then disc and then plant. They had our place and they had the place they own now that they bought from Donnell. So they were farming close to three thousand acres there. They had to get going when the getting was good. They'd get everything planted, I'm not sure of the exact timing, but they'd have it all done by January. Usually. Then get some good rains and wait until—probably May is when they started. The thing about that marsh, when you had the right rains, you'd have hay that's five feet tall.

42. A: Wow.

M: It was just incredible. The production was just amazing. As long as it had the rain at the right time. Then, depending whether they were cutting it for grain or hay, they'd bale it or use the combine, depending on what they were doing. Usually by September

it'd be done. September is usually the lag time. They wouldn't do as much until they got those first rains that would start bringing things up.

43. A: Would they actually wait for the rain before they started plowing?

M: Yes. That's usually why they had the cleanest hay. Once you get a little rain on it, boy it'd start coming up and then they'd be on it, plowing it. That was Ferd's big deal—get it so it was clean.

44. A: Did they have many people who worked with them?

M: No, it was the family. The three brothers and Ferd. That's four of them. They'd hire guys like me for the summer. And they'd hire people to drive tractor, plowing and disking and all that. Mostly part-time help. They had four of them, so that's a pretty good crew.

45. A: Tell me about what happened to the land after Leslie Salt Company got it?

M: Which one?

46. A: You said your parents sold a thousand acres?

M: Leslie just turned that into salt ponds. When you're coming over the bridge where Napa River is, that piece that you see off to the north of Dutchman is the piece. It looks to me like maybe Fish and Game bought that. I'm not sure if that was part of that Cargill sale?

47. A: I'm not sure. I know that they're doing some work restoring some salt ponds. There's a couple areas of salt ponds.

M: That's not a salt pond anymore. You can see that it's been drained. It looks like it's gone back to native habitat. I don't know if the levee's been breached, but it is definitely not used as a salt pond. That was a salt pond for decades. (3505 1:32) It was one of their pieces.

48. A: Did you know Greg Jones at all? Or anything about the Jones Ranch?

M: No. I never did get to that area on the other side of Skaggs much at all. Never did, even when we were growing up. I never hunted over there, never even went over there hardly at all. I never did know too much of that area.

49. A: Are you aware of any other salt ponds over this way [pointing to west of Skaggs, Sonoma Creek area].

M: There's that one right next [to our property], that was a salt pond. It's not anymore. But I know that was a salt pond.

50. A: That was just to the west of your . . .[property]?

M: Just to the west. They had that big channel, that big channel that comes in from San Pablo Bay?

51. A: I'm not sure if I know it off-hand.

M: There's that channel that comes in—they cut that channel in from San Pablo Bay and put that big lock, kind of a culvert in there. Then they'd let water in there and that would feed into this piece here [pointing on map] and it would feed into Can Duck Club. So that was the start. That's this piece right along that road.

52. A: Right along the western edge [of the Cullinan property].

M: Well that piece right there, that was one of the major salt ponds. As far as I knew, that was kind of the start of the salt ponds, where they'd bring the bay water in. Then it would go from there and keep moving around.

53. A: I'm not too familiar with how salt ponding works. As the water gets more concentrated, it gets shifted?

M: Yes, they just keep moving it around until finally they've got it to where they harvested it. It gets saltier as it goes. I think Can, if I'm not mistaken, was part of that process. Where they'd bring water in and out of Can too.

54. A: Can would just have it there, they just wanted it there for fish or?

M: Habitat. Hunting and fishing. That was the club. I never talked to anybody about that, as far as who exactly owned that. I know it was private. Unless they leased it from Leslie Salt. They built all those buildings years ago, so I'm assuming that's just private ownership, the Duck Club. They did some other private ownerships in through here [pointing on map]. You can see some buildings when you're driving along by Sears Point. To the north of Sears. You can see some buildings, some lodges. Those were all duck clubs.

55. A: Kind of out there, off the southeast corner of Skaggs.

M: Yes. You can drive—before you get to Skaggs, the road to Skaggs, the road going in. You can see some buildings out there and those were all duck clubs. I think they still are actually.

56. A: Yeah, there's still people that hunt out there.

M: It's just kind of a habitat area. The ducks, when I was a kid, I remember my dad and uncle coming back with a gunny sack full of ducks. They would flood this one right here [pointing on map]. We called these dead sloughs. There was a gate right here and they'd open this up and bring water in here. This would be all dry, you know. Then the ducks would come in there. Oh man, they'd come back with just a massive amount of ducks.

57. A: So you would flood part of your property?

M: We'd flood just this little slough area. The geese would come in. I've seen the ranch just covered with geese. You couldn't see the dirt, it was covered with geese. That lasted up until—Dad was still alive; he died when I was fifteen or sixteen, so—about 'sixty four. Then, all of a sudden they stopped coming in. There was still a flyway over there, but we never got the geese like we did before. Hugh and I didn't start going by ourselves until we had our drivers' licenses. By that time the geese coming in weren't there anymore. The ducks were there too, but not as much as they used to be. The flyway was still right over there, but we wouldn't get near the ducks in there like years ago.

58. A: What kind of geese were those?

M: Honkers, all the usual suspects of geese. A lot of honkers. All kinds.

59. A: Snow geese?

M: Yeah, there were snows, there were just amazing amounts of them. And then, I don't know, it was just like you turned a switch off. And no more. They were there, but they wouldn't come in and land anymore. I'm not sure why.

60. A: But you'd see them go overhead?

M: Oh yeah. It was a flyway. You'd get up in the morning in the fall in Sonoma and hear them, and see the ducks. Pretty neat. I don't know—they're probably not as much anymore.

61. A: We have some Canada Geese up in Glen Ellen that are year-round residents.

M: These you could just look up in the sky and see wave after wave of ducks and geese coming by. And right over here was the actually flyway—right over Sears Point Raceway. That’s an ideal spot for them.

62. A: Would they pass through twice a year?

M: I guess they must have. The only time I ever noticed them was in the fall. They’d start probably late September and they’d go through, probably by Christmas they were done. They were getting to where they needed to get. But for a couple of months there, it was pretty neat.

63. A: Something to see.

M: Yes it was. You’d just go outside and you could hear them. They’d be up there pretty high, but you could hear them. Then you’d look up and there they were. It was pretty good.

64. A: Do you remember any salmon, seeing any salmon in the sloughs?

M: No. I mean the sloughs are so damn muddy.

65. A: Hard to see anything.

M: Yeah, you can’t see anything. Flounders, stripers and little crabs. We’d catch a crab every once in a while when we were fishing.

66. A: How about mammals, like muskrats or?

M: You know, I never saw any wildlife down there. Didn’t see any raccoons. There wasn’t much in the way of water. It was all salty. On our ranch, Ferd—they had cats there, so he had a little windmill. They’d have water for that. But there wasn’t much in the way of water for any wildlife, fresh water.

67. A: That makes sense.

M: I don’t remember ever seeing anything down there as far as any kind of wildlife, other than birds. Birds and mice. A million mice. The little killdeer, blackbirds. Millions of blackbirds, ducks and geese, sea gulls and that kind of thing.

68. A: Any hawks down there?

M: There were a few. Not a lot.

69. A: How about Skagg's Island? Did you ever hear anything about the facility out there?

M: Rose [Millerick] used to take Mike and me; she used to go to the commissary there. So we'd tag along once in a while. I remember going to Skaggs that way. I always thought it was real odd when they abandoned that facility. I mean it was a town and they basically abandoned it and let everybody come in and steal copper pipes. It was pretty . . .

70. A: Got to be kind of a mess down there.

M: It was a mess, yeah. It was horrible. But it was a regular little town. We didn't go to Skagg's much—well you couldn't get on it. That was one thing, unless you were military or, like Rose and Jim, he was retired, so they had the pass to get in there. But other than that, you couldn't get in there.

71. A: When you did get to go in there, what was it like?

M: Just a small town. I was only there a few times. We went to the commissary. It was like driving through a miniature little town.

72. A: I heard they had a bowling alley out there?

M: Oh yeah, everything. It was pretty self-sufficient. Of course, that was during the Cold War, too.

73. A: It was a little more tense.

M: A little more tense, yeah. Once we got older, we were driving and you couldn't get in. We never bothered with it. I don't know when they decommissioned it, maybe twenty years ago?

74. A: Yeah, maybe twenty years ago.

M: The 'nineties.

75. A: Yeah. Now they're still not sure what's happening with it. It's going through some kind of transition.

M: Right. I think they tore a lot of the buildings down and then they finally 'demoed' a lot of the buildings.

76. A: There's a lot of toxic waste out there, so they're having to deal with that.

Did you ever hear any stories about the construction of Highway 37?

M: Not much. I don't know if I talked to Ferd about that or not. I remember a story—Bill Kiser was in a real bad wreck, Bill and Ferd. The old drawbridge over Sonoma Creek—some woman crossed the line there and hit them head on. That was pretty bad. It was a dangerous highway. That was before they had the divider in there. It was narrower than it is now. It wasn't a real safe place to drive. Even back then in the 'fifties and 'sixties, there were a ton of cars going back and forth on it. But I didn't hear much about the construction. I must have talked to Ferd about it. But I can't remember.

77. A: Did that drawbridge over Sonoma Creek get used very much?

M: Yeah, once in a while. I remember seeing the Napa River one up and I remember seeing the Sonoma Creek one up. Every once in a while someone would come through in a sailboat.

78. A: Mast was too high.

M: Oh yeah. It always was a big deal when those things went up. It's a pretty interesting engineering mechanism on a drawbridge.

79. A: I've seen one on the Sacramento River.

M: That one in West Sac—it that one still operational?

80. A: I'm not sure. The one I'm thinking of is more out in the Delta area.

M: OK. There was one there in West Sac, it was a big drawbridge.

81. A: I'm sure they get some big ships out there on the Sacramento.

Did you ever go to the Millerick rodeo?

M: Yeah. Pat had a video, an 8-millimeter, of bronc riders, I think about two or three of them. I remember just going in there, it was like you parked here and the rodeo grounds were to the east of the parking lot. I remember sitting down and looking, I think it was to the east, this was a covered area, and seeing just glimpses. I've always remembered that. But it's funny—that was in the 'fifties probably, I was born in 'forty-eight. So it would have to have been 'fifty-six, maybe 'fifty-seven. When I was a teenager, the grounds were gone. I don't know when they tore them down, or if they burned down or what happened. But the rodeo grounds themselves, just down Millerick Lane, they were gone. I remember when I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, there was no sign of it. At least that I can remember. I would have remembered if they were out in the middle of the field.

82. A: Pretty big structure?

M: Yeah. It was a regular rodeo grounds with grandstands. I should ask Rose, if she'd remember, why they would have torn them down. I can see no real reason to tear them down. But something happened to them. And that wasn't that long ago. We'd go down to see Mike Millerick's grandmother and her sister down Millerick Road. Right there where Larsons have their winery. A little cottage on the right-hand side. A little house. Jim Millerick's mom lived there.

83. A: Did his mom grow up there?

M: I don't know. I don't know her history.

84. A: Any other people you remember who lived or worked in the marshlands?

M: Joe Redding—that's the place that the state bought. That would be what, Camp Two? When you go to the end of Millerick Road?

85. A: Oh, down by Wingo?

M: Yeah. Before you get to Wingo. You had to pass through it to get to Wingo. Is that Camp Two?

86. A: I'm not positive.

M: Anyway, we knew Joe well, he knew my parents real well and then May Millerick and her sister, Leticia. They lived in the house there. Wingo was a thriving community when we were growing up. There were a lot of houses. Even when we were teenagers and in college. But then I noticed, I came back once, this was after I'd been gone for a while, and there wasn't much left. Obviously people weren't keeping them up and they deteriorate. They weren't built with permits. I don't even know who owned the land, how that worked with Wingo. Never did understand that. I think some of the things people just built.

87. A: Just went out [and built something]

M: Yeah. Back in the day—they were just little fishing cabins is what they were. People expanded them. There were a fair number of people living there when I was growing up. Through the 'fifties, all through the 'sixties. 'Fifties and 'sixties. But then it started to decline. That was probably into the 'seventies when it started that decline. But Wingo was kind of a little thriving community. The Bisso brothers, they had their ranch. I guess that was picked up by Fish and Game. Apparently they had stored all kinds of stuff

on that ranch, buried stuff. I don't know the whole story on it, but from what I understand, it's pretty interesting, maybe in a bad way.

88. A: Newt was telling me about them a little bit. They sound like real characters.

M: That's probably being pretty gentle. People had other names for them [both laugh].

89. A: Yeah, I've heard a few of those stories. How about any memories of floods or earthquakes?

M: Floods were legendary down at Schellville. It would rain a few inches and next thing you know the road would be closed. I remember spending the night at Yo's Triangle, that's where the Schellville Grill is.

90. A: Yeah, the fire station is there now.

M: Yeah, Yo's Triangle was the restaurant. Rich Kiser, myself and Mike Millerick, a couple of the Sangiacomos, Bill Yo and his wife Dorothy . . . It was a horrible flood—we were squeegeeing the water out. We made it, we lasted all night and the rain finally stopped and the water started going down. At least we kept it out to where it didn't destroy the place.

91. A: Didn't do a lot of damage then.

M: Inside, yeah. Floods there were just incredible. That's before they built—part of it was that they had the old metal truss bridge going across the creek right there. All the debris would get piled up against it and start backing the water up even worse. There was a tanker truck got caught trying to go through there once and got caught. That water must have been right at the intersection where that light is right now. Of course, the old fire house was right there. The water must have been four to five feet deep.

92. A: You're talking about right where Broadway comes down and hits 121, basically.

M: Yeah, right there. The truck tried to go across, he tried to make it and he didn't and then he stayed there until the water went down. The truck didn't get washed away, but it was all catawampus. The water had to have been four or five feet deep right there.

93. A: That's a lot of water, especially if it's moving.

M: Yeah, and then it'd just go out through the fields there.

94. A: Did anybody ever get swept away in a car trying to go through there?

M: I never heard that. Usually people would stay away from that.

95. A: Hopefully they're smart enough, yeah.

M: Yeah.

96. A: What was the sense of community down there? Or was there one? Was everybody out doing their own thing?

M: I never got a sense of any real community that much. Each person had their own deal they were doing. There was a community in regards to the people, the marsh, where they'd be working down there. But there wasn't that many people. You look at Kisers—they farmed two ranches there and there were only four of them, that actually farmed it. You had Yennis. Before Yennis there was somebody else and I can't remember who. So there wasn't a lot of people, there were only a handful of people. You had Haires on the other side of Skaggs Island and really there was hardly any interaction between that many people. Bissos, everybody hated Bissos. Donnell owned the piece that Kisers ended up buying. He leased it to Kisers and he wasn't involved much in the ranch itself, he wasn't. So basically it was Kisers there and Kisers down at our place and then Haires were on their own place and I think they farmed some of Skaggs Island too, Haires did. So I don't think you'd find anybody saying there was any kind of marsh community. And we never called it Baylands, it was always the Marsh.

97. A: It was the Marsh, yeah. That's how Norm referred to it, as the Marsh.

M: That's what it was.

98. A: Even stuff that had been reclaimed, it was still the Marsh.

M: Still the Marsh.

99. A: Did you ever find any Indian artifacts or anything like that?

M: No, no sign of Indians around there at all. I guess there was presence at one time, but it would have been marsh when they were there. When Ferd was telling me about this, was it Sears Point Land Company, might have been the ones that reclaimed some of that? In the early 1900s?

100. A: Yeah.

M: By that time, the Indians were gone. At least from there I think they were.

101. A: Sure, yeah.

M: I don't know if they were around Tolay Creek and there, I'm not sure.

102. A: Where you were was all former marsh, so there might have been people living over here [higher ground on the map].

M: But I wouldn't think anything around here.

103. A: Hunting and fishing was probably it, not actually living there.

M: There wasn't any kind of presence. There wasn't any kind of presence that I remember much, other than around the mission and you hear the history of it. Around there, but not down here.

104. A: Do you know any of the background of any of these names on here, like 'Knight Island'?

M: I don't know. I see 'Island Number One.' That's real inventive and then 'Island Number Two.' But I don't know about Knight. I don't think my dad and uncle knew much about the history of it and they didn't seem to care too much. Neither one of them seemed to delve into the history. If they did, they never told us. I do remember, when I started working there in the 'sixties, there were concrete slabs all up and down on the entrance to the ranch, for the gun emplacements for World War Two.

105. A: Oh really.

M: Yeah, because of Mare Island. There were large gun emplacement pads, driving in down our road. Then there was a little piece we owned across the road, it's flooded now. You come off over Napa River, it's right on the left-hand side. It's a little piece of brackish water. That used to be farmed by Kisers, because it belonged to us. The road going in there, there were gun emplacement pads. I remember they were still there when I was a teenager.

106. A: That makes sense. I've seen that elsewhere in the Bay area.

M: You see them up on the Marin Headlands, the old ... these were just pads and they had anti-aircraft guns mounted on these pads.

107. A: Did your parents, or anyone you knew, have any stories about what was going on in the marsh during the war, besides, of course, Skaggs Island?

M: They weren't involved in it until after the war. I don't know what Irvine was doing with it, whether they were leasing it to someone, or trying to run it themselves, I don't

know, during the war. It was livestock and hay. There was an old drawbridge—it's gone now---that was right near the headquarters where you went in. It was a little wooden drawbridge that they could raise up. It was in pretty bad shape when we were kids. They hadn't used it for years and it crossed over to get to that other piece.

108. A: Crossed over Dutchman Slough?

M: Yeah, crossed over Dutchman's Slough. It was right near the improvements.

109. A: So maybe [they were using] barges to bring supplies in?

M: It was pretty high, so boats could pass under it. It was non-functional when we were kids. They left it there for a long time. I think it was still there in the 'nineties. Then they must have torn it down. It was in bad shape when we were kids. You know, you'd walk over it, but there were holes. Big thick planks, but they were deteriorated pretty badly.

110. A: How would you describe people's attitudes about the marsh or about the land when you were growing up?

M: In regards to ...?

111. A: I'm thinking, was there an ethic of stewardship? Like Norm told me, of course if you're a farmer you've got to take care of your land if you want to make a profit. Was there that practical sort of sense [of stewardship]?

M: There was definitely a practical part of it as far as Kisers farmed, for instance. They were excellent farmers. You wanted to make sure the levees were maintained, those kind of things. They'd have to pump in the wintertime, since it was below sea level. They had a couple big pipes right there near the headquarters, near the end of these drainage ditches that were throughout the whole ranch. They'd bring a "CAT" in there and use the drive off of that to pump, because there was no electricity to pump the water out when it was raining. Otherwise it would pretty much flood. Fill up. No place for the water to go.

112. A: Would they pump it across 37?

M: No, right into Dutchman Slough. They'd just put two pipes right through the levee. Two metal pipes, they were probably sixteen-inch pipes and they'd pump the water out that way. They'd run it twenty-four/seven. They'd have someone down there, staying in this little shed with the cat to make sure something didn't break. When they were pumping, they'd always have to have someone down there. It was also a business for them. There wasn't a sense of habitat or recreational use. It was their business—the

peoples' business. Not just the Kisers, but everybody's business and that's how they made their living.

113. A: Newt was telling me he used it mostly for recreation. He used to go down and go hunting and fishing. Would people have some kind of arrangement with the farmers? If someone wanted to hunt on the Kisers' property, would they just go to the Kisers and ask if they could do it or get permission?

M: Yeah. Like on our ranch, we were the ones. So if someone wanted to do that, they'd ask us. They would ask Kisers sometimes, but most of the time they'd just refer them to us. Because nobody else had keys. We were the only ones beside Kisers that had keys. Of course, you had the normal trespassers. I do remember once on Dutchman, there was a Deputy Sheriff my dad knew. I was probably twelve, thirteen years old. And he had a houseboat. It was an old houseboat. He wanted to put it on the ranch and have a place to go and fish and hunt. My dad thought it was a good idea. It was a Deputy Sheriff, so there would be a presence there you know. People would go up and down the slough. It was kind of wide open. And Guadalcanal Village was right here [points on map] and that's military housing.

114. A: On the west side of the Napa River? I'm not familiar with it.

M: Yes, it was. There was military housing on both sides. That's where they housed a lot of military families. I don't know when they stopped that. During the war and after the war there were thousands of people living there. They could walk right down the levee and there you go [right onto the Cullinan's property]. So you'd have people walking in all the time. So he thought, 'Hey, great idea' to have this Deputy Sheriff down there. So I remember they floated it there and pulled it off into one of those little level flat areas I was telling you about. So it was sitting there. I'd say within thirty days, we go down there. Dad said, 'Well let's go down to the ranch, we gotta go look at this houseboat. People went in there, they'd smashed every fixture. The toilets, the sinks . . . it was like some crazy people. They shot the cabinets. They shot everything in that place. This is like thirty days after the guy put it there. A few months after that, they drug it out of there and that was that.

115. A: What a shame.

M: I'll never forget that. I've never seen anything like it. It was like just a pack of crazed people on meth or something. They beat the toilets until there was nothing but pieces of porcelain. Same thing with the sinks, it was amazing. The cabinets, shotguns, mostly shotguns. Either that or they knew that this guy was a Deputy Sheriff, I don't know. The house we had there, people pretty much stayed away from that. Of course, Kisers were always down there. There was usually someone there, even though no one

there overnight. I do remember once going there and some guys had stole all the radiators and fire extinguishers off the equipment for the metal. All the combines had all the radiators gone. So someone did come in and steal that. Not too often, given the location, which was right next to a city. I mean the gates were heavy with big padlocks. You could break in, these people did. They might have come in by boat. I don't remember the locks being broken.

There was a dock going out, right by the house. Nice dock, you could walk right up to it. But for the most part, there wasn't much. The house was finally falling in on itself. My parents and aunt and uncle didn't seem to want to keep that up. Kisers kept the barn up. I do remember when they were pouring concrete into the old livestock barn. We did that and Kisers could store their grain there. So our parents had the barn concreted. I remember the concrete trucks coming in and filling it up. Then they built a pole barn out near the road for hay storage.

116. A: Before they put the concrete in, was it just a dirt floor?

M: Just a typical barn. It was a nice barn, a big barn. I call them just traditional western-style barns. It was a good barn. It was a dairy, way back when. There was still the dairy barn there. There were a couple other small sheds, just low-cost dirt floor sheds. Across one of the sloughs there was another barn out in a field. They eventually tore that down. But they kept the sheds and the barns around the house. Kisers used the barns for equipment storage.

117. A: I suppose if you had a dairy there you could just take your milk into Vallejo.

M: Back in those days, they'd just use the cans. I remember getting stuck—they were bringing the cattle in and they brought them over the bridge. They were coming in, there was a set of gates there and I remember getting stuck in the mud and mom had to come pull me out. Probably my attitude about how I would have maintained the ranch was different than my dad and uncle's. They didn't care too much about keeping everything neat and clean and picked up. It was pretty 'western.' Of course, they had to pay for it, so it was a little different back in those days. They didn't have a lot of money. They didn't have much at all, but they ended up buying it. They got a loan from Bank of America. I'm not sure how the heck they did it. They wouldn't be able to do it nowadays. But they did. They didn't have much when they came from Montague.

118. A: Were they farmers up in Montague?

M: Actually they worked on the oil field. My dad was active. He worked in South America and Borneo for Standard Oil and Shell. That was his life after he left Ireland. My uncle, was in Mexico, Uncle Morris, so he met him in Mexico and they worked Mexico and South America in the oil fields. And then dad went to Borneo. Uncle Morris, I don't

know how he ended up in Montague. I think he was in Montana for a while, but he ended up in Montague with a little ranch up there. I guess he must have sold that. I don't know if he was renting it or whatever. I don't know how they found this one. They leased it for about five years and must have had enough resources to buy it. Then Dad bought a place in Sonoma, where my sister lives. Uncle Morris bought a place just down the street from him. Which was pretty typical. You didn't have a lot of people living on these properties.

119. A: Sounds more like they were places to visit or work, but not live.

M: They weren't the most hospitable. Down at the ranch, you've got that constant wind, you've got mosquitoes, you've got crappy water—whatever water is there is not very good.

120. A: How did you get your water?

M: There's a well there on the ranch. There were a number of wells powered by windmills when they had the livestock. The windmills were taken down except there at the headquarters. There was one there. And then Ferd put a little pump on there with a gas engine and he'd pump water to a storage tank there.

121. A: If you had a well down there, if it was shallow, it would be kind of brackish, wouldn't it?

M: Yeah, you have to go pretty deep. I don't know much about the wells there, but they were adequate for the cattle. Couldn't have been too brackish—the cattle drank it. [discussion of well locations places on the map] There was a little settlement of about three cabins. People used to use our ranch to get into them and they finally cut them off and they had to come in by boat. I don't know whatever happened to them. They weren't involved with Can Duck Club. There was a little 'No Man's Land' in there and they had these cabins. It was pretty typical before the war and even after, there were little settlements all over. Like Tolay Creek, they had a store there and houses.

122. A: Right there by the road?

M: Right there, on the south side of the road. There was like an old time convenience store. They sold bait and beer and soda and everything. There were people living there, they had houses. There were these little communities here and there.

123. A: Just enough business from hunting and fishing to make a living.

M: Just enough to keep them open. There was that one, where I was telling you where the dredgers were. There was a little bait shop there and he'd get enough business. You know, when I was a kid. Of course that wasn't that far after the war. The

war ended in 1945, so we were around there in the 'fifties and 'sixties. That wasn't that long—ten, fifteen years after the war.

124. A: This was Guadalcanal Village [pointing to map].

M: Yeah and they had those two-story barracks there. I think they were on both sides of the road. If you go there, you might be able to see some outlines on the south side, outlines of foundations. There was a lot of people and they were right next to the ranch. You could just jump the fence.

125. A: Those gun emplacements, are those still there?

M: No.

126. A: They were taken out.

M: I'm pretty sure they're all gone.

127. A: I think we've done a pretty good job. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

M: This has been good. I'll be interested to see the finished product.

128. A: Absolutely.

M: If I see Hugh, I'll ask him if he'd be interested in visiting with you.

129. A: Sure.

M: He might have more recent experiences from when he was a game warden in the area. this was within the last ten, fifteen years.

130. A: We're talking about for the video, of starting out with the history and going into the future. Where things are going.

M: Hugh's not a big fan of these guys breaching the levee, I can tell you that. We had two visits down at the ranch. Pat arranged them with some other folks—I think they were with Fish and Game. We went down there twice—the last time was maybe a year and a half ago. Hugh's not a big fan, he was giving the Fish and Game guy a hard time about breaching the levee. He thinks they should have just left it alone, left the habitat the way it was. What you see now. I agree with him. Turn it into pickleweed. If I see Hugh this weekend, I talk to him and see if he'd be interested.

131. A: One last question. Where do you see the future of the marshlands? Do you have a sense of where things are going?

M: All the biologists are running the show it seems like and I can understand it, they want to turn it back to what it was in the 1800s, which was true marshland. I think that's where it's going. There's nothing else you can do with it. The farming is going to die out, which it is now anyway. It'll just turn into mitigation ground, which would turn it back into marshland. Which is not a bad thing. It'll be a huge, massive habitat area. I don't think that's a bad thing.

The amount of farming that was done, there was never anything overly significant about the farming. In other words, there was not a real sense of some special community. Kisers lived in Sonoma, you know what I mean, and they commuted down to the ranch. People that commute down there and then live some other place. The amount of farming that was done, in the whole scheme of things, will probably end up being a short period in its total history. Once they start breaching the levees, then you'll just have tidelands.

132. A: Then you can ride up there in a boat.

M: Hugh and I made kayaks when we were in high school. We used to go duck hunting with our kayaks. That was pretty good.

133. A: Made out of wood or?

M: Wood frame. Hugh built the wood frame, mahogany frame, in wood shop in high school, Sonoma High, and then he and I covered them in fiberglass cloth. I gave mine to my cousin, Jack Minoni, he lives up in Wyoming. Hugh may still have his. They were pretty neat. We paddled around.

134. A: Well thank you. It's been great.

M: Yeah, this was interesting.

Interview with Newt DalPoggetto

at his home, 555 Crest Way, Sonoma, California

October 7, 2014

N = Newt DalPoggetto; A = Arthur Dawson

A: [preliminary conversation. Recording starts with Newt going over some place names]

N: I'm trying to remember where I saw the 'Reclamation' sign. That's where it was.

2. A: Down by the bay, yeah.

N: Yeah. That sign was there forever. I don't know where Hog Island is. It's a vaguely familiar name.

3. A: I'm thinking it might be over on the Petaluma River.

N: Could be. It's so interesting to see how the changes have occurred and how things go slowly, but they move. Like right now, we have a completely different culture than we had in 1950.

4. A: I'm sure. I was born in '59 and the world I grew up in was way different.

N: Yeah. My son was born in '56. I asked him, 'What are you going to do with all this?' [referring to all the papers and things in Newt's office]. And he says, 'Rent a dumpster.' [both laugh]. My oldest daughter Lynn would say, 'Well Dad we gotta keep all this, because I want to go through it all. And twenty years later, she still hasn't gone through it.'

5. A: It kind of accumulates, yeah.

N: My wife's Aunt Pearl's stuff is up in the library. Lynn's been going through and she died in 1982 at the age of a hundred. So she has all of her old stuff but it's all from Colorado, Kansas, Iowa, not out here. So daughter Lynn is still going through it. [Laughs] Thirty years later.

6. A: Did your kids grow up on this property?

N: Yeah. Mark, he's the youngest. We'd been here two years when he was born. We were in Sonoma when Sandra was born. They were both born in the old hospital. My daughter Lynn was born down in Santa Clara when I was in law school down there.

7. A: I was reading that article that just came out yesterday on you in *The Sun*. They said how you were one pregnancy away from going to Harvard Law School.

N: That's right. I was admitted to Harvard Law School and by god, we got married and three months later she turned up pregnant and it was all her fault [laughs]. So I was afraid to go back to Harvard because we didn't have any money. I was just on the GI bill. I had done my undergraduate before. I'd had enough units to graduate in seven semesters but I didn't have senior residence anywhere. University of New Mexico offered me a degree—that was my first four months in the Navy. I thought that was just a junk school. I didn't like it at all. Then I went to Columbia and that was wonderful. I could have stayed there for quite some time. It was a lot different than Albuquerque.

8. A: [pause while video camera and mike is set up]

N: I guess we're all waiting for rain. This is about as bad as we've had it. The air has been drier. That's one thing I've noticed. But this little moisture we've had helped a great deal. More than meets the eye. I measure the rainfall here and have for years. We've only had like thirty-six-hundredths of an inch. I get a little more rain.

9. A: You're up a little bit.

N: Yeah. I get ten percent more than Sonoma. I don't get as much as Glen Ellen.

10. A: We probably get as much as fifty percent more than Sonoma.

N: Yeah. And down in the sloughs, in Schellville, you know that weather station on top of the firehouse? They get 22 inches. Sonoma is 30. Here is about 33. Santa Rosa's 31 and a half.

11. A: Glen Ellen's around 40 I think.

N: Oh yeah. A good forty. I'd guess downtown Glen Ellen is just about the wettest spot in the valley. On the valley floor.

12. A: That's probably true. If you go up high in the mountains there's some places that get 60 inches.

N: You know, my first law office in the Grinstead-Poppe building [Sonoma Plaza] was in the back and I was next door to the Soil Conservation Group. I was in there one morning looking at their rainfall maps and I was shocked to see that the top of Sonoma Mountain had an average rainfall of 70 inches!

13. A: Really? Wow!

N: Whereas Veeder Mountain over there was about 46. Sonoma, historically, was about 25, 26 inches. We didn't have as much rainfall as we've had in recent years. They've upped the average, the so-called 'ten-year average.' When I was a kid it was 25 inches and we've moved up to just about 30.

14. A: [final adjustments for camera] We'll start officially now. Just tell us briefly about your past in Sonoma, how you were born here.

N: First it might be best to say that my grandfather, Charles, arrived in Glen Ellen in 1875 and had his first job with his two other bachelor brothers pruning grapes, vineyards up on the Frohling and Kohler Ranch, which later became the London Ranch.

15. A: Oh yeah, OK.

N: In due course, later on being a bachelor, he wandered down into Glen Ellen and this widow lady befriended him and bought him a barber and dentist chair. And he became a barber and dentist, self-taught. Dentists only pulled teeth at the time. It was no wonder nobody wanted to see them. So then he finally rode his bicycle down to Sonoma and bought a little bar I guess it was, and he finally moved to Sonoma and became a barber and tavern owner and went into business and was very successful. Then he married my grandmother, who had come over from what was then Savoy, now part of northern Italy. He married her in 1890 in the mission. Then they lived in Sonoma thereafter. My father was born on Napa Street, behind his barber shop and bar in 1896. Then he went to Sonoma Grammar and High School as did two older sisters. I was born in Sonoma in 1922. So we've been in Sonoma a long time.

16. A: Certainly one of the older families in the area.

N: Yeah. Of course, the town has changed from being a Spanish/Mexican outpost into a little small town city. My grandfather was the mayor in 1918 when the war ended. He declared Armistice Day a holiday and was severely criticized for shutting down businesses for a day.

17. A: [Both laugh] Not much patriotic spirit! That's funny.

N: But he was very proud of his son, who was over in France at the time.

18. A: So his son was your father.

N: Yeah.

NEWT DALPOGGETTO

19. A: Did your Dad spend a lot of time down in the Baylands when he was a kid?

N: Oh yes! He grew up down there. He was an avid fisherman and duck hunter. Especially he liked duck hunting in what he called 'the sloughs' which are now called the Baylands.

20. A: OK.

N: So at an early age, he started taking me down there. I have my first memories that he bought an Essex four-door sedan, a 1926 or '7 model. We would ride down there and go bass fishing. I didn't go duck hunting with him until I was about out of high school because in his early years, he and his friends had shot all the ducks. They were practically wiped out. So they didn't really come back in huntable amounts until the late '30s. Even then it was sparse, there wasn't much. He followed the principle that there isn't a resource we can't destroy [laughs]. He did his share with ducks. He loved duck hunting. He had many stories, he liked to tell stories.

21. A: What was one of your favorite stories of his?

N: He particularly liked canvas backs. He would go down around Wingo, up from Wingo, at what he called Turkey Point, which is now where Nathanson Creek and Arroyo [Seco?] Creek empty into the slough and it goes down . . .

22. A: Kind of around Skagg's Island?

N: The canal up there. You go from Wingo up around to Turkey Point, then east of Turkey Point is Ringstrom's Bay where he hunted ducks. They had a lot of mallards in Ringstrom's Bay. They still do. To the left, the slough went around and then down through what is now Mulas'. They combined Nathanson Creek and Arroyo Creek joined and they go down into salt water there. That's where the sewer used to empty was right there into the bay.

23. A: Really.

N: Untreated sewer before we had a sewer line. Then it went down to what we would call Pecker's Point. Where that came from I don't know. At Pecker's Point, what we called the canal went to the west and crossed the railroad, the little flat railroad bridge, and went up and ended up around Millerick's, on the east side of Millerick's, and petered out up there. That's basically where he did his hunting. And some on Hudeman Slough. Of course he loved to go over to the rice fields.

24. A: Over in the Sacramento Valley?

NEWT DALPOGGETTO

N: In the Sacramento Valley is where he did a lot of the duck hunting. Much better duck hunting over there. He and a group of Sonoma guys used to go over and get an outrageous amount of ducks. By the time I reached say seven or eight years old, his duck hunting days were finished. There weren't any ducks down here. It was really sort of terrible.

25. A: Did he have a boat?

N: Yeah, he had a boat in the canal. We had it tied up down there. A little rowboat and an outboard motor. We'd go down to the sloughs. But mainly for fishing it was easier to go down to Wingo and then up to the slough to the left. What we called the Wingo Slough, that eventually goes up to the canal. That was his main area of hunting and fishing. Sometimes he'd go to Ramal. He had a boat at Ramal, a little rowboat. We'd go down the Ramal Slough and get into Hudeman Slough and fish in that general area and over to the east on Hudeman Slough, past where the little landing is now. Up to the east to an area called 'The Bear Pit.' Which had pretty good bass fishing. I don't know why the fish seemed to congregate more up there, but they did.

26. A: And you were mostly bass fishing?

N: Yeah. By this time there was only bass fishing down there. Then he trout fished in Sonoma Creek. I caught my first trout at the age of six, which would have been 1928, right at the bridge in Adobe Canyon. Right there. Still remember it.

27. A: That's cool.

N: May first on Sonoma Creek was the opening of fishing season every year. It was just jammed with local people. All the local men basically, my father's friends all went fishing up there. It was pretty good trout fishing too.

28. A: Was bass season all year-round?

N: Yeah, bass season was all year-round. Trout season was May first to November first.

29. A: Did you ever see anything else down there in the sloughs—sturgeon or other types of fish?

N: No. Sturgeon was a sort of a myth at that time. They were in San Pablo Bay but nobody caught them. Sturgeon really proliferated in later years and they're quite fishable now. But striped bass were the main thing. I guess striped bass were introduced here round about eighteen-seventy something, as I recall from reading. The striped bass really proliferated in San Pablo Bay and in the sloughs and up the

Sacramento River. Up as far as Sacramento. I caught bass right off of downtown Sacramento. Which still has about two feet of tideland up there. People find that surprising.

30. A: All the way up.

N: Yeah.

31. A: How about carp, did you ever see carp?

N: Oh yes, but only in Sonoma Creek.

32. A: Not down in the salt water.

N: No. But carp are in salt water in lower Sonoma Creek and there's a lot of carp in there now. If you know where Roble's was, just north of him, was the railroad bridge on Sonoma Creek. I used to go down there. Leonard Roble was a friend and Helberg's before that. I used to trout fish down there. Later on in May and early June that was a good place to fish because the trout would moving down.

33. A: Catch them on their way out, then.

N: Yeah, on their way out to sea. They were smolting. And that was pretty good trout fishing in there. At Roble's, there's another couple that owns it now and I don't know them, there was about two feet, three feet of tidewater there. So when the tide was out that was the best time to fish.

34. A: So was Roble's—I know there's a hump on Broadway that's where the old railroad track use to be. It would have been directly west of there?

N: From the hump—that was a railroad track—to the north, the first orchard you see on the left, there's an nice orchard there now—Roble planted apple trees. Before that it was the Helberg place and they had a rock crusher. They took a lot of rock out of Sonoma Creek, which is one of the problems with the shallowing of the creek. Down there it didn't hurt much. Tidewater goes up to about Bobby Kiser's place, less than a half mile up Sonoma Creek. It's shallower there now because the gravel's gone and you don't have the gravel bars and . . .

35. A: Yeah, I've seen pictures.

N: . . . the holes that used to be three to four feet deep are now about sixteen inches deep.

36. A: 'Cause it's all filled in with mud and stuff.

N: They've taken the gravel out from the bars so the holes are not as big. The gravel's gone and there's kind of a clay-like rock base and that's it. So that's why Sonoma Creek is much shallower.

37. A: That makes sense, yeah.

N: And makes it warmer and it's not as good trout habitat. But in those days, before there was a lot of gravel taken out, Sonoma Creek was much deeper and had bigger holes which were lovely. You see pictures of people in boats around Boyes Springs. That's when we had more gravel and deeper holes.

38. A: It's a shame we've lost that.

N: It's one of the things that we've done to Sonoma Creek.

39. A: So tell me about Greg Jones and that whole operation down there.

N: I think I first met Greg Jones when he kicked me out from down what would be close to Wingo. When you go in past Millerick's and enter the Jones' Ranch.

40. A: Is that where the gate is now?

N: Yeah. That was right about there, right about where the gate is. From there the road goes to Wingo, which was open then.

41. A: Yeah I've walked that road.

N: Greg Jones didn't have a gate there then, so you could go right through. Later on there was a gate put in. We would like to go fish in the little canal there because we'd take our fly rods and we'd catch undersized bass but they were great sport. Maybe at the time the size limit was twelve inches, so we would always, in an afternoon, catch some over twelve, thirteen, fourteen inches. We'd catch maybe thirty or forty of the undersized ones and it was great sport. We'd get two bits worth of sardines and go down there. I would go down with Little Doc McGrath and maybe one or two others that are gone now and we'd spend the afternoon fishing. Greg would come patrolling by and say, 'This is private property. You can't fish here.' Of course he knew my father and he wouldn't kick him out as readily as he'd kick us out [laughs]. So I met him actually through my father when I was probably seven or eight years old, fishing down there. Greg would come by. He was a nice gentlemanly guy and tell us that this was private property and he didn't want people down there. Which was normal.

42. A: How big was his ranch?

N: Twelve thousand acres. Of which half of it is Skagg's Island. The Jones Ranch, which Senator Jones, I suppose, bought possibly from General Vallejo. Allegedly, General Vallejo's land grant extended from Vallejo up to Glen Ellen and halfway to Petaluma. I don't know how Senator Jones, who was a senator from Nevada, and made money in the Comstock Lode, he was a mining entrepreneur. He had money and he was elected by the Nevada Legislature to the U.S. Senate. I always thought he was a senator from California and I never could find him. I didn't know for a long time he was a senator from Nevada, until I read it somewhere. So he came and had the idea of buying the marshlands and reclaiming them. But he was apparently an absentee landlord, so he hired people to do that. When I was a little boy, the Jones Ranch was a twelve-thousand acre ranch which extended from Millerick's on the west to Skagg's Island to the east and up to the road at Ramal and Mazzanotta's on the north and to the bay on the south.

43. A: Mazzanotta's is at?

N: Mazzanotta's is on Ramal Road, off of 37. Go down Ramal Road and right before it turns to the east, on the right is Mazzanotta's Dairy. And then the tidelands start right there and Ringstrom's Bay is right there. And the top of Camp Four is right there. Camp Four of the Jones Ranch. Jones had it divided into six camps.

44. A: What were the camps used for?

N: Mainly for growing hay. I suppose most of the hay was oat hay. That's what it is today and has been as long as I knew one type of hay from another. Jones Ranch was basically a hay ranch and they did grow some grain. I know they grew some grain during the war years and before the Jones Ranch was broken up and the government bought Skagg's Island for a radio station.

45. A: So that was right on the eve of World War Two when that happened?

N: Yeah. At the beginning of World War Two. The Sonoma Land Company, which the Jones Ranch became, was a corporation; who the stockholders were I have no idea, but Greg Jones was the manager of it. They retained Greg, who was probably the grandson of Senator Jones. I don't know anything about his father. They lived in Marin County at the time. They lived in Marin when I was a small boy. They didn't really move up here until after the war.

46. A: That's when they bought the adobe on Spain Street.

N: Yeah. Greg and Harriet. They took that old adobe and Greg managed the place, I guess, all of his adult life. So his father before him must have had something to do with it, but I didn't know him. But they failed, they went broke.

47. A: What do you think the reasons for that were? Why did it go under?

N: He couldn't make enough money on it from hay. There was no real demand for it and they couldn't grow anything else. They could grow a little grain, but that was poor land compared to the quality of land up the valley—they had good dairies and grew better, far better crops. Especially the fruit crops and vineyards. This was vineyard country back from General Vallejo's time. We have much better land up here. That was very marginal soil.

48. A: So even back then it was still marginal?

N: Yeah. Of course there was salt intrusion. They had a hard time growing the usual crops because it was all salt marshland.

49. A: Do you know if they developed varieties of hay or grain that would do better in those conditions?

N: I didn't know that except that I knew that all six camps grew hay or grain. I wouldn't know the difference at that time between one or the other. They had threshers which fascinated me, grain threshers. They would have a pretty large crew of a dozen or so guys that would run the threshers there for maybe a couple of months in the summertime cutting the hay and threshing it out. So I would see hay bales around. I was assuming, without knowing, that there was some grain there. But oats also is cut out of the hay, so it could have been oats. Now it's all been oat hay in the last sixty years I don't think there's been and grain planted there since World War Two. But I know there was some grain during World War Two when they sold grain to the army. I'd met when I was in the Navy, in the mid'40s when I came home, an Army captain who was in charge of buying the hay there, and I thought grain. But I never saw it.

50. A: Was the army feeding horses?

N: Oh yeah. At that time we still had a little cavalry left!

51. A: My grandfather was in the cavalry in the late '30s I think.

N: Yeah, the cavalry lasted into the '40s. I don't know how it petered out in World War Two. I knew one guy who went to work at the American Trust Bank after the war. I first met him when I was an ensign and he was a captain in the Army and he had his

boots—he was in the cavalry. Really?! So that was my last memory of the cavalry. The war was about over, it was 1945, later '45.

52. A: You mentioned the thresher. Can you describe what that machine looked like?

N: It was big, they're Allis-Chalmers, just like what you see now in Kansas and so on. You'd cut the hay with some other [machine] and Jones Ranch had a lot of horses that they pulled to cut hay, mow hay. They had a lot of work horses. They had bunkhouses on some, if not all of the camps, where the men would stay and work the ranch. They would plow and disc and plant seeds and eventually harvest the crop. I always thought it was grain as a kid; of course I didn't know the difference. I think they had oat hay and barley and other things too, but I don't really know that.

53. A: There must have been some stables and things at these camps.

N: Oh yeah. They each had bunkhouses in them. One bunkhouse that I know still survives is on Camp Four. That 1200 acres is owned by the Leveroni family, 1183 acres. There's a bunkhouse there and I've been in it many times. During Bob Leveroni's time we used to have annual parties down there. So that's why they had it divided into six camps, they were work camps. Finally they built redwood houses. But I suppose they originally camped down there.

54. A: Just tents maybe.

N: I don't remember any of them. That was before my time. But I remember the houses and I remember the flatbed trucks—they'd haul these guys around in them. I remember the threshers.

55. A: So would a group of guys move around from camp to camp?

N: Yeah. They were portable on wheels. Today they call them combines. Now they combine them. Where they cut them and thresh them all at the same time. That was before the days of the combines. So they were just the thresher part that chopped up the hay and spewed out the grain. It would come out in sacks on the side and then they would bale the hay, and hay bales would come out the other end.

56. A: Once they had the hay, how did they ship it out to other places?

N: A lot of it went out by barge. On the sloughs the Jones Ranch had two or three docks built, piers built out onto the water and they would bring the hay bales and barges would come up and they'd barge it away.

57. A: Where would they take it to?

N: I would presume the San Francisco area. They would take it down the bay, you know they'd go down San Pablo Bay and it was gone. You didn't have a port at Sacramento at the time. Every day when I was a kid, an egg boat would go down from Petaluma, loaded with eggs to San Francisco. A shallow-draft boat that was full of eggs. Then they would turn around and they'd bring up hay and grain feeds for the mills in Petaluma. That was a very busy trade at the time. I remember as a kid seeing the egg boat quite frequently going down to San Rafael. it was quite busy. We didn't have eggs over here, we had a few chicken ranches, but we weren't like Petaluma.

58. A: Egg Capital of the World, something like that.

N: At that time it was terrific. So it was Petaluma Creek, until Clem Miller got it and named it a river.

59. A: If you want to talk about that, that's an interesting story.

N: Clem Miller was a very bright guy and a friend of mine. When he got back to Washington, found out that if you would change the name of a stream to a river, creek to a river, you qualified for the Corps of Engineers' budget. Spending money! So he got Congress to change the name of Petaluma Creek to Petaluma River. They qualified then to dredge it and get federal funding and to build levees. Whereas Sonoma Creek didn't get anything.

60. A: Nobody lobbied for it [laughs]. Probably a lot more freshwater coming down this valley than Petaluma

N: We have a lot more water running down Sonoma Creek.

61. A: I always thought the Petaluma River looked more like a slough than a river.

N: It is! But they had the grain mills over there and the chickens. So they had much more to export and to import. The grain came in on those barges.

62. A: Do you remember hearing or seeing other products that were being shipped out of Sonoma, down the creek?

N: Not really. Because by the time I became aware, everything went out by railroad. Trucks were not much yet. But the railroad was the main method of shipping. Everything went out by railroad and of course we had the railroads right in the valley. For that time it was quite efficient, until trucks started to take over. That didn't really materialize until the '50s when they took all the business away from the railroads.

63. A: You must remember seeing trains going down tracks across the Bay lands.

N: Oh yeah. Ignacio was a pretty good-sized railroad yard and of course Napa Junction over on the other side. Schellville was kind of the middle ground because at Schellville was where the NWP and its predecessors came from Sausalito up. And SP came over from Napa and went up to Santa Rosa. NWP and SP, both of them met at Ignacio. Then there was the old Santa Rosa-Petaluma Railroad.

64. A: What was Schellville like in your early memories?

N: About like it is today. It has changed very little. My mother used to take me down there when I was four years old because my first awareness of an occupation was that I wanted to be a railroad engineer. She would take me down there and I would watch them switch the trains. Switch the box cars and they had steam engines. I was just fascinated by it and if she wanted to amuse me, she'd take me down there and I could watch the trains in Schellville all afternoon. It was fairly active down there. But there was nothing other than the station in Schellville. To the west there was Frank McGill's service station. An original Flying A service station and he had a garage and repair. He was a friend of my father's and an Associated Oil dealer. There was nothing else there. You still have the Schellville Grill. Then Bonneau's was over where it is now (junction of Highways 116 and 121). The Bonneau family were French and my mother could speak French, so they were friends. They had a little garage or service station there.

65. A: So what was Wingo like, as a town if you want to call it that?

N: Well it wasn't a town. Wingo was very much like it is today except the buildings are older today. It looks more rickety today. I was fascinated by walking over the sloughs. At high tide you could look between the boards and there was water. There were shacks there and there were people fishing there. I don't know why the people lived there, really. Some of them worked at the Jones Ranch of course, it's right in the Jones Ranch. Some people that worked in the Jones Ranch lived there. There may have been a few people that worked on the NWP Railroad, maybe. I don't know that. We had a fellow here who was born and reared there, who died a few years ago. He lived all of his life in Wingo. On his car he had a vanity license plate that said, 'Wingo' on it. Nobody knew where that was.

66. A: I think I might have seen that once.

N: He grew up there. I think his father was a bridge tender, 'cause they had a bridge tender.

67. A: Do you remember that bridge?

N: Oh sure. I remember it because when you came on the road to Wingo and you went up on the levee, you were right there at the bridge. To go fishing up in the Wingo Slough we called it, that's not the name, where we did our bass fishing. That's where I would go all the time. Also my father and Batista Morey(sp?) would go down there, probably in early June, and right at the bridge on the Sonoma Creek side you could catch good size catfish. The catfish would come in there in late May, early June, and spawn there. Why I don't know. At that time it wasn't as muddy as it is now. Now you look at it and it's a muddy slough in there. But I think they like the taste of the fresh water. Fresh water was pretty well down there all through the winter and it may have even been a little gravelly that has filled in since. Placer mining really did us in around here and filled in San Pablo Bay, filled in the sloughs. I went down to Hudeman Slough a couple weeks ago and it's only half as wide as it was at the boat landing there and the bridge. You can see where the banks were, the original Jones Ranch banks, which didn't have tules in them originally 'cause they dug out those sloughs and built the levees. There was much less tules when I was a kid than there is now. Look at Midshipman Slough. I remember when you could see the water running in there. You haven't been able to see the water running in there for years now. It's all grown over.

68. A: All that silt. Tolay Creek.

N: That's right. And I think more of it comes from the bay than comes down from Cardoza's Ranch as erosion. I think mud gets carried in on the bay water and floats up there on the tide and drops.

69. A: As the tide changes, yeah.

N: That's my guess.

70. A: Any other wildlife you remember down in the bay lands?

N: In addition to the variety of ducks, and I can name the varieties because I've hunted them all my life. All the bay lands pretty well have a lot of raccoons. I've never seen a possum down there, though possums are sort of ubiquitous, I don't know where they've come from. They've gotten up as far as Oakmont. I've seen them on the road. There was a lot of jack rabbits. I used to hunt jack rabbits a lot with Ernie Evans, our undertaker. We lived across the street from him. He had hunting dogs. And also Jack Poulson who was later our constable. We'd go down and hunt jack rabbits. Ernie Evans had a greyhound dog that could run the jack rabbits down. They were the best because they would tire them out—then the rabbits would start circling and then you could bang! We'd shoot the rabbits. Then I'd have to come home and skin 'em [laughs]

71. A: Then the work began.

N: Yeah, clean 'em and skin 'em. I've shot a lot of jack rabbits anywhere from south of the highway on what is now the Mulas Ranch, that was the Mitchell Ranch, on the west side of the railroad. That was good jack rabbit country in there. I think they're largely gone now. And a lot of ground squirrels.

72. A: Was this actually down on the bay lands or just a little bit up?

N: A little more up, where they could get into soil. There were a lot of ground squirrels, which are sort of glorified rats I'm told [laughs]. Deer used to come down Sonoma Creek and they'd get down as far as the Scarifoni Ranch and Millerick's along the creek. They liked the fresh water and the foliage along the creek. But where you didn't have trees, you wouldn't have deer, because they like to browse. So there wasn't any deer out on the land. There were just jack rabbits and ground squirrels and birds.

73. A: Big birds? Herons and egrets in those days?

N: They weren't as plentiful as they are now. There are a lot more egrets coming up, which you didn't used to see then. Down at our duck club, they nested down there. That's along Highway 37 on the north side. There's a lot more bird life down there than there was in the sloughs. Because the sloughs basically had ducks and mud hens. Down along 37 there's quite a few mink in there. There are some mink that go all the way through the sloughs. Nobody seems to know that. But there are mink and 'coons. I've seen the mink. They're kind of rodent like—they burrow in to the ground. I'm sure there's all kinds of rats!

74. A: Probably yeah!

N: There's a lot of owls. Like in my duck blind in Leslie Salt pond, my duck blind was a haven for barn owls. When duck season was over they had the place to themselves for months. They would hatch their eggs and nest. They caught a lot of field mice—there's a lot of field mice down there, that's the main food supply for, not only owls, but I would imagine for the 'coons and ground squirrels. We have them here. They can get through the vents. Never see them. The cat catches one once in a while. I think there's a great amount of mice and rats down there that nobody seems to mention. That's why the owls are quite prolific. And the other birds, like the kestrels, the sparrow hawks. You have the red-tailed hawks. We actually have more of them around now than we used to 'cause nobody is shooting them. I think we have as much or more bird life now throughout the entire valley than we did. That includes ducks down there. Hunting is very limited. Hardly anybody goes duck hunting down there now. If you went to Ringstrom's Bay up around Wingo during duck season you'd take your life in your hands! There were people behind [laughing] every bunch of tules and bang! But I think that's greatly diminished.

75. A: How about ospreys? Ever see any ospreys?

N: No. They're a great bird, but they're a recent development here. Down at the duck ponds, one of the great sights on early December mornings, we're seeing about 40 to 80 white pelicans floating by, right on the edge of San Pablo Bay. They wouldn't come into the pond, but they'd go down the bay. They'd come through Carquinez in the early morning sunlight. God they were a magnificent sight. I counted as many as 80 of them, anywhere from 40 to 80. But they don't come north of the bay. Down there I've seen an occasional pheasant. We planted some pheasants here in 1932. My father was part of the group that planted them. We planted them first down at Leveroni Ranch, to the east. So they kind of meandered into the sloughs, bay lands area. We have a few pheasants down there today even.

76. A: Ever see any burrowing owls? They live in burrows in the ground.

N: No. I'm not familiar with them.

77. A: I think the Land Trust did some habitat work for burrowing owls.

N: There are several kinds of owls in the valley. Robert Grinstead and I did our bird study and we kept it up after we got our merit badge in Boy Scouts. He finally ended up with over 300 birds in California. His folks had a cabin up at Pinecrest and he would get the Sierra birds, where I wouldn't. Until I went up there with him. But I got the bay birds. When you go down along Highway 37 you get the shorebirds. There's a lot of bird life down there. Really as much or more now than I ever recall. We're not killing birds like we used to. You know the Italians and the French just decimated the robins around here. I'm not proud to say that I shared in it.

78. A: A different time.

N: Yeah. My wife—when I married her, I was still shooting robins—thought that it was a crime, that that was terrible. But those Italian quail were in every pot around here from these old families.

79. A: Is that what they were called, Italian Quail?

N: Yeah [laughs].

80. A: I remember Bill Lynch telling me how he took robins to Sylvia Sebastiani.

N: And we have more quail now. We have quail here [on his property]. We encourage the birds here. We have feeders out and everything and it's wonderful. So we've gotten far more ecological in later years than we were. I grew up at a time when

hunting and fishing was for food as well as for recreation. It was both. Now I feel guilty if I shoot anything. I quit duck hunting. I felt badly about it.

81. A: Before we had the cameras rolling you were telling me about how Highway 37 began. If you don't mind recounting that a bit.

N: My earliest memory of Highway 37 was probably about 1930, when my father took me down to the mouth of Sonoma Creek to go fishing. There was a new road that we could get out there to Sonoma Creek. That was a private road and good old Mr. Farrell, Dale Farrell's father, was the toll taker on the Sonoma Creek bridge, because it was a toll road. Private road and eventually, maybe by the late '30s or 1940, the state of California bought it. It was a narrow, two-lane highway over the mud flats.

82. A: Was it paved at that time?

N: Yeah, it was paved but it was very bumpy because of the soil. It was built on mud a lot of it. Better soil from Sears Point to the Sonoma Creek bridge, which it still is today. The grain fields and the Yennis have the northern part. That's Tubbs Island. But from Sonoma Creek bridge to the Napa/Vallejo bridge, Napa Slough and Vallejo, was pretty muddy and pretty narrow. It was a narrow two-lane highway and it was dangerous even then. People would have a lot of head-on collisions. They had no place to go. They took it [the road] up out of the mud and they had water along the sides most of the time and it was salt water besides. It was kind of a dangerous road to travel. It still is.

83. A: Even in the early '90s I remember they didn't have that divider and it was scary.

N: Oh yeah. Many head-on collisions. Oh yes and deadly ones.

84. A: Would it get flooded at high tide occasionally? Or in a big storm?

N: No, I never saw it flooded. There was a lot of flooding in the sloughs some winters. In fact the Leveroni's Camp Four, which was well-leveed, became a lake. I used to call it Lake Victoria for Vic Leveroni [laughs]. Bob didn't like that. He was one of my best friends. Then they would have a levee breach sometimes. I've taken my boat down and motored to get to the bunkhouse. I'd take my boat down and putter around Lake Victoria from Ramal Road over there.

85. A: Is the bunkhouse high enough not to get flooded?

N: Yeah, it was up maybe that high [motions with hand]. The water would get up maybe two-and-a-half, three feet. That would happen though when the levee would breach and on the north side, which is around from the Wingo side.

86. A: It was the force of the water coming out of Sonoma Valley that would breach the levee?

N: It was fresh water, so a lot of it must have come from Sonoma Creek. When Sonoma Creek overflows, you know, right at Schellville, it would flow down and go over that way and it could've gotten that far. But with a high tide in December, if you have heavy rain and your December high tide, like in June, it would flood. But it had to come largely from Sonoma Creek. There was a lot of water and Lake Victoria used to come into existence every two or three years. And it happened for a long time. Bob Leveroni, after Vic died, spent a lot of money on enhancing the levee, building it up on the north side—I think that's where the water came from. It basically had to be overflow from Sonoma Creek.

87. A: You mentioned the Petaluma River and how there was federal money for those levees. Has there been efforts here to try to get federal money for levees?

N: Oh yes. In fact when I came back to Sonoma in 1950 and I met our Congressman Hubert B. Scudder from Sebastopol. He made a career out of bringing Corps of Engineers people up to Sonoma Creek and we had a Soil Conservation District Board here, which consisted of Wes Haire, Dewey Donnell, Vic Leveroni, the Maffei brothers, and other farmers who were trying to get federal money to keep their lands from flooding. So they would get ahold of Scudder. Scudder would bring in the Corps of Engineers people and try to get federal appropriations. He kept getting reelected around here on his efforts to do that, among other things. Only he never was successful. Finally the Corps of Engineers told him that, just about the time Clem Miller came on the scene, 'Oh cut it out. That's not a navigable waterway, there's nothing there any more, you're not going to get any federal funds. If you farmers don't want to spend the money to build up the levee to protect your lands, then it's your ball first and ten.' And nobody's ever done it. I remember the Bisso brothers complaining bitterly about that, because by that time they were on the scene. They owned Camp One, they bought Camp One. The Maffeis bought Camp One before the Bissos. They had a slaughterhouse. They sold Camp One to the Bissos.

88. A: Was there a slaughterhouse right at Camp One?

N: Close to it, on Maffei Road.

89. A: Yeah, I know where Maffei Road is.

N: Where Maffei Road goes down to get to the slaughterhouse. On the east side of the slaughterhouse was the Maffei property and it was the beginning of Camp One. The Maffeis bought Camp One when it came up for sale. Leveronis bought Camp Four and the government bought Skaggs—Camp Six. Ig Vella's father owned a piece of ground down

there, probably on Camp Two along with Ben Behler and Rico Gallo, they owned a part of Camp Two. I think Joe Redding did—he lived right next to Millericks.

90. A: So these were all the people that when the Jones Ranch split up . . .

N: Yeah, they bought pieces of it. So Skaggs was the biggest, that's six thousand acres. Leveroni bought eleven hundred acres. Wes Haire's father bought the east side of Skagg's Island, which he's just selling now.

91. A: Yeah, Jim Haire is still around. That's his son?

N: Yeah, that's Wes Haire's son. Actually it was Jimmy's grandfather who bought that land on the east side of Skagg's Island. And they do grow grain. That's pretty good soil on a large part of Camp Six. My guess, without knowing, on the better soil they would grow grain, on the lesser soil they would grow oat hay.

92. A: That makes sense. Tell us about the Bissos.

N: [Laughs] Well the three Bisso brothers! The oldest, Jim Bisso was one year ahead of me, from the first grade. Jack Bisso was in my class and Bill Bisso was living with his mother in San Francisco and was the youngest and the craziest. Father Bisso, who was a crusty old guy, lived where the Sangiacomos live at the foot of Broadway.

93. A: Oh yeah. OK.

N: That was the Bisso Ranch and he had basically cherries. You know we had very good cherries then. They've been wiped out by some mysterious disease that killed all the cherry trees in the valley about fifty years ago, including two on this place. We'd just moved up and we lost two gorgeous cherry trees.

94. A: That's a shame.

N: I've got some more planted now, but I don't know whether they'll make it. And Ann Sangiacomo can't tell me what to do. But the Bisso Ranch was where the boys lived and old man Bisso lived on the east side of Sonoma Creek right at the foot of Broadway, over towards where Sangiacomo's office is now. He owned all that on the south side of Broadway, before you turn at Shainsky. Joe Kiser owned the next piece and then Boleras(sp?), which Sangiacomo owns now. I didn't know father Bisso very well, but he was a crusty old guy. My father knew him. The Bisso brothers were always sort of a pleasant problem. They were all poor students and they were all trying to cut and they were mischievous. They had a different outlook in things. Jack Bisso was convinced that everybody was really crooked, so he was [laughs]. Otherwise you'd never succeed in life. As a lawyer in my early years I represented him until I finally got to the point where it

wasn't worth it. It wasn't anything serious, but they were always getting into scrapes, largely of their own doing. They'd say, 'Yeah' they screwed up. 'But they did too.' They were always contentious, but always kind of had a smile about it and you couldn't get too mad at them. But you could sure get exasperated with them. When I came into town, they were building Duggan's chapel. They were going into the mortuary business. Which they were totally unqualified for. They came in and I became their attorney early on. I used to write excuses for them in school, when they would cut school. Because they didn't write very well. Part of my creative writing was doing excuses for the Bisso brothers [Laughs].

95. A: [Laughing] That's funny.

N: You really couldn't get too mad at them, but they were always a problem. They could never do things just right. But they were fairly successful. They finally bought Camp One from the Maffeis and made the payments and they did it and got into the farming business. When I came back they had also rented Tubb's Island from the man who owned it at the time. They leased all of that area that the Yennis have now, about a thousand acres or so. Jim was down there. Jim was the steadiest one. He was the oldest. Of course they were in the undertaking business about a year and then Bill Duggan came and bought it and saved the business. They had nothing but trouble in that business.

96. A: Can you tell us a little about Bissoville?

N: Bissoville is really Wingo, the old Wingo, because the Bissos owned Camp One and that extended over to the east edge of Wingo. What they did, they filled on Sonoma Creek. They took some old barges and stuff and built houses on it. That was Bissoville. No permits, no nothing, no sewer...

97. A: Straight into the creek.

N: Yeah, into the creek! That was Bissoville. You might call it an extension of Wingo.

98. A: A suburb of Wingo [laughing]. About what time did that happen?

N: That was in the 'sixties and 'seventies. Not too long ago. That was their latest production before they also became a dump. I'd parted ways with them by then and also with Bissoville. I saw that and I said, 'Forget it.' They wouldn't follow anybody's advice. 'Oh well,' they'd say. 'We thought it would work this way.' [Laughs] Didn't work that way. But I'll tell you, those contractors in Marin loved that dump, 'cause they took all of the stuff they couldn't put in the dumps in Marin County and brought it up and put it on Bisso's property. All the wall board, asbestos and all this awful mess.

99. A: Basically that was in the Baylands?

N: Yeah, right on the edge of it. That was on Camp One.

100. A: I know there were some proceedings against the dump. Has that been cleaned up, to your knowledge?

N: That was in the days of Janet Nicholas as a supervisor. She was infuriated with them. She tried to have the place raided in effect. And did. There was toxic materials and so forth. By this time Jack had died of prostate cancer and so had Jim. He was up on another ranch up by Marysville. So only Bill was left and he was the craziest. Bill caused all of this, so this was all Bill's doing. He was literally impossible. He was younger than me, not much. I first knew him because I met him up at the Glen Ellen Hotel having lunch one day just after he'd gotten out of prison from dodging the draft. He failed to register or something and he hadn't ever lived in Sonoma then. So this was in the early 'fifties. I didn't know who he was. And they said, 'Oh, that's Bill Bisso. He just got out of prison and he's moving into Sonoma.' The mother and father were separated. She lived in San Francisco and he lived up here. So the two older boys were with him. Bill grew up and went to San Francisco schools.

101. A: So you never had to write him an excuse then.

N: No. Just the older kids.

102. A: I remember when he ran for supervisor.

N: The most marvelous thing about him, when he was sued for the dump and everything and Janet Nicholas got the county counsel to file suit against him for clean up and violations and all kinds of stuff—Bill represents himself. He told the court that they couldn't proceed against him because he was insane and he was turning himself in to the Napa State Hospital and to please dismiss the case. And that ended the case! I don't know what ever happened. Janet Nicholas was no longer supervisor, the case died. The County Counsel, I talked to them about it, just on a joking basis.

103. A: That's quite a story.

N: The case died. You might ask Janet Nicholas what ever happened to it.

104. A: I heard Bill Bisso is still around.

N: He's my neighbor up here. I can see his house. He has forty acres up here. He's been up here since the 'sixties, late sixties. We're not in shouting distance but he's on the way up toward Mission Highlands. They've got a forty-acre piece up on the end of Los

Robles. He and his mother lived there. And then when Bill got married, his wife lived there. His mother died. She was a nice quiet lady. I don't know how she got those boys.

105. A: Are you getting tired Newt?

N: I'm not tired. I talk for a living [laughs].

106. A: One thing I wanted to ask you, when you were a kid there was no Golden Gate Bridge.

N: No. There was the Golden Gate Ferry.

107. A: How would you get to San Francisco when you were a kid?

N: There were two ferries. One was the Golden Gate Ferry operated by Southern Pacific. The other was the Northwestern Pacific Ferry. They both ran from Sausalito, different slips. So we'd drive down to Sausalito in a car, in the old Essex and get on the ferry. I used to like that. It was a nice ferry ride and I could play their baseball pinball game. I loved that. My mother liked to go to San Francisco. She was a San Francisco secretary who grew up in Alameda. Her mother would go down and stay at the French hospital for a couple months at a time. Sometimes next door to Henry Maysonave, who was in there more often than not during his twenties. The Golden Gate Bridge opened in 1937 and our Sonoma High School band marched across the bridge on opening day in 1937.

108. A: Were you in the band?

N: Yeah, I played the baritone. At that time I remember talking to Bill Johnson, 'cause I was swimming out at Boyes Bath House a lot. Ray Litzenberg owned it. Bill Johnson was complaining bitterly to me, and anyone who would listen, about the fact that the Golden Gate Bridge District was charging fifty cents to cross the bridge! Whereas the Bay Bridge, which opened a year earlier, was only charging two bits. He said that would wreck the development of the North Bay area because people wouldn't pay fifty cents to cross the bridge. They wouldn't come up to the Boyes Springs Bath House. So the Golden Gate Ferry, the only one left happened to be a Northwestern Ferry which was the *Eureka*—that lasted for a number of years.

109. A: I think that boat is still around at Aquatic Park.

N: Yeah. And there was another one, the *Charles VanDamme*, that Juanita used to have her restaurant on, parked down there. That was on the Richmond-San Rafael run before the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. That was a different company. On the east side of Sonoma, Ledson bought the ten acres. That's where Charles VanDamme lived. He and

his wife owned the ferry and he retired up here. Died shortly thereafter, when I was a little kid. When the Richmond Bridge, which was the last bridge built, came across, those ferries were gone. My mother's mother lived in Alameda, so I rode the ferries a lot.

110. A: Spent a lot of time on the bay then.

N: Yeah. We did a little fishing on the bay. Bass fishing out of San Rafael. My father was a very avid fisherman. He used to tell the priest, [who asked] 'Where were you on Sunday?' He'd say, 'I was down praying to God at Wingo.' [laughs]

111. A: The Wingo church.

N: 'I said my prayers down there.'

112. A: [putting in new cassette tape]

N: One thing about wildlife and fish life—we started going down fishing when the Sears Point Road was built and we could rent a rowboat from 'Dirty Dick' who lived in an 'ark' about a half-mile up the river [referring to distance above Sonoma Creek Bridge from what is now Highway 37]. I'd go up and get the boat and row it down.

113. A: He lived up Sonoma Creek from the bridge?

N: Yeah. We got pretty good striped bass down there. But we also got flounders. We'd get an occasional flounder in the sloughs. Down there we'd also get sand sharks and leopard sharks, which we didn't keep. Also from time to time, the stingrays would come in and dig all the way through the sloughs. I think they must have eaten the shellfish and stuff. They dig great big holes which you could see at low tide. They've sort of disappeared. The sharks though are still abundant in San Pablo Bay and San Francisco Bay—there's lots of sharks in there. Of course there were mussels all along the tules, we had patches of mussels. Nobody ate them, but I don't see why not.

114. A: I always think of mussels being attached to rocks, but these weren't?

N: Yeah, there were some mussels along there and they'd attach right at the edge of the water there. I haven't seen mussels much [recently], that's one change. I haven't been down in the sloughs in recent years, so I couldn't tell you.

115. A: How about clams—were there clam beds?

N: No, I don't ever recall any clams. They had oysters in San Francisco Bay that were natural first and then I think they planted them. There could have been some clams down

there, but I don't know that. But we didn't have any. I would have loved to have had them.

116. A: Yeah, that'd be good. Tell us about 'Dirty Dick.'

N: I've been trying to think of his last name. I can find out. 'Dirty Dick' was a retired merchant seaman, bachelor. He lived about a half-mile up from the bridge, on the west side [of Sonoma Creek]. And he had a little 'ark.' You know he floated the 'ark' into the tules in the mud and settled there.

117. A: You mean like a barge?

N: Yeah and he lived on that. He had a little phonograph that he would play [makes a hand-cranking motion and laughs]. And with this little hatchet, small hatchet—he had a little workbench outside and he made decoys. And he sold them for fifty cents apiece. His decoys now are collectors' items. Bill Mori knows more about it and he's a collector of decoys. 'Dirty Dick'—he had a simple name—Janson, Dick Janson, he was a merchant mariner. I don't know where he came from, maybe Vallejo. He would always keep a fishing rod going. He had a little dock outside and he had two or three rowboats that he'd rent out for fifty cents a day. I would go up with my fifty cents and get the boat. I remember Dale Farrell came with us once and he said, 'Jesus Christ! Who the hell is this guy? How can a guy live here?' He was really, really pretty crusty. I don't think he ever had a bath you know [laughs]. And he had a beard and a cap.

118. A: So was the only way to get to his place by water?

N: You had to walk up the levee or maybe with a pickup you could ride the top of the Sonoma Creek levee and then walk out on his redwood-plank walkway out maybe 150 yards or so from the bank and then he was there and another 25 yards or so to the water. He had his little wharf out there where he would fish day and night. Just leave the line out and he'd catch fish. He lived very modestly and he made these decoys as a pastime. He was very skillful on the decoys. He made them out of redwood and my father had some and they've since disappeared over the years.

119. A: That's too bad.

N: Bill Mori was asking me about them. He has a lot of fame in duck circles now. He was a real craftsman. He didn't have much to say but he was steady. He lived there for years. I think he lived there through the World War Two years and maybe a year or two thereafter. I lost track of him because I wasn't here. When I came back he was gone.

120. A: How did he get into town to get any kind of supplies?

N: I don't know. A few in town knew him, like Dale Farrell knew him. Jack Myers, who worked at the post office, he knew him. I don't think Bill Mori knew him. Bill Mori never fished and he's six years younger than I am. But Bill knows his decoys because Bill is a duck hunter. But he always hunted up in the Sacramento Valley. He belonged to a club up there, got in early on. Much better duck hunting. Bill Mori might know more about it. He knows about Dick and his decoys. In fact when I see him I'll ask him. He lives about halfway between our place and Bisso's up here.

121. A: You've got a lot of old friends up here, so to speak.

N: So to speak.

122. A: Any other characters you remember associated with the Baylands?

N: Well, 'Dirty Dick' was the premier one. Greg Jones, who became good friend in later years when he lived in Sonoma. Joe Redding, who lived there with the Millericks, and of course the Millericks. If you want to call them Bayland people, they're right on the edge. But they were mainly into horses. Old Ben Myer he was in hay and grain. There weren't many people down there—it's a big blank [spot on the map]. There's one fellow who's name I can't recall who had 'Wingo' on his license plate. He grew up right in Wingo. But there wasn't really anybody who lived down there permanently except like the bridge tender. Originally there was a bridge across at Wingo, up above. When I was a kid the pilings were still there—it was a railroad bridge. The railroad bridge at Wingo was very active, still active. But you don't have a bridge tender living around there [now] though. They went by the boards. I don't really remember anyone who lived down there, 'cause there weren't many people down there. Jones [Ranch]—nobody lived there, even the Joneses lived in San Rafael until after the war when they came up here and lived at first right down by Millerick's in a little house. So they were sort of an absentee ownership. I've never met anyone who knew Senator Jones.

123. A: That's going back a long ways.

N: Yeah. They were all absentee people. Same way with Tubbs Island. Who was Tubbs?

124. A: Is he the guy who started Safeway?

N: That was Skaggs. Skaggs started Safeway. People knew Mrs. Skaggs. I have a vague memory of Skagg's Grocery, which became Safeway.

125. A: Was that here in Sonoma, did that start here?

N: Safeway, they came in about—up there [on store sign] it says 1923 on the wall, which is incorrect. I think Skaggs probably started Skaggs Markets in the east bay in 1923. He didn't come into Sonoma until 1932. Their manager lived next door to us in a house my father and aunt owned. So I knew them right from the beginning. Ray Roberts, he was the first manager of Safeway. After the war he left and went out into his own grocery store, which is now the Church Mouse in Sonoma on Napa Street.

126. A: So Skaggs made his fortune in groceries and then he bought the island?

N: Yeah, then he bought the island. He and his wife. I never knew whether he had any children or not.

127. A: So it was just kind of an investment for him?

N: Yeah. That's what I think. And I think it was a damned good investment. He sold 6000 acres to the government and had the island named after him!

128. A: Right. We're still talking about him.

N: Yeah. That's right. I know she lived for quite a while, but I didn't know her. Vic Leveroni knew her, the Maffeis knew her. Very few people lived in the Baylands.

129. A: It's been a challenge trying to find people to talk to. You're our third interview. I've talked to Norm Yenni. Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to talk to Glen, he would have been a good person.

N: Glen was my age and a year behind me in school in my sister's class. We were good friends. The Yennis are nice people.

130. A: Yeah.

N: Norm has been farming down there, 'cause he took over after the Bissos. Glen did, on Tubbs Island. Jack Bisso probably died down there. He had prostate cancer. Jack and I always remained casual friends. I knew him the best 'cause he was in my class from First Grade until...he lasted about two years in high school and quit. Neither Jim or Jack survived to graduation [laughs].

131. A: They were off causing trouble somewhere.

N: Yeah. They became entrepreneurs.

132. A: I feel pretty good about what we've covered. Anything else you'd like to mention?

N: Nothing in particular. I think we've covered the ground pretty well and the people, such as the few people are that lived there. The Joneses are all gone. Greg senior is gone and Greg junior who was a good friend and his brother was in my class, they're gone—he was killed in Korea. And they never lived up here until after that war. I wish I could think of someone . . . who's alive!

133. A: That helps.

N: . . . That had anything to do with going down there that were my contemporaries. None that are older.

134. A: I did get an interview with Milt Castagnasso back in about 2002. I got some good information from him.

N: Milt would know some, yeah.

135. A: He remembered running fuel down to Camp Six, in a boat in about 1935.

N: Milt Castagnasso was in Bob Leveroni's class. They were four years ahead of me. They were out of high school before I got in. So Milt had a little to do with it. He would know something, though he was mainly up here. There were very few people that had much to do with that and there weren't that many people that were bass fishermen at the time. My father was about as avid a bass fisherman as I recall of people going down there regularly. Lee Clerici would. I would go down fishing with him. He'd take me down as a kid. But he's gone. Nobody younger than me. My sister knew—she went fishing with us a lot, not that she cared about it.

136. A: Is she still around?

N: Yeah. She's over in Nicasio. Her greatest story was, we were on a wharf one day out there. At Camp Six there was a wharf and it was Sunday afternoon, nice August afternoon. We were casting off the wharf into the water into the slough, Hudeman Slough. I was showing her how to cast and standing next to her. She leaned back and she got her hook in the back of my leg [makes a painful sound].

137. A: Geez.

N: It hurt! And she broke out laughing and she couldn't stand up she was laughing so hard at me. I got madder and madder at her. She said I was the biggest fish she ever caught! So that's when we were about twelve, thirteen years old.

138. A: Was it tough getting the hook out?

N: Oh yeah. She hooked right in the muscle, right in the back. And then she kept pulling on it [laughing].

139. A: Just to really make sure it was set [laughing].

N: I'd go, 'Oww!' and she'd say, 'What's the matter?' [I said,] 'You've got me hooked—ahhh!' To make matters worse she laughed about it. I lost my sense of humor about that. I didn't think it was funny at all. We caught two or three nice bass that day too. Six, eight inches. The bass weren't big then. When my father was young, the bass were much bigger. He'd come home with some pretty good-sized fish. He'd come home with some big catfish too. We'd put 'em in the wash trays, 'cause they live a long time. We'd keep 'em two, three, four days swimming around in the wash trays on the back porch. But those catfish, before Bee[?] Mori died I saw him fishing down there one day at Wingo for catfish. I've never heard of catfish since, down there. But it's so muddied up. Nobody thinks of catfish in the bay.

140. A: Yeah, I don't know if I've heard of catfish down there.

N: Yeah, but they were there and they were plentiful. My dad would come home with like twenty of them. So that's a lost resource. If we can only clean the creek out, build up the pools.

141. A: People are working on it, but it's a tough problem.

N: It's tough. We've destroyed the resource. Inadvertently, but . . .

142. A: Yeah, little by little.

N: We used to go down and catch forty crawfish in an afternoon under the bridge there at Franquelin's. Behind Farrell's house, there was a good hole there. My father and I, or we kids, would go down on summer vacation and we'd get thirty to forty, forty-five crawfish. Come home and cook 'em. My mother loved them. I love crawfish and we'd have some big ones. Now, I've got a crawfish trap that I put down at Leveroni's while Bob was alive. There's a few crawfish in there, but they're tiny. The pools are too shallow for them. But there's still some native crawfish in there. Where they came from I don't know.

143. A: I had them in Isleton. You can get a plate of crayfish there.

N: I bought a bunch and put them in my pond down here, which is dry as a conservation measure. The guy I bought the bucket from—they were small ones, and I wanted big ones like we had here. That was about twenty years ago when I built the pond. All I had in there were some catfish and some bluegill, small catfish. He said,

'They'll be there forever. They'll really breed like hell.' I never saw them again. I think the catfish ate them. They disappeared completely.

144. A: Something must have eaten them.

N: The guy said I was making a mistake because they proliferate so much. I'd have nothing but crawfish. But I never saw a bone, nothing.

145. A: If the 'coons had gotten into it, there would have been some shells around or something.

N: Yeah. One of the mysteries. Alright, any other question you can think of?

146. A: I think that's good for today. If I think of anything I'll give you a call.

N: OK good.

Interview with Jim Haire

at his home office, 5399 Haire Lane, Napa

February 12, 2015

J = Jim Haire; A = Arthur Dawson

1. A: [preliminaries about the kind of work I do]
J: So this project that you're doing is for the Land Trust on Skagg's Island?
2. A: Well it's more of a general project to document how people have used the marshlands over the last hundreds years, approximately.
J: Have you done any research into how the wetlands became dry?
3. A: Oh yeah. I'm always interested to hear other people's perspectives on it.
J: Did you ever read a book called *The Tule Breakers*?
4. A: I've heard of it. I don't think I've actually read that book. Is that about the Dutras?
J: Yeah.
5. A: I've been out to the Dutra Museum in Rio Vista.
J: Well the old man wrote this thing and it's the history of the evolution of the sidearm dredge that did the work on these things. It's very very interesting. What do you know about the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act?
6. A: I know that basically, as I understand it, if you could drain it you could claim it. So anything below high tide line was considered State land. But if you could drain it, dry it off, put levees up.
J: You put a plan together—like in our case Percy Jones did. You know who Percy Jones was?
7. A: He was a senator from Nevada, made it big in the Comstock Lode.
J: His family was into the silver mining and then he had vast land holdings. They were also into the cattle business.

8. A: And he was down in southern California as well.

J: I'm not too familiar with that. Here he used the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act—here they were called 'Camps,' Camps One through Six. Before he did this he was in the Delta on Upper and Lower Jones Tract and Empire Tract.

9. A: That makes sense.

J: Empire Tract was named after the dredging company. Part of what you had to have to be able to utilize the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act was a legitimate dredging company. Either a hired one or in his case, one that he created. He was there first and then he came back down here and started with the Camps here. Up there they're called Tracts, I don't know the reasoning. Down here they're called Camps because the people that farmed them, it was prior to the mechanization. You ever hear of Holt Tractor Company?

10. A: No, I can't say I have.

J: Holt turned into Caterpillar and they were in Woodland. They were the ones that came out with and got them to work, an internal combustion engine in an iron tractor. There's a story, I can't tell you if it's true or not, I've heard it a couple of different times, is that they brought a couple of those to demonstrate on Camp Six. Camp Six was the last of the Camps, so that's where the internal combustion engine was pretty much foolproof. One of them supposedly got stuck and by the time they got enough horses and mules and the other 'cats' there to get it, it had sunk [laughs].

11. A: [Laughs] Really!

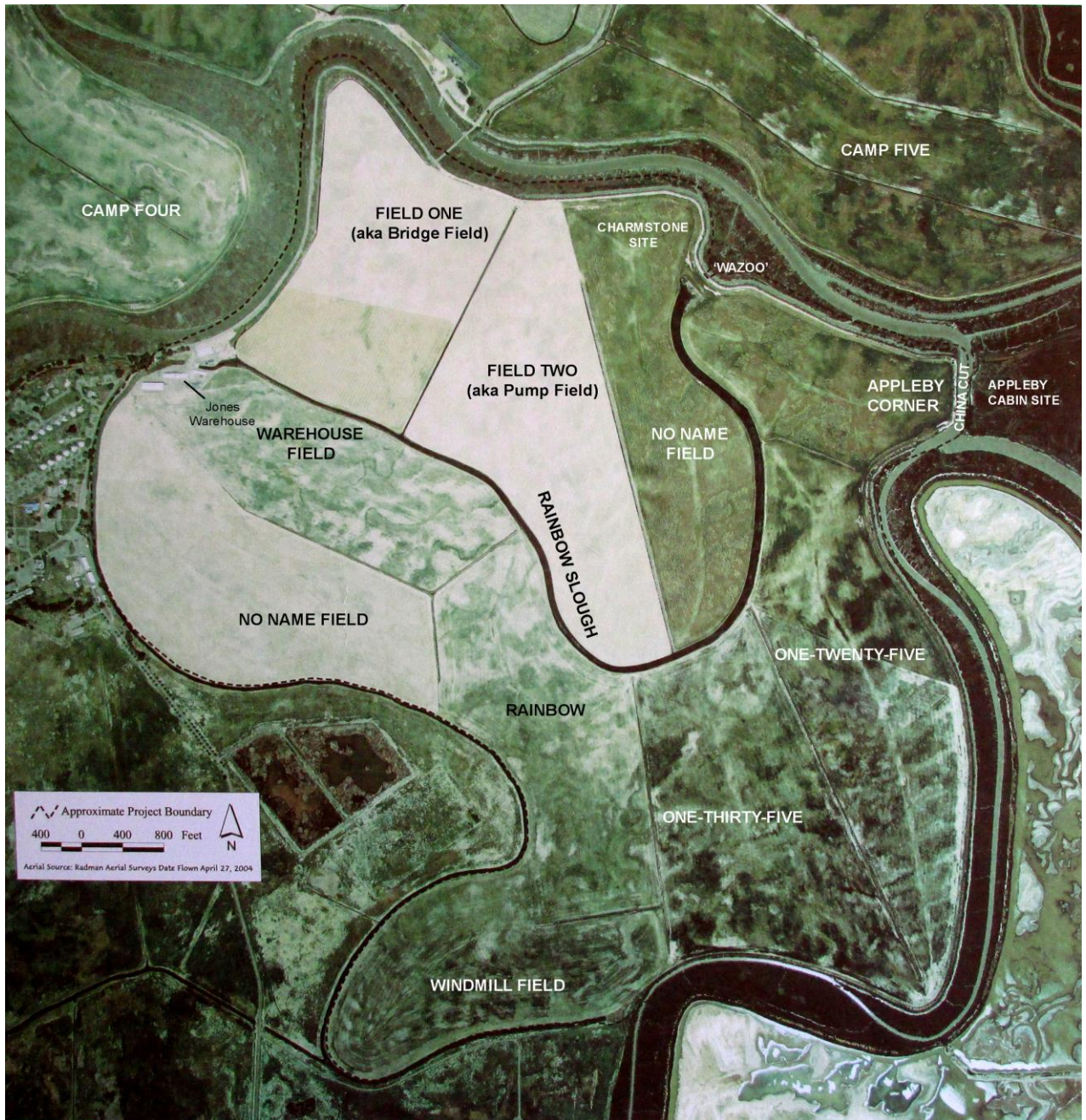
J: [Jim pointing out locations on an aerial photo of the property]. This is from '04. These fields, some of them have names [goes clockwise from the top]. This is 'Field Number One' and we also call it 'The Bridge Field' because the bridge is there to come across.

12. A: So that's the northernmost part of Skaggs Island, is that right?

J: Yeah, this is the northern end. So this is Field One, also called The Bridge Field. This is Field Two, also called The Pump Field because our pump is right there. This doesn't have a name. This is Appleby Corner, this is where that tractor supposedly . . .

13. A: So it could still be down there.

J: Or it's bullshit. One or the other. It's called Appleby Corner because three brothers came here with some family monies from England, I understand, and they were going to



Aerial photo of Haire Ranch on Skaggs Island, 2004. Place names identified by Jim Haire.
(Radman Aerial Surveys)

be great farmers here. But they did not do well and two of the brothers, I don't know what happened to the third, but two of the brothers lived in a little cabin right there. So that's why we call it Appleby Corner. This is the 'One-Twenty-Five,' that's the acres in it. This is the 'One-Thirty-Five,' that's the acres in it. This next one we call 'The Windmill Field' because right here on the government side there was a windmill for the cattle and the sheep. Then this one doesn't have any name. This is called 'Rainbow' because this is Rainbow Slough.

14. A: Any idea why it has that name?

J: I think because it's kind of what it looks like.

15. A: Just the shape then.

J: That's the only thing I can think of. I never asked. And this one we call 'The Warehouse Field. We built this warehouse. That one right there was built by Jones. That one's about a hundred and six or seven years old.

16. A: It would be interesting to go out and see that. So would they store hay in that barn.

J: They stored hay in it. All of their hay came off of here in boats. So if look just the other side—there's a sea wall here, put in many years ago. But if you look just outside of it, you'll still see the old pilings. So they would take the materials [hay] from here [warehouse] and they would take it a wagon and bring it up here and then they would put it on with a 'stiff leg' onto the boats. This levee and this levee, that *was* the slough [either side of channel] right there. Now the slough is lucky to be twice the width of this building [about 2x 25 or 50 feet]. And this is really bad over here—this is Napa Number Two. This is the county line also. But this one is literally not as wide as this table.

17. A: Wow. What's caused it to fill in so much?

J: Normal sedimentation. Anyway, I'm going to show you these. These are the only things I have when I read your questions [referring to native artifact. Jim shows me two charmstones]. This one I found in this field right about here someplace. What it is I have no idea.

18. A: So this is between . . .

J: Between Appleby and the Pump Field. Doesn't have a name. That's where that one comes from [charmstone is light colored and more or less tear drop shaped. No hole]. The plow had plugged up and I was digging it out and I found that. You don't find rocks, rocks are not down there. There's only rock that somebody's hauled in.

19. A: Yeah, sure.

J: This one is a unique one [showing other stone, made of darker rock]. Somebody took a lot of time to drill a hole in it. This one I found up in the lower vineyard, just off of Ramal Road by a little spring that had been a spring a long time ago. There was rocks and things in there. So that has something to do with the Indians. Buck Sangiacomo, the vineyard people? Buck has a lot of this stuff. Buck has got one of the largest collections you ever want to see in your life. He says what this was is a fertility charm that the medicine man would hang around a woman who was trying to get with child. I said 'How do you know that?' He said 'Because of this.' [points out groove at the tip.] He's really well schooled. So that is kind of a really cool thing. I can't imagine how long it took somebody to drill that hole.

20. A: Without any modern tools, that's amazing. Any idea where this rock came from? It's an interesting rock [dark with slightly lighter veins]

J: I have no idea.

21. A: They say the charmstones at Tolay came from hundreds of miles away some of them. Sierra.

J: Those are the only two artifacts that I've ever found.

22. A: This one was sort of up on dry land.

J: This one was up north of where the old Buena Vista Winery is, which is Kendall Jackson now. Just to the right-hand side of it. It was kind of a screwed up looking area. So I had the scrapers in there and I was cutting it out and I was putting it back to the contour of the rest of the ground. And then I found that.

23. A: And the other one was actually out in the old marsh?

J: Yeah, it was laying out here. How the hell it got there I don't know. It had to have been there for I don't know how long. I'm assuming that didn't happen while it was in a waterway [speaking of how it was shaped]. I think someone made it.

24. A: It looks to me like another charmstone. These come in different shapes.

J: It's a witch doctor's fertility charm according to Buck.

25. A: That's great. Wow.

J: So what're they going to do? They're going to make some kind of a video of this, what you're compiling?

26. A: I'll be putting together a report which will have all the transcripts. Then I'll look at what everybody says and distill it down into some chapters about different things—'Reclaiming the Marsh,' 'Farming,' various things. We do have a videographer who's videoing some of the people we're talking to and he's going to put together a film about the Baylands, about the changes from the past up to the present and looking into the future, where things are going.

J: It's too bad that you couldn't get the knowledge that Rich Kiser has, or Bill.

27. A: Everybody's been telling me that [chuckles].

J: They're the ones. Ferdinand was on these lands when Percy Jones was here, when Skaggs then bought from Percy Jones. They really have a lot of knowledge, but for some reason they don't want to be [interviewed], maybe the same reason I don't want to be photographed.

28. A: Sure. I respect peoples' rights to privacy. They did agree to look over what other people said and maybe add to it. So I'm hoping.

J: I want to qualify what I'm going to tell you today. I'm going to tell you what I believe to be correct. I would say it would be your task, and I would urge this to be done, to try and verify some of the things that I say from another source. All I know is what people have told me. I have never done any research. My grandfather started farming on this land; it would be right around 1939 or so. 'Forty-one is when the government took through eminent domain, three-quarters of the island. Skaggs had it by that time, the Joneses were out. So that's what I got. I'll tell you what I think I know.

29. A: That's fair enough. You know I started doing oral histories back about twelve years ago and I've been amazed how what people tell me can be corroborated with other sources. And what people tell me adds to the record quite a bit. It's a lot more detail a lot of times than what you might find in an old newspaper article or something.

J: Unfortunately my family was never much on pictures, so we don't have a lot of pictures. I do have—this is a picture of the Fillippini Ranch that my dad bought [shows aerial photo of ranch house and other ranch and winery buildings]. The reason I got this out is because Fillippini did own some of the marsh. Not the Camps, but some of the marsh. This was a huge dairy when Fillippini had it. It went all the way through here where we're at, over the hill where Al and Charlie Stornetta had, all the way into a place called—you ever been to Lovall Valley?

30. A: Yup.

J: They owned Lovall Valley. And it went down to the marsh. It went alongside, it had a common levee with Camp Five. But not in Camp Six. This was the house that they built in the early 1900s, very early 1900s. This barn right here, which is gone now, Kendall-Jackson tore it down about two weeks ago, this was their milk barn and it was state of the art. This building my Dad built [points out several buildings his father built]. This one right here, which is still there and it's a house, it was on Skaggs Island. It was right there on Skaggs Island where our buildings are, right on the edge of the levee. It was a cookhouse. When my father bought this place, they moved it up there.

31. A: It was a cookhouse in Jones' time?

J: Yeah. My grandmother was the cook down on Skaggs Island for a while, before I was born. My mom's mom. My mom's father, he was killed, he was a horse-shoer in Petaluma and he was kicked by a mule before I was ever born. So that was my mom's mom and dad. My dad's mom and dad, my grandparents, they came from Ireland when they were married. They settled at a little town called Marshall out on the coast?

32. A: Oh yeah. When would that have been?

J: That's a good question. I've never really thought about that. My father was born there. I'm sorry, I said Marshall. Wesley.

33. A: Wesley. I don't know if I've ever heard of Wesley.

J: The street or something they were on was Wesley. My father would be a hundred and two or three right now, if he had lived. So it was prior to that.

34. A: So maybe right around 1900?

J: Yeah. Then they left there and my grandfather worked with milk cows, when the milker was sick, he'd work for the other ranchers around. He raised Jerseys. Matter of fact, I have the second piece of land that he ever had, which was leased. The sign in the building next door. The guy brought it to me many years ago. We're building a new shop across the other side and another building that's there to replace buildings on Skaggs Island that I use for the vineyard operation, for equipment. That's going to go in the new shop.

Anyway they left the coast and they went to Novato. This sign says 'Novato Jersey Farm.' He raised Jersey heifers for dairy replacement. When they left there, they went to Sonoma to the Grace Ranch. Are you familiar with that?

35. A: Is that over by Temelec?

J: Yeah, kind of wraps around Temelec and then goes up to the dump. So they were there, they leased it from the Grace family.

36. A: Milt Castagnasso, was he out there also at some point, at Grace Ranch?

J: I really couldn't tell you. The name is familiar but I don't know. That is the time when they were there. My dad had graduated from Davis, so he was with my grandfather. So they started and leased a few hundred acres from Skaggs. When the government took the land from Skaggs through eminent domain to open the radio station, that would have been in 'forty-one, Skaggs helped them finance [the purchase of the remaining piece of Skaggs Island]. Do you know much about Skaggs?

37. A: I know he started the Safeway chain and one of the early stores was in Sonoma, right?

J: I don't know that. But you're right; Safeway was one of his startups. He would be a venture capitalist of today. Other than putting money into something, he also put himself in control of it, on boards. I've always wanted to find out what his name was. Because all the paperwork says 'M.B. Skaggs' and 'E.I. Skaggs.' Then there's mention of an 'O.P. Skaggs' which was M.B.'s brother. These two competed in the business with the small stores [both laugh]. Sometime when you're sitting at your computer google M.B. Skaggs. It's amazing what that man was. Anyhow, that's when my grandfather started there.

38. A: That was late 'thirties?

J: I would say in that 'thirty-eight-nine period [1938-39], right in there. Then they bought from Skaggs that, which was about a quarter of the island. And the government didn't want that. So Rainbow Slough as a natural kind of a boundary through there. Jones' dredges, I'm assuming, built Rainbow Slough. 'Cause Rainbow Slough stops and starts *inside* of the levee. All it is is rainwater. And all the ditches, the small ditches that separate the fields, those are to remove the water and take it to the pump stations.

39. A: So it's all kind of internal drainage.

J: Internal drainage. People will say that was hooked to tidal. If you look at it today, it's not tidal. One interesting little thing when they were building it, it's kind of a small triviality, was another guy who could have told you a lot, Walter, but he's been gone now about ten or twelve years. Walter had a hay press that was called a 'Junior Monarch,' was the builder of it. They were called 'Five Wires' and they were huge bales. They set up in a place and then the buck rakes brought the stacks of hay to them. Then they would move

and do the same thing. Anyway, you see this levee, see how it's got this 'wazoo' in it?
[Points out location on aerial photo]

40. A: Yeah.

J: That is where the dredges met and put the levee together.

41. A: So that's kind of the 'gold spike' place.

J: Yeah. It originally went like so [traces a straighter line with his finger]. But the dredges had to have water to float, so they had to do it at high tide. And they kept losing it and kept losing it, so that's why they kept coming in to virgin ground. So that's why it's got that 'wazoo' in it. [Both laugh].

42. A: That's great. Did you ever hear anything about what it was like working on one of those dredgers? The old steam [powered ones]?

J: I was on one of them. They were diesel. I was on the 'Alameda.' It was one of the smaller one. We had them do some work on what we call 'China Cut.' Supposedly this small cut across here was dug by the Chinamen after they came off from the railway, building the transcontinental railroad. That was supposedly dug by hand with shovels. As you can see it's not very long. This piece of land here is a duck club—Gebinoni. Al Gebinoni.

43. A: Is that still there, the duck club?

J: I don't know. Al is in a rest home now. I don't know if they still hunt it or not. Here [pointing on map] this levee was bad on their side, so he had Dutra come in with the *Alameda*, which was the smallest of the dredges. The *Alameda* was also, if you get that book, the first dredge that ever had a steel hull. All these things were wood. So we had them do this piece of levee on the cut for us and I stayed on it one afternoon. They call it a wheelhouse, but there was no wheel. There was literally two big two-by-fours that were about from here to the wall long [eight or ten feet]. The operator stood up and pushed on these.

44. A: Really.

J: A side-arm dredge doesn't swing its boom. It does it with water that's in the barge itself. It sloshes and that's what tips it. So one [two-by-four] would close and open the bucket and the other would raise it and lower it. When they set a load on the levee, they would set it down, wait for this thing to slosh. When it started back the other way, then they would open the bucket and it would come back.

45. A: So that was the only control?

J: Two levers, two levers yeah. The right to left of the boom was done with the water in the barge itself as it sloshed. I'm not saying all of them were like that. But it was small. I naturally never ran one. I have rebuilt our levees. I had a dragline that I sold a few years back because I knew this thing was going to end for us. If we didn't come up with some kind of a deal they were going to 'eminent-domain' me. Because Skaggs, when the government took three-quarters of the island away from him, he filed suit on them. You probably saw some of this.

46. A: I haven't looked into that in any depth.

J: Well he filed suit to make sure that the court laid out who had to do what. So the government has to pump all of the water on the island. What we do now—we built a pump of our own, my father decided we needed a pump. Which still operates today, it's operating right now. These are big pumps. The navy has one that's 42-inch probably, 25,000, 28,000 gallons a minute. They have another one that's diesel powered, it's a little smaller than that. Ours is an electric one, it's 24-inch, it pumps about 16,000, 17,000 a minute. So these are the three pumps that keep Skagg's Island in a farmable range. Anyway, the court order was that the government take care of this water and keep the water level for farming. As long as we were there, the government could not flood their part.

47. A: They were obligated to pump.

J: Yeah. So they come to me and they tell me they're going to build a levee alongside of Rainbow Slough. Then we would be on our own and kept dry. Well I was afraid of that. I'm not too much of a fan of a lot of government things because I've run into this in my life. So the document says the levees are 'to be maintained at a height and width necessary to keep the tidal waters out. Any breaching or overtopping of said levee will be repaired promptly.' If I allow that to happen, I feel that I have degraded and taken power away from this agreement. It's only three pages long.

48. A: Today it would be three hundred [both laugh]

J: Anyway, I said 'No.' They said they were going to do it anyway. I said, 'I can't stop you from building a levee. But put one gallon of water behind that levee and I'll sue you.' So they never went any farther. So it was kind of testy between myself and the government for quite a while. We've been dealing with the sale of this thing for six years.

49. A: I interviewed Norm Yenni and he was telling me about some of the stuff that's happened down at his place.

J: Oh down there, yeah.

50. A: Some of the changes that were made. During the big flood in '05, [Highway] 37 got covered and it was coming onto his property.

J: Got covered. Thirty-seven was not a highway built by the state of California; it was built by a private entity and was a toll road. The original road. So there's so much history here, but I'll let you ask your questions.

51. A: You've got a lot to talk about, so I'm happy to ask questions or hear you talk about what you want me to hear.

J: That's about it. The first place that I ever drove a track-type tractor was in Field Number One.

52. A: How old were you at that time?

J: I was about twelve I guess. Two people worked for my dad, many people worked for my dad, but two people worked for him nearly their entire lives. One was a fellow named Fred VanGuilder[sp?]. His family were small farmers in Iowa and he came out here during World War Two and was working on Mare Island. One of my uncles was also working on Mare Island and met Fred, who said, boy he'd do anything to be back on a ranch. So Charles brought him to meet my dad and he worked for my dad his entire life. As a matter of fact Fred, when he passed away, he had no family, he was never married, there was no family at all. So his wishes were to be cremated and be spread on my vineyard on Ramal Road. [chuckles] So that's where he is.

The other one was a fellow named Henry Johnson when I was really little. Before I was born actually. And he worked with my dad his entire life. Hank Brandis was another one, was one of the last ones. My father bought two of the houses that were on Skaggs Island, two of the buildings I should say, and made houses out of them.

53. A: Were these houses there before the Navy got it?

J: No. The one house that is still utilized as a house, well both of them are—that kid right behind you there lives in one of them [gardener visible through window]—was the Marine barracks, so it was the gate coming in. There was no connection to Highway 37 originally; it was all just from the north down Skaggs Island Road. So that one, the Marines slept there, the guard offices were there, the gate was there—you had to go through them to get on and off the island. One thing that was really amazing to me was the rules of the day. I'm building a small house over here by that barn and the shop and you have to have bathrooms in it. What I'm having to go through on the sewer. We built a mound for this house.

54. A: You got a leach field?

J: It's what they call a 'dozed mound.' There's no piping like for a leach field—it goes into the surrounding [soil]. What we're going through now to get something for these other two. One thing that always got me about that was that it was built on pilings over the slough. The toilet, when you flushed it, you could look right down and see the slough [both laugh].

55. A: And the tide'll just take it away.

J: That was what it was, yeah. But things have changed so dramatically. Now, my god, what you have to go through now is absolutely amazing. Cuttings Wharf was the same way. There were a lot of cabins down there and they were over the slough and the toilets were the same way.

56. A: Right straight in. That's funny

J: Right straight in. Anyway, ask me some questions and I'll try to answer them the best I can.

57. A: OK. So where were you born?

J: I was born in Petaluma. That was where my mother and her family lived. My dad was connected with Petaluma because Novato was not very far away. So I was born in Petaluma in 1942. I'm 72 years old now. I was born on the twenty-first of June, which is the longest day of the year. My mother said it was 'a damn long day.' [chuckles]. I grew up in the Fillippini House. We moved there when I was five. Schooling was kind of unique. Right straight down here there is—it's a church now—is a one-room school. My first grade teacher was a lady by the name of Mrs. Umbel. That's the only one I remember. She was one teacher and eight grades. You ever see 'Little House on the Prairie?'

58. A: Yeah, long time ago.

J: It was exactly like that. It's still there. As a matter of fact there were three of them right around here. There was another one ...

59. A: What was the name of that school?

J: Tule Vista. Now it's a church. There was another one on the Napa side over here on Las Amigas Road. Again a one-room school that was converted into a house and it still is. There was another one that was moved when they worked on the highway here at Stornetta's Dairy you would take a right and go into Sonoma. It's still there—I happened to go by yesterday and it's still over there.

60. A: Is that right across from Nicholson [Ranch]?

J: Yeah, right across from Nicholas. Anyway, Tule Vista was the school.

61. A: How many kids in your school?

J: I'd say, all eight grades, probably at the most would be twenty-five or something. Our graduating class [eighth grade], there was three of us. There was a girl named Ellen Flood, a guy by the name of Larry Mazzanata, whose family had a dairy at that time right over the hill. Dale Ritchie was related and now he has vineyards on part of it. And myself, that was the three of us. We were the last class to graduate. Then I went to high school in Sonoma. After I graduated from high school I did a bit of time taking classes that I liked in Napa and I never got any degrees farther on. My father was a college graduate. My kid John, he graduated from Sac State with a degree in business. He was never much interested in the hay and the grain, but he is in the vineyards. So I said, 'You can hire people to do all of this in the vineyards and you can hire consultants to tell you, like I do, what makes up the soil, what it's lacking, what it has too much of' and so on. I said, 'You have to understand the dollar.' So he got a degree in business instead of agriculture.

62. A: This worked out it sounds like.

J: Especially now. His mother had her thumb operated on so she can't do anything. We have just a tremendous bookkeeper, Floyd Moses, in Sonoma. He's unfortunately talking about retiring, but he's great. So Karen [Jim's wife] worked for the state at the State Hospital in Napa and she was in the bookkeeping department. So she does all of this stuff and now John has to do it. Me, I don't even touch the computer. Last time I did I screwed it up a lot [laughs].

63. A: So you get to be outside.

J: Yeah. The biggest thing I can do there is my cell phone.

64. A: So tell me about farming when you were a kid.

J: Farming when I was a kid, the equipment wasn't as far along technology-wise as it is today, but it was pretty much basically the same thing. You were a dry land farmer, there was no irrigation. So you farmed utilizing Mother Nature's help. 'Seventy-six and 'seventy-seven we had poor water years.

65. A: Yeah, I was in California by that time.

J: And these four years here. This year is not as bad as last year. Last year was pretty bad. My main irrigation lake for the grapevines is up over that hill there in a little valley.

Last year, when we finished with that, we had five foot of water left in the bottom of it. So this year we're about two foot from spilling. It's a sixty-acre-foot reservoir. Covers about three acres, so it's a fair size. But the drought is something. I guess I didn't want to think that our weather could be changing because of mankind and its fossil fuels, burning the forests and all of this, but something is going on. Now the seal pups are starving to death and dying off the coast. They're saying that one of the problems is there's a lack of oxygen in the water off the coast. So there's things that are happening.

But anyway, it was pretty much the same as we have now. A lot of our equipment is back from the 'fifties. My strong suit is the equipment and building shop to work in. I have a pretty extensive shop that we'll be moving up here. I have lathes and milling machines and plasma cutters, all this kind of stuff. We can fabricate most anything. My vineyard stuff, I build a lot of that. I don't think I own one piece, either here or on the farming, that I haven't modified either tremendously or moderately to make it fit what I want. So that's what I do the best.

66. A: If you were to describe a year of farming out here, starting . . .

J: The wintertime would be the slowest part of the year and that's when the equipment is moving through the shop. Also in wintertime, that's when this warehouse—and I built it, me and four other guys who were out of work. [Showing aerial photo] This is a pretty good-sized pole barn right here and that's hay storage. You'll be loading hay out of there. One thing dramatic and before I was old enough to be involve, the hay was baled in this big rake and they brought hay to it. Now we go down the row and we go to the hay itself. There were large crews of men that needed to be there to do this. Now I farm a little over a thousand acres there with myself and two others. During the wintertime, there's only the two of us. Myself and Roy. We do the shop. So that's one thing you see now with the technology—much less hard labor. The conditions too. The swathers [sp?] have cabs on them, they have air-conditioning, you have a radio. Before, you were right out in all the elements.

67. A: Norm Yenni was telling me how that's kind of expected now, all that stuff. He said, 'Yeah, I can be on my cell phone' [while working]. In the old days, how many men did it take?

J: Those hay presses, they were pretty specialized. So Walt Crivelli was one who came in. Kisers also had one. Not Rich's family, but relatives. It was called the 'Widowmaker.' That'll give you a clue how hard these guys worked. Walter would talk that they ate three big, big meals a day. Breakfast, lunch and dinner. But in between those was two more big meals. So they ate five times a day. That was how hard they were working. Like I showed you there, that one building that my father moved. You went in and sat down and ate your lunch, or breakfast or dinner in those. So hand labor, physical labor was much much greater.

For myself, I kind of started when a lot of this technology was there. The stationary hay presses were gone. You cut the hay and put it in a row rather than in a shock. Then you drove your machine and it picked that row up and put the bale out. The technologies when I was in grammar school and high school, during the summer I drove a small truck that held about, you would load on, about ninety bales. It had a chute up the side that as the truck went along there was a chain that drove off the tires—you steered it in so the bale would come into the front of this thing and it elevated it up so you didn't have to pick it up and put it on there. Now the harrow beds, one person in a harrow bed can stack—we have two hay presses and I will run one of those hay presses for about four hours in the morning. Because you can't bale in the real heat of the day—you don't get the dense enough bale, you don't get the weight. And then get on the harrow bed and I'll pick up everything that we have done for the whole day and I'll be done by four or five o'clock and the stack is up. With the truck, you loaded it on the truck one bale at a time. Then you drove it to wherever the stack was going to be outside...

68. A: Take it off again?

J: Take it off one bale at a time, and put it in a stack. Bales go through what they call a 'sweat.' That's when spontaneous combustion would occur, if you get them trapped in a barn, when they were still doing that, and burn everything down. So then you come back and you pick it up out of that stack and take it to the barn and put it in one bale at a time. So the labor is the thing.

69. A: Yeah. I can see. I've worked a little bit on a ranch and I have some sense of moving hay bales around. Never did it full time.

J: When you did it all day long, be it hot or be it cold, it was a miserable job. And then you go pick it up out in the field, even though you've got this conveyor on the side, which was a huge help, and went to the edge of the field and one bale at a time unloaded and made a stack there. Then you had to come back and pick that stack up and put it in a barn.

70. A: Moving it several times.

J: You moved it a lot. Now the harrow bed makes the stack, it's highway legal as far as the ties go for CHP. The computer does this. You take it to the edge of the field again or wherever you want it. It picks itself up, hydraulically pushes itself away and the stack just stays there. Then you come along with a thing called a 'squeeze,' which is like a big forklift but instead of the forks being like so, they're sideways. They squeeze the bottom bales. They pick the whole thing up and put it on a truck. I loaded a truck yesterday going to Petaluma, to a dairy. Twenty-five minutes, loaded twenty-seven tons.

71. A: Wow. That's amazing. How much hay can you produce per acre or however you think about it?

J: On average, and you have to remember this is dry land farming, if you look at it like you do with the grapes, I'll look at an average of about three years. You're talking about two-and-a-half tons you'd be doing good. Some would be more, some would be less. The years. You're at Mother Nature's whim. Like this year we got a pretty fair amount of rain. We are above average. But we're not going to be able to make up the deficit in the previous three years. We're not coming out of the drought.

72. A: Right. You get an average year after a drought year and you're still low. So the kids you went to school with in that little one-room schoolhouse, were their families mostly farming down here on the Baylands?

J: Larry Mazzanata was a dairy ranch right across Ramal Road right here. Ellen Flood, I don't know, I know where she lived. She lived across the highway there in a house that's still there. Her father, I don't know where he worked. The Kozac family, there were three kids in the Kozac family. Bobby was one year older than I was, so he was one grade ahead. He had a brother one or two [years] ahead of him. Joanne was his sister. She was a year ahead. Them I know some. The sister is still alive. Bobby the younger one was killed in a car accident in Schellville, forty-five, fifty years ago. He wasn't very old, he was in his twenties. John, I don't know what happened to him. None that I went to school with there at Tule Vista—Larry Mazzanata for instance, he passed away. Ellen Flood, I don't know what happened to Ellen. Larry passed away probably thirty years ago. He was an architect in San Francisco. He didn't follow the farming. There's nobody really that I can think of that I have any contact with today that's from there. High school yes.

73. A: Did people down here socialize much with each other?

J: Not so greatly. I would say, like my dad would go to the coffee shop in the morning with a lot of the farmers. Which still happens. A lot of the farmers were there.

74. A: That would be the place over by the Fire House in Schellville?

J: Yeah. That place was built for the crews from the presses.

75. A: Really.

J: On the other side over here was a place called Wright's Corner. The building is still there. They've converted it into kind of an art boutique. Walt Crivelli, who I just mentioned, was a dairyman from right here, his aunt started that and it was a beer bar and you could eat there. So there were those kind of places. But as far as neighbors, these places were relatively large. It wasn't like you had a forty-acre family farm. These things were a lot bigger. And then the dividing line between Napa and Sonoma. The county line

is about a hundred feet up that hill. Sonoma was Sonoma and Napa was Napa. Walt Crivelli and Till, his brother, they had a dairy right down there where Duhig Road comes out onto Highway 12/121, right there?

76. A: Yeah.

J: He had the hay press, Walter. So he did work, not every year for my father, 'cause sometimes he was booked and they would get the Kiser press to come in and do it. So it was not like 'Little House on the Prairie.' Put it that way.

77. A: There's a big old piece of farm machinery down on lower Broadway? I think it's on Sangiacomo's property.

J: No that's Kisers. That's the 'Widowmaker.'

78. A: Oh, that's the 'Widowmaker,' OK.

J: Gary Kiser just passed away a few months ago.

79. A: Yeah I was trying to talk to him but I didn't get to him in time.

J: He would have been another one. Because he also worked in all this. Joe, his kid that took over the earthmoving business, was never that involved in it. But Gary would have been a good one. Walt Crivelli, like I say, would have been another great one. The three Kiser brothers, but they unfortunately or fortunately, I don't know which, decided they don't want to get on any records or anything. Then you've got people like myself that were told stories that I think are feasible. Some of them make sense, some of them don't make sense.

80. A: It's always good to corroborate things with other sources.

J: That would be your job. That's what you're going to get paid for.

81. A: [Laughs] That's the hard work. How about wildlife down here?

J: Oh you know, here and there, jackrabbits. One of the things we see that you never saw before was the coyote. Never saw a coyote. Now you got a lot of coyotes and jack rabbits are few and far between. There's coveys of quail. Pheasants used to be pretty abundant, now not so much anymore. Deer. Skaggs Island had a heck of a herd of deer on it. Up until the drought the herd had to be up around thirty or forty. There were quite a few around. Then the drought happened and the only water they had was Rainbow Slough and the tributary ditches. They all dried up. Two years ago I walked across [points

out a spot on the aerial]—Rainbow Slough here, as you can see, is a bigger slough than here?

82. A: Yeah.

J: Walt Crivelli's uncle was a lever man on the *Sonoma*, which was the name of one of the two dredges that did this. This was done by a ditcher. If you ever get ahold of that book, *The Tule Breakers*, it'll explain all this to you. Anyway, right here is a crossing. Two years ago I walked across Rainbow Slough right there with boots like those [one's he's wearing] and never got a bit of mud on them. I had never in my life seen the bottom of Rainbow Slough and I walked across it.

83. A: Wow. So do you think the deer just died?

J: No, they came up here. Several of them died trying to get across the road. But they were here. Now there is at least one down there because I saw one here about a month ago, saw a doe about a month ago. There was quite a little herd of deer down there.

84. A: Do you think Skaggs took them in? Or the guys in the military?

J: No, it was after the military left. They migrated in. They got run out of the mountains someplace and they found a place for themselves.

85. A: Probably no mountain lions down there.

J: No mountain lions or anything like that down there. But that's about it. Naturally the ducks and the geese.

86. A: Have you noticed any changes in the numbers of those?

J: I don't hunt and I don't fish. I'm not really up on that. I never took a liking to that. My big thing was I enjoyed the shop work. I enjoyed drag racing. I built my first car when I was sixteen. Didn't have a driver's license so a fellow in Sonoma, Don Sheldon, you didn't have pictures on your license then. He was about my build, so I would use his license to be able to drive my car [laughs]. So I'm a member of the 200-Mile-An-Hour Club. Now they're over 300.

87. A: Is that over at Sears Point?

J: We ran at Sears Point. Sears Point wasn't there at that time. The race tracks when I first started around here, there was one at Cotati. That was an airfield, World War Two. There was Half Moon Bay, which was an airport again, down below San Francisco. There was Vacaville, which was right on the freeway, but it's gone now. Those were three of the

main ones. Kingdon was outside of Stockton. It was again an airport that was utilized. I enjoyed that. We were building a new car and my kid got hurt in a snowboard accident and it's sitting in the shop at Skaggs Island and he never completed it. So hopefully we'll complete it up here. Right now my main concern is getting this house [completed], which is going to be a security house. We need somebody to see things here. We've gotten robbed here probably eight or ten times. They steal fire extinguishers and chains and tools. There's hasn't been, luckily, any vandalism where stuff was destroyed. So we've got that for security. That big building that we've just built here last year, blocked part of the shop, so the house is going to go around the other side of it. So the drag racing has to be kind of put on the back burner.

88. A: Ever see any hawks down here?

J: Yeah, mostly red-tail. They're in the vineyards. Another bird that wasn't here until say, the first ones started showing up twelve, fourteen years ago, are the ravens. We have two and I don't know where they nest but they're here mostly every morning. We call them 'Fred' and 'Ethel.'

89. A: [Laughs]

J: They're on the roofs and they'll go down into the gutters on the buildings. I guess they get bugs or whatever. Those weren't here before. Now they're everywhere.

90. A: That's interesting. Do you remember the Millerick Rodeo?

J: Yeah. My mother was a Millerick. So that was part of her family.

91. A: I tried to talk to Rose Millerick also, but it didn't work out.

J: Couldn't do that either, huh? It's a funny group of us here [laughs].

92. A: It's been more work than the first oral histories I did, some of the guys you probably know in Sonoma, a little older than you, but like Bill Basileu. We mostly talked about the creek and fishing, they were happy to talk about it. I had more people than I could get to.

J: There you go.

93. A: Why do you think that is down here? Any thoughts?

J: The places were large enough that you were kind of on to yourself. Not that there weren't friends. Like my mom and dad would have a Christmas party usually every year. Thanksgiving and that type [of holiday] was just family. We were together then. I really don't have the answer to that. It wasn't 'Little House on the Prairie.'

94. A: I understand. When you start looking at history, that probably never really was, that romantic [era].

J: It probably was not.

95. A: Some people talked about the Bissos.

J: They were different. Very intelligent, just took a different path to get to an end.

96. A: I guess Bill Bisso is still alive. You probably know Newt DalPoggetto?

J: Yeah.

97. A: He's still practicing law at ninety-two. Amazing. He lives in Agua Caliente and he says Bill Bisso lives nearby.

J: I think you'll find that Bill is deceased also.

98. A: OK. Maybe. How about any stories or memories about floods or earthquakes, fires, things like that?

J: I went through three earthquakes in my life. I went through Loma Prieta—was in the shop on Skaggs Island when that hit. I had just bought a new, large toolbox, a Snap-On, and it had ball-bearing drawers. It rolled all the drawers over and tipped over on the bottom one and bent it, I had to replace it. I remember that one.

99. A: So things shook pretty good down here, I imagine?

J: It wasn't like the Napa two earthquakes that I went through. Karen and I lived in Napa then on West Pueblo in a two-story. We lived there before I built this. The first Napa earthquake we were there. It was the middle of the night, kind of like this last one was. It shook pretty good. Loma Prieta, when I was on Skaggs Island, that was in the afternoon. It was more of a, I don't know how the hell to explain it, it was more of a sashay. The last one, the last Napa quake—the master bedroom is right here, right at this end of the house. We got outside before that one quit. That one had to be *over* twenty seconds.

100. A: It was a long time, yeah.

J: That one was rough but we took very little damage. A soffit came down on the garage behind you, which covers the eaves. The swimming pool had, I call it a tarp, floating on it. I got outside and the motion lights had come on. We never lost power

believe it or not. It had pushed that out, tore the track out that's screwed onto the side of the pool and it was about three feet of water flowing out of that thing.

101. A: Wow.

J: So the soffit was about three thousand bucks to have it repaired. The pool was about another eight hundred or something. Karen has got a glass cabinet with little knicky-knack things on it. A couple of those broke. Never lost a picture off the wall. Nothing. But it was violent. Look out that window. See that stuff sticking out with no grass on it?

102. A: Yeah.

J: No so much the rocks. That stuff is called 'Ashfall.' I always called it sandstone. What ashfall is is molten rock from a volcano. So this whole hill here is literally one big rock.

103. A: So you're solid.

J: So it's solid. That's why we were so fortunate. Not a window broke, nothing. I have some apartments and some buildings in Napa. They did pretty damn well. Broke some windows and that type of stuff. Had to realign doors and what have you and do some work on the air conditioners and a restaurant[?] that sits on top of the roof and what have you. I have something called a Quickie Mart—just the building, not the business. That is like a 7-11, that kind of thing. But we did pretty good. Some drainage in the parking lots—we had to replace two of the parking lots because the drainage had collapsed. So Napa did cost us some money on what we have. But here, definitely very very fortunate.

104. A: I live in Glen Ellen; it shook pretty good up there. Woke me up.

J: Right off my fingertips [pointing] two miles was the epicenter. We were really really close.

105. A: [Looking at notes]. What were people's attitudes about the land when you were growing up as far as stewardship?

J: Nothing like it is now. It was more so of protecting of your privacy and things you owned. There was nothing that I recall as far as 'this grass should be protected' or 'that animal' or anything like that.

106. A: More of a practical approach.

J: You protected what was yours. Just like what I'm doing building this small house as a security house that Justin will live in. Just protect what you have. That was it. There wasn't anything really radical.

107. A: Sure. Times have changed. I was born in 'fifty-nine; it's a little different era [than Jim's] but I've seen things change quite a bit in my lifetime. Anything else you'd like to say?

J: Unfortunately some of the people who've passed on would have been great. Walt Crivelli had boxes and boxes and boxes of pictures.

108. A: I wonder if he might have donated them to the Depot Museum in Sonoma?

J: I'll ask his stepson when I see Jimmy again. Jimmy McElrun [sp?] is his name. He lives outside of Calistoga. His mom was married to Walt and Walt and his mother only had one girl, is all they ever had. Jim was Walter's stepson and he worked with him on the dairy and in the fields. He had a lot of stuff, Walter had a lot of stuff. Walter was born right down at the bottom of the hill here on the left-hand side as you're going towards Napa. About thirty years ago, Walter took me in there and showed me the foundation of the house. It's still there.

The foundations of a lot of these houses around here were built out of ashfall. They cut blocks. This was a ranch called 'Clayton.' O.B. Clayton and his family lived here. The house and everything was down below. Some way or another, Fillippinis bought it. They bought actually two ranches. They bought this one and then over on the other side of the hill was Young Ranch, they bought it too.

That house down there—it was no good for anything so they pushed it down. The house sat on blocks of ashfall. Which I thought was sandstone. I never knew what that stuff was until we were building this place, because I had to get a grading permit to cut a notch in the hill. One day we were here and you have to rip it. I have a D-8. So we would rip it and then we could then push it. But you couldn't cut through it with the blade even if you tipped it over onto a cutting edge, it just drew a line in it.

So this guy shows up and came over and talked to me and said that he was a professor from Davis and that he found me through the permit that I had to have, the grading permit. He knew what the stuff was and he says, 'Would it be OK with you if I took some samples and kind of hung around for a while.' I said, 'What for?' He says, 'You don't see ashfall opened up very often.' What the hell is ashfall? He says, 'That stuff.' I said, 'You mean sandstone?' He says, 'its true name is ashfall.' Fifteen years ago is when I learned what that stuff was.

It's under these two blocks of grapes here. Not the greatest thing in the world, but the wine it does make is quite good. But I'm not selling a bottle of wine, I'm selling a ton of grapes, so I wish it wasn't here, but it is. And it stops, right at the bottom here. When it goes up the hill on the other side, it's not there anymore. This hill is it.

109. A: It's this hill, huh.

J: So I was approached about a wine storage, boring tunnels into the hill. I never really cared to do that, 'cause then you'd have all kinds of traffic. The traffic on this highway now is ungodly. So I never got involved in that. Had to fight CALTRANS tooth-and-nail. Domaine Chandon and I. My father sold the piece on the other side here to Domaine Chandon. They came here and started the winery from France. Yountville by the Veteran's Home. The one here [nearby] is also from there-- Domaine Carneros. The other one is Domaine Chandon. Moet Chandon. I think it's the oldest champagne producer in the world.

110. A: Really. Wow.

J: That's why here they do make champagne, but they won't allow it to be called champagne; it's called sparkling wine. The only champagne comes from the Champagne region of France and these guys are French.

So now I'm just grapes. That's all I'll have planted after this year. Just before the rains started, on a Wednesday, last week, we finished planting Skaggs Island for the last time.

111. A: Wow. The end of an era.

J: I don't know what's going to happen when my time comes to leave this earth and run into my grandfather or my father. I'll probably get a boot in my ass for selling it. [Laughs]

112. A: Time changes.

J: Yeah. What they say they're going to do with it is something that I believe is desirable. I'm not a fisherman, but I had an uncle that was married to my mom's sister. Al Kusilage [sp?]. He was out of Eureka and he was a fisherman. You know what those guys go through, especially the salmon that are having a helluva time. Also the steelhead are having a helluva time. What the Federal Fish and Wildlife says they're going to do with Skaggs Island sounds good to me. It was something that was going to happen one way or another. They have three-quarters of the island and I could keep them from doing anything with it, through that court judgment that Skaggs got. Skaggs is the one that did it, we didn't. If it hadn't of been for Skaggs doing that, they would have had our ass . . .

113. A: A long time ago.

J: A long, long time ago. But Skaggs did that and he's the guy that we would have to thank for that. It's different now. I just hope they do it in a timely fashion. There was a little article in the Napa paper last week that had Don Brubaker, who is Fish and Wildlife head.

114. A: I've heard that name.

J: He's a good guy. But he's got [to deal with] the hierarchy. I got into some really goddamn rows with these guys. Really some rows [laughs]. But never Brubaker. But he had to answer to so many people. So San Pablo National Wildlife Refuge, he is the head of it. Which now includes Skaggs Island. Then the Cullinan Ranch down by Vallejo.

115. A: Oh yeah, I talked to Mike Cullinan. I interviewed him also. I don't know if you know the Cullinans at all?

J: The name, but I don't think I ever met them. But Kisers farmed there lots of years.

116. A: Mike worked for the Kisers a little bit.

J: So now they've breached the levees and they're putting water on it. Is it complete like they were going to do? I don't think so. I says, 'I wanna know what the hell you're going to do with Skaggs Island? Why are you going to do this? Some things I don't understand. I don't understand why you keep getting land, taking land out of production that's feeding an animal, that's feeding a human being on this earth? At least in our area. We feed a cow, the cow makes milk. We feed a beef cow, that cow is meat. Why do you keep taking this land? Why don't you take something, a piece of ground, that's fine, and then restore it to what you're talking about and move on to the next one? Why do you take five or six and you just take them out of production?' To me they look like shit.' The answer was, one guy who I never ever saw again [chuckles], 'We wanna buy land when it's cheap.' So when I put a price on ours, I took that into consideration.

117. A: I'm sure. They were showing their hand a little more than they should have.

J: I don't understand that. Why you wouldn't buy something—like when I bought some apartments in Napa, we went through, painted them, rugs, low-flow toilets. Done all the upgrades to some older units. Got someone living in it so you got some income flow. I realize they don't need income flow and then went on to the next ones. It makes no sense to me at all, buying all this stuff and it's not doing anything. So that's where I really hammered on them. What's supposed to be on Skaggs Island are two to three big channels that would be tidal, for the salmon and the steelhead. That material that comes out of those channels would be made into hundreds of small islands, from a couple acres to a quarter acre, that would be out of the high tide. So the nesting birds could stay there

and be protected by water around it. Then hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of acres of mudflats that I call 'The Feeding Ground for the Long-Legged Birds.'

118. A: Egrets . . .

J: and herons. We'll see. Anyway, I was going to tell you, they had Brubaker on the front cover of the Napa paper. He's standing by the bridge on 37, the one that they had to close because of the earthquake. So they have to repair it and that's part of what it was talking about. The reporter must have asked him, 'What are you going to do with Skaggs Island?' He says, 'The restoration on Haire Ranch will more likely than not be started in 2016. So we'll see if that happens.

I'm seventy-two. My dad made it to eighty, my mom made it to ninety-four. I want to see what the hell you're doing to the land that has been in my family for over seventy-five years.

119. A: Sure.

J: I don't know if I ever will or not.

120. A: Government takes a long time.

J: It made no sense to me then and it makes no sense to me now. But nothing I can do about it.

121. A: One more question. What can you tell me about the Millerick family in the area?

J: My mom's father was a Millerick and they were related somehow to these here. My uncle Jim, Rose's [Millerick] husband, he was a pilot in World War Two, a bomber pilot. Jim has passed on. But the ranch—you've been in the restaurant there—that's where the rodeos were. Like you were headed down to Camp Two or Camp Three, Wingo.

122. A: So if you're heading down Millerick Road, would it have been off to the left?

J: Just barely down there on the left-hand side. There was an old barn there that I don't know if it was in it or not.

123. A: There's still some buildings over there, maybe a house.

J: The most famous member of our family is from my mother's side. It was her oldest brother and his name was Buster Millerick. Buster Millerick trained race horses. He worked a little bit with Native Diver, that was one of the famous ones. He was a 'leg man' or something. He is in the horse racing hall of fame. His whole life was that. Was married

to Martha but never had any children. They're all buried, along with my grandmother and my grandfather who was gone before I came along, they're all in the cemetery in Petaluma. Sea Biscuit, when Buster was very young, Sea Biscuit threw a leg funny or something, so he actually, at the ranch on Millerick Road, Sea Biscuit was there for a short period of time. A few years ago, were you here when they had the statue of Sea Biscuit they were taking all over the country.

124. A: Yeah.

J: They were down there and my mom was still alive. So they got my mom down there and she sat alongside of the statue of Sea Biscuit and they got pictures. She passed on just shortly after that.

125. A: That's a good story.

J: So that's what I know of it.

126. A: I think that's good. You gave me a lot of good stuff [explains process from this point forward. Then the conversation on the Baylands picks up again.].

J: Camp Six, when it was built, it was the biggest of the Camps. It's just short of 4500 acres. Most of the rest of them are less than 2000, roughly. It's right across the slough from Camp One, which was Headquarters. There was a bridge. Jones built a bridge across there, so they could go back and forth.

Along Ramal Road there was a stop for the train. There was a dairy on Camp Four, out in the middle of it and there was a railcar that was taken the wheels off of it and set to the side of the track and the train would put water in there. That was their water for the dairy. A dairy in them days was probably thirty or forty cows. So it wasn't big. And there was a siding there, they would also pick the milk up every morning.

127. A: That makes perfect sense.

J: Percy Jones and then Gregory Jones were the ones that actually farmed here. Newt was telling me about him, he knew Greg Jones. They called him 'Blinky' because his eyes—I remember him when I was a little kid standing alongside my dad, his eyes went a million miles an hour. So a lot of people called him 'Blinky.'

128. A: Funny. Both eyes?

J: Both eyes as I can remember. I was at most five years old, but I remember him. Skaggs would have been an interesting fellow to have known. How it came around to his ownership of it. A couple of different stories which I've heard—I don't know which one is

true, so I don't repeat them. Either there was a loan that couldn't be paid or somehow or another.

129. A: He might have got it through some kind of default.

J: I don't know how it worked. Supposedly Jones and Skaggs knew each other somehow or another and that's how it happened. But Skaggs, he was quite a guy. There's a movie with Fess Parker in it, it's called *Smokey*; it's about a horse. I believe it's set in Colorado. I've seen it a couple of times. You don't see it very often. He was a young fellow then, Fess Parker when he made this thing. Anyway, in the town they're having a parade and this horse was a bucking horse and it got hurt and a peddler got it to pull his wagon, kind of a junk man. And the horse was used to these parades, so the horse takes the old junk wagon when this guy went into a store and he's following the floats in the parade.

130. A: All by himself.

J: On a sign on one of the buildings is 'Skaggs Drugs.' Which I understand was the forerunner of Payless stores.

131. A: Huh. If he was the forerunner of Payless and Safeway, that's something.

J: And a lot of other things. Google him sometime.

132. A: I'll do that.

J: And 'O.P.' was his brother; they both did the same thing but they were competitors with each other.

133. A: Interesting.

J: Well OK.

134. A: Thanks Jim.

135 [post interview] Jim described seeing freshly-reclaimed marsh on the Fillippini property when he was young. Once it dried out, there were cracks in the ground big enough to hide a cow! Eventually these were filled in and roughly leveled enough so that it could be disked. Jim's Dad bought some land at Camp Five from the Bissos, across the slough from Skaggs Island.

Interview with Sam Jones

at his home in Santa Rosa, CA

August 14, 2015

S = Sam Jones; A = Arthur Dawson

1. A: [responding to photos Sam is showing]...so that would be from on top of the bluffs looking over the ocean?

S: Yes. This is Senator John Percival Jones, his second wife Georgina (Sullivan) Jones, Harry Gorham, the Senator's nephew, and Harry's wife. Harry joined Sam Jones, the Senator's younger brother in Gold Hill, Nevada to work the mines both in gold and silver and specifically operated the Crown Point Mine. Sam managed the mining operations for the Senator until Harry came into the picture. Sam continued to oversee many of the Senator's investments while he was in Washington D.C. where he served as one of the two Senators from Nevada from 1872-1902.

Here is a picture of the Senator. My son Tyler looks a lot like him in his younger years. The second picture was the Jones' home in Santa Monica that the Senator built for his mother and extended family to stay at. The picture was taken around 1890. As he lived in Washington D.C. much of the time, other family members spent a great deal of time there including my great-grandfather and later my grandfather. The Senator had acquired a 75% interest from the Bandera family and the widow Bandera laid out the City [of Santa Monica], donating large tracts of land for the railroad, the Veteran's Home at Sawtelle, school sites and church sites.

2. Recently my wife Candy, my sister Christina and her husband Howard went to U.C.L.A. to review our family history. Our great-aunt Dorothy donated family pictures, letters and communications to the Library in 1949 so that all current and future family could share their history. One of the many things we wanted to explore were how many business ventures the family had been part of and how they might be interrelated. The family holding company was called the Ramina Corporation, which included the names of the four children: 1) Roy Jones, the only son and born to John and his first wife Cornelia (Conger), and then the three daughters with Georgina (Sullivan)— 2) Alice was the first, then 3) Marian, and finally 4) Georgina.

I was able to count at least 30 different entities included under Ramina Corporation, from wholly-owned businesses to simply partial investment. The Ranch in Schellville was wholly owned until my grandfather took in a partner in the late 1930s, M.B. Skaggs, the founder of Safeway. The Ranch was Sonoma Land [Company] and the business of growing primarily grain crops was called Producers Hay Company.

I learned that not only was the Senator involved in a lot of businesses, but that most were very capital intensive. The Ranch was reclaimed in large measure by dredging and building levees that often needed repair. There were three dredgers working almost

around the clock. On top of that, farming, as it became more mechanized, required large amounts of capital. They did run some sheep and cattle to supplement the crops, but mostly for their own labor crews' food.

3. Prior to tractors and trucks, the Ranch had as many as 200 draft horses and 50 saddle horses. The Ranch was acquired in the late 1880s. It did fairly well producing hay, wheat, and barley through World War I, but the 'twenties were tough on grain producers and then the Depression hit. The Senator had passed away in 1912 and Sam became ill in the early 1920s, passing away in 1926. My grandfather was called on to take over the Ranch in 1922 after running another venture, a pear ranch, in the Tehachapi Mountains for several years prior to that. Two years of frost closed that venture.

The real money was made in mining, largely in the 1860 – 1874 time frame, and then again for a brief time around 1890. Most of this was gold and silver on the Comstock, where the Senator gained his reputation, became a Senator, and owned first the Belcher and later the Crown Point, both of Gold Hill. They had mining interests in the Sierra foothills as well, but most of the success was on the Comstock. Again, a very capital intensive industry.

I apologize for the long introduction. Let's get back to your questions.

4. A: [describes the oral history process—interview, indexing, release etc.] Have you ever seen the pictures at the Sonoma Valley Historical Society? There are a couple of binders with photos of the bay lands.

S: I've seen some stuff like this with the Gaye LeBaron's book.

5. A: [Gives Sam a copy of *Creek Wisdom*] This is distilled down to something people might actually want to read. This [other] one is more like a report format [300 page oral history report done at the Sonoma Ecology Center].

S: There's the Shepard family [looking at *Creek Wisdom*]. Two of my very best friends are related so they spent a lot of time with the Shepards.

6. A: I just saw Brian the other day. And Eliza. I probably hadn't seen her for fifteen years. Last time I knew she was in middle school and now she's grown up with a career.

S: And Win Smith? Has he passed away?

7. A: Yes, he did. Sometime in the last ten years. Do you know Mickey Cooke? She lives next door to Pat and Win's place.

S: No.

8. A: I think she was Win's sister. My brother-in-law remembers going with Brian Shepard and hunting frogs up in the Jack London Lake back in the 'seventies.

S: The Narvaez family? They're related to the same people that I said were related to the Shepards. They were great friends of my grandparents. They lived in Glen Ellen up on the hill up in the eucalyptus stands, back to the west and towards the London Ranch.

I had to search for this Historical Society thing. I knew it was a pretty salient topic but I had it on a bookshelf kind of stashed away [refers to 1993 article, 'A Bonanza in Hay,' written with information given by his grandfather during a speech.]

9. A: So does this give your version of Senator Jones' story and how he made his fortune? That family background and also your grandfather Gregory's? I'm actually working on a history of La Casita right now [Gregory Jones former home, an adobe in Sonoma].

S: I have yet to be there [at the winery that's now in the adobe]. My other siblings have all been there to see it and say that they treated the family very well. I have kind of mixed emotions. We all have some of the furniture from there and, although he's done a beautiful job with it, the memories are a far cry from what it is like now. I'd love to see that. We're talking about doing a family outing there, about getting everybody together.

10. A: I'll send it to you when I'm done with it. What I'm trying to do is a sort of mini-biography for all the people who lived in the house. Some of it is much harder [than your grandfather's], trying to take little bits of information and stitching it together. We know more about your grandfather.

S: Well, yes, because my grandmother kind of spear-headed that. I think it was 1946 when they bought it and it was her project [Gregory's wife Harriet] when they moved up from Marin County because my grandfather was on the ranch and stayed there during the week. Times were tough. I think they took a good part of what they sold the Marin County house for and put it into the restoration of the adobe. She did all the research and tried to make the thing as authentic as she possibly could. She did a heck of a job.

The furniture that was there was a combination of things that had been passed down through families on both sides, but largely from the Jones side. But she was very good friends with the Sutros, from San Francisco. When they tore down the Sutro mansion, the Sutros called her and asked if she would like some of the furniture. She incorporated their things, and she would go to rummage sales and find things that really had no value. She would get them redecorated and she put them together. This couch, as an example, sat in the house. I think that it came out of a pool hall. I don't think it has any significance or value and it didn't come down through the family, but it sat next to a horse hair little two-seater couch that my sister has, that I think had great value but was in disrepair. But by re-stuffing it and decorating it, it all came together.

So do you want to start with the Senator?

SAM JONES

11. A: Yes. He's originally from England, right?

S: Yes, he was born on the Wye River and he was fifth of thirteen children. They came in the 1840s from Wales to Cleveland, Ohio. His father, Thomas, was a builder, largely a mason. They made headstones built buildings and I think they had a couple of cemeteries. The two oldest boys took over that business. One of the boys became a judge in Ohio. In 1850, two of the brothers, John Percival Jones and Henry Jones embarked on the *Eureka* on a 9-month voyage around the Horn to San Francisco.

12. A: Sam. Is this his photo [pointing to wall]?

S: Sam Lloyd actually went to mine someplace in Idaho. John and Henry took nine months on the ship the *Eureka*. They went out through the Saint Lawrence Sea Way, down the whole eastern seashore, around the cape and up to San Francisco. It was a nine-month voyage.

When they got to San Francisco, they worked the mines in the Marysville area, the Yuba River, and didn't have much success there. They moved up to Trinity County and Henry apparently stayed there longer than John did. John had a couple of mines but not a lot of success. They didn't really produce anything. He [John] was elected Sheriff of Trinity and Shasta Counties and was there in 1858 until 1861 or 1862. Then he ran for the state legislature and served a term or two in the state legislature. He married Judge Conger's daughter, Cornelia Hannah, and was in Sacramento a good part of the time.

He ran for Lieutenant Governor for the state on a losing ticket. Then he moved to Nevada. He was the superintendent of the Crown Point Mine, the Kentuck Mine, and the Belcher Mine. (At one point he owned part of the Belcher and traded his interest to secure the Crown Point).

13. A: Was that in Virginia City?

S: It was in Gold Hill just down the other side. He and Alvinza Hayward, of Hayward, California fame, ended up buying the Crown Point Mine and gave up their interest in the Belcher. I don't think they ever had interest in the Kentuck Mine, but I'm not positive of that. Hayward backed him, and then Hayward got out of it and Jones ended up owning the Crown Point Mine. In 1869, the Crown Point was part of the Yellow Jacket Mine fire where a number of people were killed. A couple of different veins were connected and the fire blew through several properties and the Crown Point was the hardest hit. People were killed and Jones went into the mine himself and saved some people. He became quite a popular figure, both for his prowess in the money he made, but also because he was one of the working people. He ran for the United States Senate and won and served a number of terms, a total of thirty years in the Senate [representing Nevada].

You think about the time he was in Gold Hill. He actually brought family members there to run operations once he was elected because he was spending most of his time in Washington DC. By that time, his first wife had passed away. He had one son, Roy Jones, with her. He went to Washington DC with a new wife and they had three children. They spent more time in Washington DC and New York than here.

His brother, Sam, took over the mining operations and Sam was later the one who took over the ranch in Schellville. He was the younger brother who dedicated himself to helping his brother. He never married. He ended up replacing himself in the mining operations with a nephew, Harry Gorham, who was the son of a sister, Cornelia, who was one of the original thirteen children. Sam liked San Francisco, so he was developing lots in San Francisco and managing the ranch that they bought in 1878-1880 with the long-term goal of developing it. They never got around to doing that. Farming was a way to produce something on the land in the interim.

14. A: Do you know who they bought the land from?

S: I don't know whether it was a land grant. I know there was a number of different settlers in this article from the Historical Society. It looked like a whole bunch of people had made a whole bunch of attempts. The land was pretty poor. It was tideland and a bunch of people took a stab at it and couldn't (make it). So probably, I'm going to guess through political connections, he saw an opportunity. And Sam had scouted this out and Sam was the one that said, "Hey, we can run some horses there, some cattle, some sheep and begin a farming operation, reclaim the land and do something with it until we can develop it."

The senator died in 1912, Sam lived until 1926, I believe. My grandfather came into the picture in about 1921-22. Sam was pretty old at that time and I think he was not in the best of health. As history would indicate, they tended to call on other family members to step in and help because the Senator had his fingers in agriculture, in mining, and as I mentioned to you offline, in an ice machinery company, to investments in railroads in the Panama Canal, the Treadway Goldmine up in Alaska.

15. A: That was on the Klondike?

S: Yes. We had a small interest in the largest mine, the Treadwell.

16. A: So from some things you showed me before, even though they were involved in the beginning of mechanization they weren't able to carry that through?

S: Correct. I remember when my grandfather was running trucks, I think this is a good illustration—he always had some Scandinavian men that lived down on the ranch that never were married. It took two of them to do what one man today would do. The largest truck that my grandfather had was a Chevrolet that he bought in 1956 that could

carry twelve tons of hay. He had to run an old Dodge behind it to carry the other four tons to get to a sixteen-ton load. So it was a lot of loyal customers in the later years that hung with him. They weren't as competitive as somebody that could go out and get a Peterbilt. It was a smaller scale and kept him busy in the later years but it wasn't a moneymaking operation.

17. A: Do you know anything about shipping in the beginning? I've seen pictures of the hay barges.

S: Yes, we had a warehouse down on Third Street in San Francisco, right about where the (ATT) ballpark is. They used to barge the hay down Tolay Creek and Sonoma Creek across the Bay and unload it at the warehouse. Of course, if you look at how much hay was used at the turn of the century; have you ever seen that [movie] clip of four days before the earthquake? Think about how many livery stables there were in San Francisco, just the operation of cleaning up the horse manure!

From there, they could dispatch it [the hay] and ship it overseas for the First World War. And even in the Second World War they were shipping hay to the Philippines because they were still riding horse back over there on some of the islands.

18. A: Do you know Newt DalPoggetto?

S: Yes. I know of him.

19. A: I interviewed him for this project and he was saying that one place that the hay was going to in the Second World War was the Cavalry.

S: Yes, I read his book. My grandparents were friends of his and my parents, I think, knew him pretty well.

So going back to when Roy Jones, my grandfather's father, was trying to run all of these various entities. I think up until about the beginning of the First World War, things were pretty lucrative, still, in the mining area. Regulations and population changes were new pressures too. There just wasn't enough money. There were investors in some of these projects and so there was no way to take money from one entity and feed another because they were a different set of books.

20. A: So there were all these different entities. I have the impression, I don't know if it's true, that in the beginning the money for all these projects from the mining?

S: Yes. I was reading in one of these articles, that it appears that the money was made (and I don't know what the cut off was) because there was this great push in the late 1860s up until the recessions of the early 1870s. And I know that my great-great-uncle Sam went back and was able to extract another \$5 million worth of ore in about

1890 with the help of Harry Gorham. So it wasn't totally played out, but a lot of the investors had lost interest and moved on to something else. But they were able to go back ten to fifteen years later and extract more.

The Crown Point, according to one article that I read here, produced about \$29 million dollars. And that was largely to the Jones' benefit. There were lots of investments in railroads, building the wharf at Santa Monica, building the railroad from the Panamint Mountains down to Santa Monica, which didn't produce anything. The Senator got in a rate war with the Big Four over whether Santa Monica or Long Beach should be the Port of Los Angeles; Long Beach prevailed. He also invested in railroads in Panama.

The Senator was very benevolent. He came by the money through hard work and a lot of luck, and maybe some political maneuvering, but he was very generous. He did buy a 75% interest in the Santa Monica Rancho from the Bandera widow.

21. A: They were the original Mexican landowners?

S: Correct away. He [John] continued to give things away. They had a huge extended family and friends that they were supporting all the time. The home in Santa Monica was sixteen bedrooms, and was built for his mother. There were never less than sixteen to twenty people living in that house. The Senator was writing the checks for the whole thing.

He had three daughters from the second marriage (I mentioned that his first marriage was to Cornelia Conger). His second marriage was to Georgina Sullivan, whose father was the head of the Port Authority in San Francisco. She was apparently related to the Younts of Yountville. There were three daughters. Alice, Marian and then Georgina. Alice married a sculptor and lived in Giverny, France where her husband had been her teacher. She went over to learn languages and took up art and married him. Marian married Robert Farquhar, an architect, and Georgina became part of a religious commune.

22. A: Did Alice's husband become famous?

S: Well, he did. There is a bronze that he sculpted in Pittsburgh. McMonnis. Frederick McMonnis was his name. He was pretty well known but I don't think he could support the lifestyle that they were living. And Marian married Farquhar, an architect in Santa Monica who built a couple of homes that are still in Santa Monica, including their own which is still there. Buster Keaton lived in that house for a lot of years, I just saw that recently for the first time. She was quite a tennis player and was the first woman to represent the United States at Wimbledon. The third daughter got involved in a cult, a church and disappeared into the fabric of doing whatever it was that she was doing.

As to what motivated the Senator (John Percival)—he had a real interest in machinery. I learned recently that they had an investment in Ojai and they were farming in hopes of

finding oil. The people in the Ojai valley decided they didn't want oil derricks so that never materialized. He invested in ice machines for making ice in far different cities.

23. A: Did that interest in mechanics have a direct connection with the development of the tractor or the dredger?

S: I don't know. He and a number of people in Los Angeles decided to go up to the Bakersfield area and buy a section of land and drill for oil. This was in 1908. They looked at some farming in that same area and did some farming. They had pear orchards in the Tehachapi's, which was my grandfather's first job when he got out of Harvard. He went there and he got two years of frost and blight. It wiped him out two years in a row. He got ahold of his father and said, "We oughta scratch this deal." And the next thing you knew he was up in Schellville managing the ranch.

24. A: Was Gregory in the military?

S: Yes, he was a first lieutenant, later a captain in the First World War, stationed in France. He was in charge of getting troops to the front. That's a picture of him right there on the right hand side in the military uniform. He had a sister, Dorothy. There was just the two of them and she lived in Santa Monica pretty much her entire life. When he graduated Harvard, the first job he had was in Los Angeles trying to sell Maxwell Cars. When that didn't pan out or he didn't like it, he had always had an interest in farming so he took over the pear ranch in Tehachapi. When that didn't work out, he moved north to San Francisco for a couple of years, to Marin County, and then to Schellville.

25. A: How did he meet your grandmother?

S: She was from Pasadena originally, and later from Santa Barbara. I'm not exactly sure how they met but he and my other grandfather were roommates at Harvard, class of 1917. And so my other grandfather was his best man, and they were married kind of hurriedly in Massachusetts as he was shipping out for the First World War. He was gone for a year and a half right after he got married. That'd be tough. But they used to do that.

So, he kind of fell into it. I don't think that my knowledge of my grandfather was of him as a hard-core business guy. He wanted to work outside. He loved the outdoors, loved farming. If he hadn't farmed, I think he would have been a college professor. He knew Latin inside and out, read some Greek. He would have been a history professor. But the family just had all these things to deal with and rather than just let them go, people made an attempt to salvage them or make them work.

I know with the land, even as a kid, talking with him and riding in the hay trucks with him, it was poor land to begin with. He inherited the property but he inherited it with all the debts. He lived by the barometer every morning. He would go outside and look about the rain. And about every fourth or fifth year the levees would break and salt water

would get into the crop and then he couldn't sell the crop. It was enough to get by but it was never super successful. I've read some of his old ledgers. During the war, my grandmother was keeping the books. There was one year when he said, "My income this year was \$600 and I don't have the money to pay Harriet anything." In reading through those ledgers, the largest bill was to Marsh McClennan for his insurance. And that was about \$1200 a year.

It's funny looking back on those things, looking at a \$2 donation to the Boys Club. Those were real dollars when you made \$600 in a year.

26. A: Do you know about the levees and how they were being maintained in that era?

S: No. By the time the tractors came, I know that a lot of that work was done by them. (We bought the second Holt Tractor, which were like today's Caterpillar). Some, I'm sure, was hired out. But when the levees were breached, they would do everything they could to kind of cordon that section off so it wouldn't spoil the rest of it. The way the six ranches laid out, that map would indicate...in the Historical Society article where my grandfather was interviewed, he talks about the tide changes, and based on what was going on, how they would plant the fields and why. There were three dredgers working full time on the canals and levees—the *Sonoma*; *Eureka* and *Nevada*.

Besides hay, there was some alfalfa. There was barley and oats, and obviously supply and demand dictates what you plant and when you plant it. I don't know how many cuttings they would have gotten in the course of the year. There were several. Three in this area is fantastic but you don't always get it. A single cutting and you would be losing a good chunk of dough, two and you might be making a little money and three would be a glorious year.

27. A: Was he running any cattle?

S: Yes. They ran cattle periodically. I think in later years they were probably somebody else's cattle. Early on, they were theirs. I've seen pictures of sheep out there. I know that, although they never had formal duck clubs, they allowed people to shoot ducks out there. It was a pretty good flyway at one time. My dad said when he was a kid, they had 200 draft horses and 50 saddle horses out there.

28. A: And that would be for all six camps?

S: Yes. In that marshy land, they would have to run six to eight horses across to be able to pull the plows through that ground. A horse in boggy ground, two, three, four hours with intermittent rests was about all a horse could do. My dad told stories about the old guys that would drive down there for my grandfather, in terms of training the horses. They would just run them 'til they hit a canal where they had to stop or run into a

levee. So the horses had no place to go. It was probably a great training ground because you could just exhaust them and after a while they would mind their business.

The labor down there, when I was a kid and earlier, were a lot of northern Europeans, Swedes and Danes. A lot of them were single. All the way back to my grandfather's tenure. I know that according to this article, when the railroads were finished, when the Union Pacific was connected in Utah in 1869, I think, a lot of the Chinese people were looking for work. So a lot of the ground, when the levees were built, were built by the Chinese by hand with pick and shovel.

29. A: You know Jim Haire? He was telling me the story of when the tractor was first coming in and they were demonstrating (it) out at Camp 6 and it just went down in the mud and disappeared.

S: That's probably what eight draft horses pulled out. So, the eastern side of the property, I'm going to say as far east as Skaggs Island goes, is probably as far east as our ranch went. I know almost up to Ramal Road on the north east side. There used to be a little Flying A Gas Station right across from Sears Point. It's just a wide spot in the road now where you can pull over, but there was a café there when I was a kid, and a two pump gas station. I think for obvious reasons, backing up to the marsh and waterways and everything else, because of leakage, it was gone by about 1960, '61 maybe. Beyond that to the west was probably the beginning of the property. When you get between Jordan Smith's going south towards the Donnell property, that's probably where we ran right up to Highway 121. In most areas, it was behind the homes and the private properties that would face along our county roads today. This article says that the property was 10,400 acres. Call it 10,000. I read somewhere else that it was 12,000 (acres). I'm going to say that the 10,400 acres is an accurate number.

30. A: How many draft horses did you say were here?

S: Up to 200. My dad was born in 1925. His older brother, Sam, who was killed in Korea was born in 1922. So when they were kids in the late 20's and early 30's, they still had that many draft horses.

31. A: So they didn't mechanize much?

S: No. I think they were slow to mechanize this big tractor that they had from Holt. I showed you a picture of it.

32. A: How did the camps work?

S: Joe Keechler was the overall foreman. Over the years, various personalities from the area, guys like Jimmy Millerick and Pat McKenna, who worked on the ranch at one time. A lot of my dad's and uncle's friends from Marin County worked on the ranch.

There was a gentleman by the name of Axel Christiansen that worked for my grandfather for years, lived in the bunkhouse out on Camp 1. And in later years my grandparents took care of him. He lived upstairs in the El Dorado Hotel when it was still kind of a boarding house.

There was another gentleman by the name of Walter Hildebrand , 'Missouri' was his nickname, that my grandfather also took care of. I'm sure he paid his board and they took their meals downstairs. Missouri was a heck of a teamster. He was one of the head guys driving the teams. I'm sure Axel was a teamster as well. He was one of the holdovers towards the end because he was still working for my grandfather until he couldn't do it anymore.

33. A: Ferd Kiser, was he employed by your grandfather?

S: I think so, but I'm not sure. When I first got in the insurance brokerage business, I was trying to get an appointment with an insurance company in San Francisco with the Chubb Insurance Company, and a gentleman by the name of Tim Lenihan was in charge of the western office. I went in and gave my song and dance and he said, "We're really not making appointments to brokers these days but in your case I'll make an exception." I asked, "Well why is that?" and I was surprised because he said "Well, I used to work for your grandfather on the ranch baling hay." He said, "I know your family, you come from good stock." And so I got the appointment.

Then I went and called on Arnie Riebli who is still alive. He was in the egg business in Petaluma, and although I didn't get his business, he said, "I know your name and I know who you are. I used to work for your grandfather out at the ranch." So I'd run across people twenty-five, thirty years ago who would say, "Oh, yeah. I knew your family, I knew your grandfather, I knew history of the ranch." And so it was kind of fun.

34. A: It sounds like the family was well regarded. So, there were six camps. Was there a somewhat permanent population of workers in each camp or did they move around?

S: I think Camp 1 was Base Camp. That's where the cookhouse was. During the war my grandmother was the cook. I know that they fed the fellows five meals a day. They were burning some calories, and they were long days. They would have an early breakfast, maybe at five o'clock in the morning. And then they would have a snack at eleven, and a snack again in the early afternoon, then something late afternoon and then in the evening. They went to bed early. They must have had some dairy cows there because I remember my grandmother said that these guys drink a lot of milk.

35. A: So, if they were working at Camp 4, would the workers come to Camp 1 for meals?

S: They probably did. I don't know because I never crossed one of those canals. I don't know how they got across them as opposed to going around. They may have taken some meals out to them in the fields.

36. A: I heard something about a travelling cook wagon. I think the Millerick's actually had one. Someone told me that until up to twenty or thirty years ago, they went around with sort of like a Gypsy wagon [cook wagon]. It could have been for their own ranch or it could have been for the Jones Ranch.

S: I don't know of any permanent bridges out there other than the ones you see out at Skaggs Island. So they must have used some barges to get across because they were barging hay down to San Francisco. So I imagine they were portable bridges or barges.

37. A: Or even just a rowboat. With just a few guys you could row across.

S: I don't know how that worked, but I do know that the bunkhouse and cookhouse were at Camp 1. The two largest hay barns when I was a kid, were there. But I've not been at all of the camps so I couldn't say what's left of the pictures I showed you that I got out of the UCLA library. There were horse barns and what not, I'm not exactly sure where they were on the property.

38. A: Well, for 200 horses alone, that would be a lot of hay.

S: Yeah. And those were just draft horses. Not saddle horses. They are a whole other deal. I know that there was a fair amount of hazing with the young guys. My dad's brother wasn't all that interested in horses, but my dad was. He was told to just go pick out a saddle horse. They were green-broke and they would just let the horse run and go and run them into the side of a barn and the horse would stop, or run them into a ditch or a levee, right up to it, so running away was only good for a certain distance. Then he would run into a dead end.

You mentioned to me the other day that there are a couple of people like Norm Yenni that would have a better idea of the perimeter of the property. He is a member of a deer camp with my brother-in-law, and the subject has come up a couple of times about the two of us getting together and I should probably do that.

39. A: He [Norm] said that he moved up there in 1969 and his father, Glen Yenni, had been a dairy farmer and then decided he'd try farming the marsh. He's still out there [Norm], and has been out there for going on fifty years.

S: Is he on Ramal Road?

40. A: No, he's on Tubbs Island, which I guess wasn't part of Jones Ranch.

S: I'm not sure about Tubbs Island.

41. A: He lives near Cline Cellars. There's a couple of Yenni families that are related. Newt [DalPoggetto] told me that at Camp 4 there's still a bunkhouse out there and Vic Leveroni owned it. When the levees would flood every couple of years, he [Newt] would take his boat out to the bunkhouse because it wouldn't get flooded and he would call it Lake Victoria.

When did your grandfather's fortunes turn? Did he go bankrupt?

S: He never did go bankrupt. The Skaggs family bought him out around 1937-38. I know that he leased back 2000 acres with Jack Loney who was from Sonoma, from 1958 to 1965. He was seventy-one and still bucking hay. That was kind of the end of it. He wanted to travel and do some other things and so he started to divest himself of it.

It's hard to put in into today's dollars. They had good years. The Historical Society has an article that talks about one particular good year, I don't know if it was 1937. But they didn't talk about too many years of production in glowing terms. In the early years, when Sam Jones was running it, there doesn't seem to be much recorded about it. These pictures are not dated.

Here [referring to article] they say that, "the first use of the reclaimed land was a horse ranch. Then in 1891 the first crop was planted. The enthusiasm for project was largely due to Sam Jones. I know that there was a dredger called the *Eureka*, one called the *Sonoma*, and that picture there shows three dredgers. I don't have the name of the third one.

42. A: I think it was the *Nevada*.

I wasn't able to get an interview with him, but Bud Keechler's grandson is still in Sonoma. He's maybe in his eighties and he was going to talk with me. Suddenly his daughter called me and said, "What are you doing? I don't understand." And I got kind of stonewalled.

S: I know that there was quite a controversy with the Bisso family over Camp 1. I don't know that they bought it directly from our family, I don't believe that they did. There was maybe somebody in between. But in the 1980s and the 1990s when they got caught putting toxic waste out there, it may have to do with that because that's the only negative that I know of. Maybe if somebody thinks there's something be written about them, there might be a connection. That could be a sore spot. That's the only controversy [about the property] that I'm aware of. I'm not sure what the outcome of that was other than that the Bissos had it taken away from them.

43. A: I think it was cleaned up. I heard a story about how they went to court and Bill Bisso represented himself and he got up in court and said that he was going to check

himself into Napa State Hospital the next day so they needed to stop the proceedings and drop the charges because he intended to have himself declared legally insane. The charges were dropped and he walked away. They got away with a lot of stuff!

S: I hadn't heard that before. I don't think anybody locally was even aware of it for some time and then once they were, the way that the court system works, it takes sometimes forever to get things done.

44. A: Bill's still around apparently. He's one of Newt's neighbors. They're not immediate neighbors but not too far away. He's known the family since he was in grammar school. He lives up above Agua Caliente. He's still a practicing lawyer. He's 92 years old and is super sharp. He's a great guy. His experience with the marsh site is all going down there for recreation. Hunting and fishing.

Do you remember a guy who lived on a barge just upstream from the Sonoma Creek Bridge? His nickname was "Dirty Dick". He lived by himself and he made duck decoys. If you Google him on line, he's been gone for 50 or 60 years, but his decoys are collector items now. They're worth around \$1000!

S: I never heard that story.

45. A: His real name is Richard Jansen and if you drive over the Sonoma Creek Bridge on Highway 37, it's named the 'Richard Jansen' bridge.

If you could describe your grandparents Gregory and Harriet, their personalities, or anything else about them that would be good.

S: Well Harriet was a very, very outgoing, dynamic woman who had lots of friends. My dad made it possible for her to live in that house until she passed away. She was 99. People were always coming to visit her. She was one of the leading advocates, if not one of the idea people behind the Vintage Festival, which she kept going for many years. She was very involved with the Adobe Association Homes. I think there are seven or eight adobes in Sonoma. Together they were involved with Boys Club and Hanna Boys Center as benefactors. My grandfather, in retirement, took care of the Trinity Church as a gardener.

46. A: That's the one that's down Spain Street?

S: Originally it was on Napa Street just down from Della Santina's. It's that little brown church that is now a different congregation. They built that church on Spain Street in the early 60s maybe and my grandfather donated his time to take care of that so they didn't have to pay for gardeners.

My grandfather was very quiet, very well educated man. I would say he was methodical in some respects, very detail oriented. But almost painstaking in the way he went about things. But he loved the out-of-doors; he was a very good athlete. Again, he was a graduate of Harvard and had done very well there.

For him and his father, Roy, it had to be interesting growing up with a lot of money. He went away to Exeter at 13 and then to Harvard after that. His grandfather was in Washington DC, his father was busy trying to take care of family things, and so for him, he kind of grew up by himself. His sister went to the East Coast to high school and college as well. She went to Radcliff.

47. So, he was kind of a little lonely. Reading the documentation from UCLA recently and trying to understand some of the connectivity between the families and the pressure of all of these assets that needed to be maintained and probably not enough people to handle them or to really understand the needs of those particular businesses. They were spread too thin. There were too many people that were not producing that were living off of the way that things used to be. Then slowly, because of the change in dynamics in mining and agriculture, things changed.

They were capital-intensive businesses and the depression hit. You can see looking at the family history that that had a real pinch on things, so life changed. He [Sam's grandfather] grew up in that house as a young man in Santa Monica and his father had a new house two or three blocks away, so things were very comfortable. Later on in life he had to really, really work for it. He was kind of saddled with the business that he got into.

He, too, was very generous with his time. In addition to the Boys Club and Hanna Boys Center, both my grandparents were on the Sonoma County Grand Jury. They were just good people and very committed to the City of Sonoma and to Schellville.

My grandfather died in 1978, a year after he gave the speech to the people at Skagg's Island [refers back to where the information from the article, which was based partly on this speech]. He died of emphysema. He was very good but he liked his Chesterfields and his Camels. He probably never wore a mask driving a tractor. So that caught up to him. But he was very sound other than that. He was 82 when he died.

48. A: Do you have any particular memories of things you did with him either out at the marsh or elsewhere?

S: I remember riding down in the trucks with my grandfather and Axel driving the second truck. The Herzog family were very loyal to him and he delivered hay to them. He delivered hay to the stable out at Stewart's Ranch in Point Reyes, the Piedmont Stables in Oakland, the Graham family. I see the Grahams today and know that their kids are still horseback riding. Lloyd Graham was very loyal.

I remember my grandmother getting up at five in the morning and making box lunches for us. I'd never seen so much food. But when you're working twelve hours a day bucking hay, you're burning some calories.

49. A: Did you actually work there at all?

S: No, by the time he quit I was twelve or thirteen years old. But by the time I was eight and capable of sitting on a haystack and staying out of the way, then I could go and be company. I liked to see what was going on. I was always enamored with ranching and horses. Had he been able to hold onto it longer, my father might have been in the business. I certainly would have given it a go had we had that as an asset, when I was of age.

When I was young, I used to think that there was a closer connectivity there, but when you read the history, it really was out of our hands in the 1940s and I wasn't born until the early 1950s, so it wasn't meant to be.

50. A: My grandfather was a researcher for the USDA but he always wanted to have his own farm. So he actually ran a farm while he was still working. My dad grew up on that farm. After my grandfather retired he opened up a little dairy operation. I remember going out and milking cows with him and things like that. Good memories.

S: My grandfather rode horses but it wasn't a passion with him, it was work. But my dad always rode horse and I own horses and ride them all the time. It's kind of stuck in our blood. It would have been interesting, knowing what is known today, knowing about the grapes growing around the periphery, that if they had bought land around the marsh... Who would have thought in the 1950s that grapes would be what they are today?

51. A: My wife moved to Glen Ellen in about 1970. She was about eleven. My father-in-law gave me a brochure they got when they moved there. It talks about Jack London State Park and how Glen Ellen is not the wine country but is in the Valley of the Moon. Ten years later, I remember hearing about the wine country when I was in college, so there was some kind of marketing effort there in those ten years.

S: My wife picked prunes here as a kid, and apples and walnuts, and all of the things that we had. Those are few and far between these days. Everything does change.

52. A: This has been great. I appreciate all your family background. I think I mentioned in an email that I never thought I'd talk to a Jones.

S: Well actually I have a brother who lives down at Wild Oak. There were four of us. My older sister is two and a half years older, and I have a younger sister, two and a half

years younger. We were kind of together. And then I have a brother who is eight and a half years younger than I am. So, he was three or four years old when my grandfather got out of the farming business. He never had the same experiences that I did.

The girls would go down and stay in the adobe with my grandmother but they didn't have any interest in going out to the ranch. My sister, Christina, you might want to interview her because she can tell you about the *Casita* [the Jones' adobe]. She had a private law practice and later worked for Chevron. But she has a master's degree in history from Davis. She did a lot of Jones family history, she wrote some papers on it, and she did a lot of interviewing of my grandfather while he was in good health. On that subject she would probably know more than I would.

She lives in Lafayette and is up (here) quite a bit. She is in contact with Bill Price about the property and has furnished him some information and I think that both Bill and the preceding owner that we sold to were interested in family pictures and so on. I'm not sure what's been produced there. Getting copies of those things is kind of a painstaking exercise. But she has a lot of information on the Casita.

53. A: Did you ever hear anything about Maria Goethe? There's probably somebody in between her ownership and your grandparents', but only a couple of years. She and her husband bought it in 1874 and she didn't die until some time in the 1930s. Her daughter-in-law sold it to somebody and there was maybe a couple of years between that and when your grandparents bought it.

S: It was in pretty sad shape when they bought it. I've been told that it was Indian slave quarters for Salvador Vallejo's family. Not the El Dorado on the corner but next to it was Salvador Vallejo's home so this would have been in the back yard and this would have been where the help lived.

54. A: There were three adobe structures like that and this is the only one that is left. A recent source corroborated that.

S: I have a picture of the Square up at my ranch from about 1865. You may have seen it. It is from standing over on the southwest corner and you look across and you can see the Blue Wing Hotel and you can see my grandparent's house in the background. And you see a few little buildings in the back so you're probably right about that.

There were things, artifacts, in that house that we all, all the kids, have. That picture was actually over the mantle in that house for a while. That couch, that round table – you'll see in some of the pictures where my grandmother had her chair down towards the piano and this was next to it. I know that my sister, Christina, has some pictures of the inside of the house that you might have seen. The Prices may have them.

55. A: I didn't see much of the inside from those days other than there's a newspaper article that has a picture.

S: Yes, the swinging door? From where the dining room was, you walked in and there was a pantry going down to the kitchen. We called it the TV room. It was a smaller room that had a bookshelf into the left, and a couch and a little hassock in front of the couch. My grandmother did some sculpting and there were a couple of sculptures on the right hand side and on the TV. That's where they'd watch TV.

The door is called an "old Spanish door". It was a gift of Jan and Pete Narvaez, who were related to the Shepards. Young Pete Narvaez lives down in San Leandro. He's in his early seventies. So I'm talking about his father who was a chemist.

56. A: I missed Milo's (Shepard) memorial service but I heard he [young Pete] was there.

S: He's a very interesting, bright guy. His father was fascinating. He could talk on any subject. They were really neat people.

57. A: Do you ever talk to Rich Kiser and the other Kisers?

S: No, I need to contact them.

58. A: They were not willing to do a formal interview although they did meet with me to talk. They said that they were afraid that they'd say something that wasn't true. My attitude with oral history is to collect information from people, put down what they say and ...

S: And you can put an asterisk by it. It's like going to Ancestry.com. People put in bad information and when you see it and know that's not the case, you try to correct it.

59. A: Exactly. The thing is, there's so much in people's heads that is not found anywhere else. It's invaluable information that you'll likely never find with any other source. Though much of the time, it can actually be corroborated with other sources [meaning the general validity—the details from oral histories are what's especially unique—AD comment].

S: Yes, the Kisers did buy part of the ranch and that's what I'm looking for now.

60. A: Rich and his brother, maybe Bill Kiser. I met with both of them and they're still farming down there. They're in their early eighties, I'd say. Still really vital people.

And Sherman Boivan, is he still around?

SAM JONES

S: I don't think so. I'm looking for some other pictures that you may want to see. You can take these two. That one with Sam Jones on it? He died in 1926, so it's before that.

61. A: I was in Virginia City about ten years ago and I had heard the name Jones, especially associated with the marshes, and all of the sudden I saw a bunch of stuff on Senator Jones, and thought, wow, he was here, too. That was the first time I really associated him with the mining.

S: If you have an interest in that, [check out] this book I'd never seen before, but this was the Senator's house. This was the front porch. It was abandoned. The author, David Toll, is kind of an historian in Nevada, and is the great-grandson of Harry Gorham who was the nephew to the Senator, who on his way to Harvard got detoured to Washington [DC] and they talked him into taking over the mining operation from Sam.

He's a relative. And so there are different people who are Joneses.

[interview concludes with a few more comments about various Jones' relative]

Interview with Paul Sheffer
at the Sonoma Land Trust Baylands Center
July 18, 2014

P = Paul Sheffer; A = Arthur Dawson

1. A: You were just telling me about this site and said you were familiar with the rancher who used to be here.

P: Dickson brothers owned the ranch here, and someone else owned the ranch over here [neighbor] and we used to work with them. Especially with Dickson, we worked with him on the levees and drainage. I was working with the Soil Conservation Service as it was then. Now it's the Natural Resource Conservation Service. We helped maintain the levees. I started with the Corps of Engineers in the late 'seventies for blanket permits. The Corps asked the Resource Conservation District to work with the ranchers so they could have a blanket permit, so they wouldn't have to go through all the agencies to maintain their levees.

2. A: Were the levees maintained with private money? Or public money or a combination?

P: I'll back up on that. In the early days when I first came here, the Soil Conservation Service paid them to help maintain the levees. But they stopped that practice and so it was all private money.

3. A: What year did you start working in this area?

P: Late 'sixties, early 'seventies.

4. A: When you first came you were with the Soil Service and then that switched . . .

P: I worked with the Soil Conservation Service until 1990 and then I transferred over to the Resource Conservation District and worked there until I retired.

5. A: The people who were farming in this area, what type of agriculture were they practicing?

P: Basically it was oat hay. They tried several things. I think they tried alfalfa—not enough water for that. They succeeded in some parts, depends on the soil, in growing grapes and some tried wheat. But basically it was oat hay.

6. A: Are they able to grow grapes on reclaimed marshland?

P: Over by the Diablo area they pushed it down where the marshland soil is called Reyes soil—they grow them in the transition between the Reyes and the other soils. They've got some, but not too much. I was here before this area became the Carneros. It was considered

too cool and then some of them decided to try it down here. So they're growing the Champagne grapes basically. Then they got this appellation and it just took off.

7. A: Now it's well known.

P: Exactly. Napa, Sonoma and Marin County in the Baylands.

8. A: That's all Carneros.

P: Right.

9. A: The oat hay, was that mostly being used locally or were they shipping it out?

P: They cut it for hay, sometimes they cut it for the grain. They used that for horses, basically locally, I think. Now you have to ask the ranchers that.

10. A: Yeah. What happened to the farmer who lived here [at Baylands Center Site]? Do you know his story?

P: I don't know what happened to him. He didn't grow hay, he ranged beef cattle.

11. A: Was he raising beef cattle on the reclaimed marsh or a little above?

P: I don't think his property went much on the reclaimed marsh. Basically the reclaimed marsh was owned by the Dickson brothers in this area right here.

12. A: So Dickson brothers were mostly farming oat hay?

P: Yes. They had a pheasant club on this corner there.

13. A: I think I've heard the shotguns.

P: Right. Once in a while they'd bring sheep in and graze after they've harvested. But that was sort of in a desultory way, not too much.

14. A: Do you have any favorite places down here, in this area?

P: I just love it anywhere! That was the nice part. I'd get to go all the way down to the bay and watch the wildlife. The wildlife has changed unfortunately.

15. A: In what ways?

P: Well, I've seen red fox, I've seen burrowing owls. But I didn't see any of them for a long time. Seen a few clapper rail and marsh mouse. And the hawks—there does not seem to be as many hawks as there used to be. In fact I don't see as many birds as there used to be anywhere.

16. A: Any particular reasons you can think of for the decline of some of those species?

P: Outside of the obvious . . . global warming . . . I really don't know. But it's sad to see that. Down where I live I haven't seen a mocking bird for a couple years.

17. A: You live in Petaluma?

P: Right.

18. A: About what year did the burrowing owls start to decline?

P: I'd say late 'eighties maybe. It was funny to see them pop up.

19. A: I don't think I've ever seen one in the wild. Do they prey on rodents out here?

P: I don't study birds, so I can't tell what they do. Probably, yes. Down at the barn there, they have barn owls.

20. A: You said you saw clapper rails as well?

P: I saw one clapper rail, yes. I gather they're a rare sight indeed. That was when we were working , cleaning out Tolay Creek.

21. A: So it was flushed out?

P: Oh no. They were just there. No they weren't flushed out.

22. A: They were cleaning out Tolay Creek—were they doing some dredging on the lower part?

P: What they were trying to do, with Fish and Wildlife and Fish and Game, on lower Tolay they tried to increase the tidal action. So they cleaned out the creek and as part of the levee permit, they had to give up a little part of land right there by Highway 37. I don't know how well it worked. They did have problems with Highway 37 because the tidal action was washing along the highway. They had to reinforce it. That was something they didn't anticipate, I don't think. One of the problems they didn't fix was the bridge underneath, on Highway 37, they never cleaned that out. So the water never goes from the upland down through the Tolay Creek. It goes up around on Second Napa Slough I think.

23. A: So it heads almost north, or east at least?

P: Yes.

24. A: Do you know anything about the lagoon that's down by the corner of Highway 121 and 37?

P: Laguna Ranch?

25. A: I'm thinking of Highway 37 and you're heading east and you come to a stoplight—is that called Laguna Ranch down there? [misunderstanding about location— see #96 for location Arthur was thinking of, next to Tubbs Island].

P: Right. That's Laguna Ranch. Someone said that used to be owned by Bing Crosby. Yes, I know a lot about that. We worked with them. Unfortunately, I hate to admit this, we drained it. SCS drained it. Cardoza owned the Ranch. They planted crop on the ranch where it had been drained. Now they have some vineyards in there too, on the uplands.

26. A: Some of that is now Open Space District Land?

P: That's Open Space District. They have tours there and everything else. That was one of the two lagunas. There's one there and there's one on the Marin-Sonoma border.

27. A: Laguna de San Antonio?

P: No, the one drainage in San Antonio Creek. They drained that one too. Which has caused a disaster. Be careful what you do!

28. A: Right. It may have effects you don't anticipate.

P: It always does. Every time man tries to do something, they foul it up.

29. A: From what I've heard and seen, a lot of the diked marshland has been subsiding substantially.

P: The marshland itself is an organic soil and it has subsided, yes. I did some casual measurements, not with the GPS. The elevation of the dikes were about nine feet and the land itself is about two feet below sea level.

30. A: So eleven feet of difference.

P: Right.

31. A: You'd guess there's around ten, eleven feet of subsidence then.

P: No, this is from the top of the levees. The levees above natural ground were about six feet. So there's about three foot subsidence I would guess.

32. A: Have you heard any stories about when the levees were originally built?

P: I've heard stories that they were built around the turn of the century. That's all I know. It was called a 'Land Reclamation District.' The whole area. There's also the railroad was down there too. An old soils map from 1912 shows this all as being tidelands and the railroad going across it.

33. A: I think I've seen some of those old maps. It's quite amazing to see how much land was reclaimed at that time.

P: Right.

34. A: You could create land if you had the money for the dredger.

P: Right.

35. A: Any other economic activities that went on besides ranching down here? There was the railroad, there was ranching.

P: And cattle on the uplands. They had a hunting club down there, off Highway 37, a duck hunting club. Salt flats were over in Napa.

36. A: Any salt ponds you know of in Sonoma County?

P: Not that I know of. And of course you had the airport over in Marin County.

37. A: How far did your territory extend to the east?

P: When I first started around here, I worked in Napa. They had an office in Napa, they had an office in Sonoma, they had an office in Petaluma, and they had an office in Marin. I worked them all. I worked in Napa, then I transferred, worked in all the offices. I worked in the lower Sonoma and western Marin County. That's where I ended up. Then Sonoma and Petaluma merged. Then Sonoma merged lately with upper Sonoma County.

38. A: Right.

P: There's still one more [Resource Conservation] District in Sonoma County, Gold Ridge. So I had all lower Sonoma and western Marin.

39. A: Did you have any particular projects that you were especially proud of?

P: At the time—I built quite a few dams. There was one dam, what we called a 'grade stabilization structure.' That was built where a creek was degrading and causing a lot of erosion. The difference between a grade stabilization structure and a dam is that the grade stabilization structure doesn't have a core. So the water can leak underneath the dam. We're

not interested in stopping it from leaking. I built that in '85. In '86 is when we had the big storm.

40. A: Right, I remember that one.

P: And the creek was fifteen feet deep and in '86 it was filled with gravel. Nice thing is that it leaked. Before that, upstream and downstream, it was fairly barren. Now you can't see it because of the trees. It's really healed. It's right below when you pass the Cheese Factory?

41. A: Out in West Marin?

P: Yes, it's all on the south side there. From what I heard they had turtles there and salamanders. I was really pleased with that.

42. A: So you created a lot of habitat, restored a lot of habitat.

P: Right. One thing though, is when we built the dam, they asked me to put the spillway rock down at the bottom a foot lower. I didn't think that was right, because that was large drainage area. So we had '86 [flood]. We had two-foot diameter engineer's rock. That [storm] moved that rock six feet down the stream and dug a hole eight feet deep.

43. A: Wow.

P: So they put three-foot rock in, flush. The next storm, it moved those rocks about two feet downstream. The power of water is really great.

44. A: Nothing you can do to stop it.

P: So I've always been proud of that one. In '75 that's when they started clamping down on the dairies. So I was in on the first design of the animal waste systems. I've done most of them in Marin County and lower Sonoma County. SCS hired some engineers and they went out and helped all the ranchers design the systems. So I liked that too.

45. A: I imagine dairying was much more common, widespread, when you first started?

P: Oh, definitely yes. They've gone down a lot. I think one of the things that has saved them is the fact that they've gone organic and they've gone to the artisan cheeses. If you ever go down to the [San Francisco] Ferry Building, most of the stores there are from Marin and Sonoma County. Marin and Sonoma County are doing quite well as far as artisan cheeses, beef, wine, oysters, things like that.

46. A: Kind of niche foods. It's a good healthy landscape, so it makes sense that it would make good food.

P: Right. Marin Land Trust, they've helped save the land, helped the ranchers stay in business and develop what they can develop.

47. A: Yeah—the idea of a working landscape where people are still involved. I have a friend down in Nicasio, Mark Pasternak.

P: Oh yes, I know Mark. We built a dam on his property. Right above the house.

48. A: Oh yeah. I've gone swimming in that pond.

P: We built that one.

49. A: He's got a zip line now going out over the pond.

P: How is Mark?

50. A: He's doing well. Haven't seen him for about a year.

P: I like Mark. If you see him, tell him I said hello, if he remembers me.

51. A: OK, I will. His wife and my wife went to high school together. They both graduated from Sonoma High School. We've known them for a long time.

P: How's his vineyard doing?

52. A: Pretty well I believe.

P: It hasn't blown away?

53. A: [Laughs] Not yet. He's always been into wine. It's always been fun to go out to his ranch. That's fun that you know Mark. He's a good guy.

During the 1986 flood, what happened out here in the Baylands?

P: They got flooded. Leveroni got flooded, and Kiser Brothers didn't get flooded. Gary Kiser did get flooded and Bisso got flooded and the one next to Bisso got flooded.

54. A: Did levees actually fail?

P: The levees failed. They overtopped probably, some of them. We were working on a flood control project with SCS and they did a lot of surveys and they found out that one of the projects was to flood the Gary Kiser property, but they found it doesn't make a bit of difference. Just too much water. They had the high tide coming in and all that water coming down. You'd probably just have to take out all the levees and hope that would make a difference. So they abandoned that.

55. A: It's my impression that this landscape is in transition and that farming is becoming less viable as time goes on? If that's true, was that impression held back in the '70s?

P: As far as the oat hay land has remained fairly stable. Upland you've had a grape explosion. That changed the whole landscape. Places like down here had no grapes at all. Lakeville, there was no grapes at all. The funny thing is, as I understand, before Prohibition, there were grapes there. Now, in lower Sonoma Valley they've exploded. What went out were the dairies. They had quite a few dairies here in the lower part of Sonoma County and Napa County and Marin County. They're gone—I think there's only about three or four dairies in lower Sonoma County and one dairy here in Petaluma; Sleepy Hollow here. When they disappeared, they were taken over by vineyards.

56. A: When the grapes came in, was that a surprise? Unexpected?

P: No. What happened, I think, is when Napa passed their ordinance of upland, no less than 45 acres, that opened the area for the grapes to grow. When that started, it went over to the Sonoma Valley. And then Sonoma Valley started, and then last but not least, Petaluma started. And then they even went over to Marin. They found out the cool climate is not too bad for the grapes, especially around here. So it was gradual but it's exploded and then they start restricting them because of the steeper hills. That slowed it down a little bit. It's so expensive. Things aren't exactly booming right now after 'eight [2008] or 'nine when the economy collapsed. But they seem to be holding on. As understand, it takes a lot of money to start a vineyard now.

57. A: It takes a few years to start making money off it too, I'm sure.

P: Vineyard is like any other business. I owned a bookstore in Berkeley. Any business you go in, you have to assume, three to five years you're not going to make any money. If you can't last that long, don't bother.

58. A: That makes a lot of sense. Gotta be there long enough so people know you're there. Develop your reputation.

P: Develop a reputation, a place to sell your grapes. Get to know what the business is and all the tricks of the trade.

59. A: You mentioned birds, how about mammals or large animals?

P: The only mammals I saw down here were the red fox, maybe a coyote. Nothing down here. I have seen mountain lions up in the hills and bobcat. Right now, where I live, we have shall we say a 'plethora' of turkeys? They're a pain in the ass.

60. A: Dig up your yard, yeah [laughs].

P: Everybody's upset about them. No big deal. I think what happens is they drive the little birds away. I remember when they first tried putting turkeys in, they tried up in the foothills in the 'eighties and they never took. So they brought 'em down here in the 'nineties and they took with a vengeance and the ranchers just hate them. Of course there's several ranches out there that raise turkeys and the wild turkeys are an anathema to them because of disease.

61. A: Are there turkeys down here in the Baylands?

P: They haven't moved down here as far as I know.

62. A: I live in Glen Ellen and we see a lot of them around there.

P: I'm sure you do.

63. A: In fact they graze right in the middle of the State Hospital grounds. You drive by and there's a bunch of turkeys out there. I think the mountain lions eat them.

P: The problem is, why there's so many of them, what the Fish and Game told me is we've killed the predators, so what do you expect?

64. A: Exactly.

P: This one rancher had some hay all in bales, they were all chewed up. He asked the Fish and Game man, "I know what it is, but you're not going to do anything about it. 'Why?' [Fish & Game Man] said, 'Mice—you've killed off all the predators, so that's what's happening.'" So that's what's happening, you have to have that balance there or else you pay for it one way or another.

65. A: I think that's one of the reasons why mountain lions are getting much more common. Nobody is killing the deer, so their prey population has increased. And you can't hunt mountain lions.

P: [both laugh—it sounds like A said, 'have' rather than 'hunt.' They straighten out the meaning]. I've seen this one man who had, in a cage up in the hills, a grizzly bear, Siberian tiger, and a panther. Up in the hills of Sonoma. That was scary.

66. A: I heard a story about Glen Ellen back in the '70s about someone who had a Bengal tiger in their garage.

P: It's amazing what you find when go out to some of these places. One place had a place about as big as this table, maybe a little bigger, with two pools. He had trout in there. He had one pool running over gravel. He said the trout spawned, laid eggs and came back [to the first pool]. they had this complete cycle in that one little area.

67. A: That's amazing! Do you remember seeing salmon or trout in some of these local creeks?

P: Yeah. I've seen them in Petaluma River and Sonoma Creek and Napa River.

68. A: That was both salmon and trout?

P: I'm not exactly sure of the difference, so I can't say. They were small at the time.

69. A: We've seen a few salmon, Chinook salmon, in Sonoma Creek in the last ten years.

P: Well good.

70. A: Hopefully they're on their way back. Can you tell us anything about Skagg's Island.

P: Skagg's Island Navy base, we were there several times. Partially farmed. One thing we did was pay to clean out the ditches for the drainage. The pumps there are very powerful. For how many acres that has, they have one pump to pump all the water from that whole area. They have this one pump that does vast acreages. They pump out the water after the rainfall.

71. A: I heard their electric bill out there is a million dollars a year, something crazy. So when you first started, the base was still there and then it went through the closure?

P: Right. Yes.

72. A: I'm not up on what's happening out there right now. Do you know?

P: It's in limbo last time I heard. I guess they were waiting for the Navy to clean it up before the Land Trust or some other outfit bought it. They still have the debris there, it was toxic.

73. A: Speaking of toxics, do you know much about Bissoville?

P: Oh yes, I know about Bissoville [chuckles]. I know about Bissoville and I know about the Bissos.

74. A: Care to share a little bit?

P: They're unusual, very unusual people. They have their opinions and they stated them very vividly. They were an anathema to the agencies—it was mutually felt. They stored a lot of junk there and let people stay in their barns as tenants. It was toxic, it was very toxic. They went outside of the levees and built levees outside to reclaim land. As you know, most of that land is confined by state lands.

75. A: Anything under high tide.

P: So that was illegal. They'd come to our meetings and raise their voices quite loudly and unpleasantly. Their main thing was the Treaty of Hidalgo [Guadalupe Hidalgo 1848] and some other treaty, 'stream and gravel' back in the early 1900s. They said that the state had no jurisdiction over them and that they were under the Treaty of Hidalgo and all that. There were a couple of other people who subscribed to that, but nobody paid attention to it.

76. A: So it didn't have any real legal basis, as far as you know?

P: Nobody's tried it.

77. A: Do you know anything about the designation, it used to be called Petaluma Creek and now it's the Petaluma River?

P: Right. That was so they could dredge it for the water traffic, that's why they changed it. It's actually a slough, and the Corps of Engineers couldn't come in to clean it out unless it was a river. So they changed it from a slough to a river so the Corps could clean it out so the boats could come in and out.

78. A: Was that because local people were asking for that service from the Corps? I've heard Sonoma Creek is in that same grey area where if it was called a river they could do the work , but since it's not . . .

P: Sonoma Creek, right there at Highway 121, near the fire station [foot of Broadway], is about as wide as this table. And it's about as deep as this table is tall. It just can't hold it [the water during a flood]. Mulas flooded the same time that year.

79. A: I think he flooded again in the last big storm—2005, 2006?

P: He floods pretty regularly. That's because of Sonoma Creek. It passes right by the winery [Millerick Road] and there's a big hole in the levee. It goes from there over to his property. He's tried to get permission to build a levee or something to hold it off. I don't know what the status of that is.

80. A: I heard a little bit about that, but don't know a lot. I did hear that if his field hadn't flooded, flooding in the town of Sonoma might have been worse. Hard to say.

P: As I said, because of our flood control project, we did a little surveying. That little bit of land isn't going to relieve it that much. It just goes in and around that land and doesn't store that much water. I question whether that would have affected the flood in Sonoma. Right there is a bottleneck and that cuts off the water and backs it up. Until you clean that out, you're going to have that [problem]. Highway 37 and 121 flood every two years. That's the way it is.

81. A: I've seen the flooding down by the fire station. You get to the end of Broadway and that's as far as you can go.

P: Right. There's a property on the other side there that was leveed. They built the levee deliberately. It goes around and comes out on Broadway and goes out across the road too. We did extensive surveying on that whole area on that project.

82. A: And your conclusion was that there wasn't a whole lot that could be done, unless . . .

P: Unless you opened up the lower part. And that would mean taking out some buildings. The bridge is wide enough, although it's plugged up. But below it has to be widened quite a bit. Almost to the railroad bridge [referring to bridge downstream of current highway bridge].

83. A: I think there used to be one upstream as well because there's that hump on Broadway at the lower end and it went across the creek there I think.

P: Right. Two other places that flooded that year were Sangiacomo [lower Broadway landowner] and the airport. Sangiacomo, Sebastiani and the airport.

84. A: Sangiacomo used to have a lot of pear orchards and things, right?

P: Pear orchards—he tore them out and put in grapes.

85. A: Do you know about when that was?

P: I'd say in the 'eighties.

86. A: Seems like most of the fruit trees were pretty well done by then, huh?

P: They had more pears, they had more walnuts.

87. A: Yeah, there's still some walnut orchards around.

P: I have a bad joke. You want to hear a bad joke?

88. A: Sure. I like bad jokes.

P: There's a vineyard over in Napa that has walnut trees growing in it. Someone asked me why there's walnut trees? I said that's simple—they're growing Grapenuts.

89. A: [Chuckles]

P: Thank you for laughing.

90. A: Did you ever hear anything about the ferries and barges that used to connect the Baylands to . . .

PAUL SHEFFER

P: Barges used to come up to where the highway is at 121. Those buildings there used to be a place where people stayed to go up to Boyes Hot Springs. There used to be enough room there to turn around. They also used to bring cobbles down from above for the cobbles in San Francisco streets. That's what I heard.

91. A: That's down by Millerick Road?

P: That's it. They used to bring tour boats up, going to the hot springs.

92. A: Excursions from the city.

P: From the city. Can't get up there now.

93. A: No. That was a different time. Did you ever hear any stories about the construction of highway 37?

P: No.

94. A: I'm not sure when it went in, but it must have been quite an engineering feat.

P: It must have been yes. 'Course that'll probably all be under water in ten years or so.

95. A: Yeah, they're starting to talk about where it's going to go as sea level rise continues.

P: Right. That's the trouble. I told them right there at Tolay Creek. That floods a lot and it's just going to get worse.

96. A: You know if you go from here up over 37 and you come down to the stoplight and there's a lagoon on the right hand side of the road? I heard that had been farmland?

P: That's where I was telling you about. That was a mitigation area. Fifty-seven acres that Yenni had to give up to mitigate for the levee program.

97. A: So was that planned that that got flooded?

P: That was planned. Not too well made, but it was planned.

98. A: Did you get to see the process?

P: I helped with the process. I did the surveying on it.

99. A: I'm sure you must have noticed some changes in the wildlife in that area as the water came in?

PAUL SHEFFER

P: Not much, no. Because Fish and Game had a dam, had a pond right below it. I haven't been there in a long time. But I haven't seen much change. 'Course the land below there is Fish and Wildlife.

100. A: Yes, goes all the way down to the bay. There's a little bit of marsh down there at the bottom, if you follow that road down [on the bay].

P: Yeah, if you follow the road down, that's Fish and Wildlife land and that's all for wildlife. Very nice area. I don't know if you've been there.

101. A: I've been there, yeah. I've walked and ridden my bike a couple of times.

P: That was the nice thing about working there. See I could drive down there [chuckles].

102. A: We took some kids out there once in school buses [Ecology Center field trip].

P: That should have been quite a ride! [laughs]

103. A: It looked pretty funny to see a school bus coming out across, along the levees. It was a little too much. We didn't do it again. But it was a good experience that one time.

Besides the hunting club, were people hunting elsewhere in the marshes down here?

P: Oh yes. The ranchers used to go hunting and they'd ask their friends. There were the pheasants and the regular duck hunting club over there. But then the pheasants would escape. The ranchers used to hunt dove and ducks and whatever down there. You'd see shells all over all the time.

104. A: Did you ever see big flocks of migrating birds coming through?

P: Nothing stands out in my mind, really. No big flocks. Seems like the geese were further north. Over in Petaluma, I've seen them there. But down here, no. I may have but it just didn't register.

105. A: Sure. The geese over in Petaluma—there's a big area over there that never was leveed, right?

P: In the city of Petaluma I've seen them flying. They probably come down here for the grain.

106. A: Sure. Do you have any memories of earthquakes or fires?

P: Earthquakes sure. And fires, both. I was living in Napa when the fire started in Napa and went over to Sonoma. That was one of the big fires.

PAUL SHEFFER

107. A: Was that in 1964?

P: About that, yes. And earthquakes—we had Loma Prieta.

108. A: 1989?

P: Yes. And we had one near Santa Rosa. There were a few minor shakes. Nothing that exciting. And we had fires all over. There were fires up in the Cavedale area. They're probably getting a lot more.

109. A: Ready to burn up there, unfortunately.

P: Oh yes.

110. A: Any things like plane crashes?

P: One plane crash I know—the man who produced the rock concerts?

111. A: Oh, Bill Graham?

P: Yes. Bill Graham crashed down over here [in Baylands]. He died. That's about the only one I know.

112. A: Was Hamilton Air Force Base still . . .

P: That was still here. And the Renaissance Fair.

113. A: I remember the Renaissance Fair.

P: That was too bad what happened.

114. A: What was the story with that?

P: Some guy absconded with the money.

115. A: Oh really. Jeez.

P: And they didn't have enough money to pay the rent.

116. A: That's too bad.

P: That was fun.

117. A: Yeah. I went to that once or twice. I lived in Marin back in the mid-eighties, it was still going at that time.

Do you know anything about these camps? Camp Two, Camp Six, all these numbered camps?

P: That's when it was all one [property], the Reclamation District. So they divided it into camps so they'd have a place with a barn for the hay. So they used to divide it up into different camps. That was early days. Then they were sold off separately. That's how they came to be.

118. A: Do you know anything about the town of Lakeville?

P: Not much. It was probably a little place that people liked to live, like . . . the little place here by the railroad bridge? Wingo. Those people just like to live along the creek. One interesting thing about that area—Lakeville, is designated as an archaeological site.

119. A: So you can't dig there.

P: You can't dig and you can't do anything on the levees or anything.

120. A: Did you ever find any native American artifacts?

P: Lots of them. Here and there, all over.

121. A: Any particular places where they seem to show up?

P: Along the Napa River there's a lot. Right along the river. I found some on the beach at Tomales Bay. In the hills you find them occasionally. But along the creeks, Sonoma Creek, yes.

122. A: That makes sense, people settled near water. Do you have any contact with any of the tribal members?

P: The group up here by Lakeville, I worked with them when they brought the property there and that's about it.

123. A: I know they eventually turned over their option to the Land Trust—now they're in Rohnert Park of course.

P: Yes, they couldn't build a casino there so they went up to Rohnert Park. So they turned that land over to the Land Trust?

124. A: I believe that's true. I think what happened is they realized there was a lot of opposition down here and they decided maybe this wasn't the best place.

P: That's good land. There should be a couple other properties that should be available there. There's not much going on in that area and they should be able to get a nice band along the river there.

125. A: What location are you referring to?

P: Where the tribe used to own property. The property's on the west side. Should be available because there's not much being done there. Not in grapes, not in hay, not in anything.

126. A: Just lying fallow at this point?

P: Yes.

127. A: Which stream is that on?

P: It's on the Petaluma River. On the west side of the Petaluma River.

128. A: How far above the Highway 37 bridge is that?

P: The property is almost in Petaluma.

129. A: OK. . . [looking at notes]. Do you know anything about M.B. Skaggs who apparently leveed of Skaggs Island?

P: No.

130. A: What would you say you've enjoyed most about working out here in the Baylands?

P: Being outdoors. That's why I liked my job. I came originally from Pennsylvania, so this was a whole new territory. I had to learn the flora and fauna and that's what I did in my spare time when I was outdoors. I wasn't really an engineer, I was an engineering technician and everything was new and it's a job where I felt I accomplished something. I was helping people. It was always different, every problem was different. I liked the people I worked with, they were more important than the people I worked for. I was lucky.

131. A: Sounds great.

P: It was great, I'll tell you. We had vineyards out on the hills here and went all the way out to Point Reyes National Seashore, couldn't ask for a better job.

132. A: You got to move around and be outside.

P: Oh yes. You were pretty much your own boss. And you had problems and you had to solve them and each problem was different and I was always learning something all the time.

133. A: That's good, it keeps you young.

P: Another thing is, if you listened to the ranchers you'd learn from them. They know a lot.

134. A: Yeah. That's part of the impetus of this project is to learn the local knowledge from the people that have been out here. I have a lot of respect for the experts in their fields, but I also think there's a lot that gets ignored . . .

P: I learned a lot from the ranchers.

135. A: They've been here, they've seen things over a long period of time. What was the biggest challenge with working out here?

P: I think the biggest challenge was animal waste systems, designing them. Because they had no specifications. Nobody told you how to do it, what to do or anything. It was from scratch. Even our state office didn't have anything. That was the biggest challenge. For me, I was sort of a shy person and going out cold with the ranchers who I didn't know, that was a challenge. It was a good one though.

136. A: Yeah.

P: As you can see, I'm not shy anymore [chuckles].

137. A: Obviously you got over it.

P: I got over it, right.

138. A: What would you say about people's attitudes about the land?

P: They love the land and they'll do anything to save it. They're not averse to environmental, for doing things that help the land. But they feel sometimes that the people that come out to help them have only their own interests in mind and not theirs [the ranchers']. Some of the restrictions are illogical and counterproductive. If they listened to the ranchers a little more—I mean the ranchers aren't always right, but the environmentalists aren't always right either. One agency we were working with, one person I remember was from Water Quality. He listened—I was sort of the middle man in this conversation. He listened to the ranchers, the ranchers listened to him, he showed them respect and they showed him respect. And then they got things done.

139. A: Sure.

P: And the rule says 'You can't do this.' And then they talk to the ranchers: 'How can we do it?' Not saying, 'This is how you will do it.' They say, 'How can we do it? How can we work with you? How can we work with your land?' And it got done. But if you come in and say, 'You do this, you do that,' forget it. They won't let you on their land and you'll have no operation. But it can be done. It's just talking and listening.

140. A: I know you have a reputation as someone who could work with ranchers and got things done. I've heard through the grapevine you're well respected for that.

P: Thank you.

141. A: I appreciate that approach.

P: It works. I've seen people come out and start telling them what to do and their hackles go up—'Get that person off my land, I don't ever want to see them here again.' It's nonsense. Because they both want the same thing. Sometimes you have to educate the ranchers that manure in the stream is not helpful. But see they're thinking—the dairies, they built the dairies next to the streams, so you could push the manure in the creek. But the dairies at that time milked fifty head of cattle. Now the average milk herd is three hundred. That's a big difference.

142. A: That's a big difference.

P: So that's an awful lot more manure and now they find that putting manure out on the land is saving them money. It helps to grow grass.

143. A: Makes sense. It's fertilizer.

P: Sometimes they have to do the learning and sometimes the agencies have to do the learning. In the long run it works out, if they want it to.

144. A: Treating it as a shared problem to work on together is a good way to go about it. So what do you think about the future of the Baylands?

P: I think the Baylands are all going to be underwater eventually. All the levees are going to go. The ranchers will realize that eventually. The problem is, if they sell out tomorrow, they'll get what they say is 'reasonable price'—six thousand or two thousand an acre. When they see the land, of course it's grape land, going for forty or fifty thousand dollars. They feel that ten thousand maybe—don't trust me on the amount--

145. A: Right, I understand what you're saying.

P: What they feel is a more reasonable price, they'd sell out tomorrow. But they realize that they're going to eventually. Just like the Dickson brothers went.

146. A: Can you tell us that story? How did they finally make the decision? What was the . . .

P: I don't know. That was his decision and just thought it wasn't worth it. That's all I know. He sold out to the Land Trust. Next door was Land Trust at the time I think. Eventually

all the levees have got to go. But the problem is, what are you going to do with the highways? Highway 37 is going to be in trouble.

147. A: It's become a major artery back and forth.

P: You take out the levees, it may help the flooding in Sonoma but I don't think it is. Because all that land is underwater anyhow and you have a high high tide with the wind blowing this way and the storm coming down that way—there just isn't enough room. You're going to have flooding and that's it.

148. A: Were you involved at all in the project over in Napa, the whole Napa River Project?

P: That's where I started work in this area. I started surveying the Napa River for a flood control project. That was for the Soil Conservation Service. We surveyed the whole river, drew up plans and then the Corps came in and took out the water part and we did some work up by Conn Dam. I left before they did the floodplain areas there. But I was there when they surveyed for the original flood control project.

149. A: From what I understand, the people in Napa are pretty happy about the project.

P: They should be, it's really nice down there. It's really boomed.

150. A: Yeah, all kinds of businesses and the river's right there.

P: Of course I don't want to go to downtown Napa, or downtown Sonoma. Forget it.

151. A: Yeah—it's getting crazy. Tourists are all over the place. Even downtown Glen Ellen is getting kind of bad.

P: Healdsburg is going berserk too. Healdsburg's the next Yountville.

152. A: Wingo is still . . .

P: Wingo is still Wingo.

153. A: Probably always will be. Anything else you'd like to add?

P: That's about it. I enjoyed talking to you and I'll be sad to see the ranchers leave but I'm afraid that's inevitable. I was glad I had the chance to get down here and work with them and be here when it was here.

154. A: Thank you very much Paul for the interview.

P: Thank you very much.

PAUL SHEFFER

155. A: [Arthur describes next steps in the process]

P: By the way, to digress a bit. Do you work with the RCD?

156. A: On occasion.

P: They have a lot of photographs of the area down here when they were working with the draglines. Pictures of that. There are pictures of people putting sandbags on the levees. Slides of course. Also, I wrote out a complete history of the levee permits. Now that's if they haven't thrown it away. That'd be a good source of material. I had boxes and boxes of stuff. I was a packrat sort of.

157. A: I should contact RCD.

P: Kara [Heckert]. If she doesn't know, I'll be glad to help her find the stuff. I know pretty well where it is. The slides will be with NRCS, I'm pretty sure. Maybe you can ask Lisa, Lisa Shanks. Lisa knows.

Interview with Norm Yenni

at the 5400 Highway 37

August 15, 2014

N = Norm Yenni; A = Arthur Dawson

1. A: [set up and preliminary chat]
N: Who else are you interviewing on this deal, Arthur?
2. A: I interviewed Paul Sheffer. Jim Haire is on tap but hasn't been available yet. We're hoping to get Rich Kiser.
N: Good.
3. A: He's been a little hesitant about it.
N: That's so much Rich. Very, very much so. He's wondering, 'Why should I volunteer information?' If you approach it from the historical angle, he knows a lot about history.
4. A: Yeah, I keep hearing his name as the go-to-guy.
N: Oh yeah, he's real good. As far as the other side of the hill, boy I don't know who would be . . . I don't know if Jens Kullberg might be. I'm trying to think down there on the Lakeville side. Kullberg has been down there for a long time.
5. A: I interviewed Maureen Herzog. Do you know her?
N: Marilyn?
6. A: Or Marilyn, right. It was for a different project on Sonoma Mountain. She grew up there on the Jacobs Ranch.
N: Yes. Jacobs.
7. A: But I met her down in Lakeville where she's got her dairy operation. Nice little spot. And Gary Kiser agreed, but I've heard he's having health problems.
N: Gary had a stroke here sometime back.
8. A: Oh, he did?

N: He had pictures of this place that I've never seen. He knows history about this place. But his health is pretty questionable.

9. A: Yeah, I heard he was having problems and I called him in June just to see if he was still available and he said, 'Not now.' But he did talk to me. It seemed on the surface he was still aware.

N: You might ask again, but I don't believe his health has improved any at all [Gary passed away just a month or so later]. I've often thought, what you and I have talked about before, some of the history, some of the old anecdotal stuff is kind of neat. So I can see from your perspective, he'd be great. But Rich Kiser's also pretty sharp on that.

10. A: We're hoping to get somebody from the tribe who knows something about this area. Have you ever met Nick Tipon?

N: No, I haven't.

11. A: And there's another tribal member. . . Joanne Campbell.

N: You know, that's interesting you talk about that, especially in reference to the Baylands. I really question how much—I've never seen any hard evidence that there were any Indians down here to any extent. They might have come down here and did some hunting. But I don't think the Indians were so foolish as to live down here.

12. A: I believe there are a few sites down here, but you're right, they weren't living out in the marsh itself. There was a village which might have been around Sears Point that I've seen reference to.

N: That could be.

13. A: It would be more them living on the edge of the marsh, maybe using it as a place to hunt and fish.

N: Very possibly for the hunting and fishing. I don't know that there was that much wildlife out in the marsh. Of course the ducks and the fish. But the Indians weren't so stupid as to live out in the marsh and get eaten by mosquitoes! And that was a huge mosquito trap years ago I'm sure. I think they did their best to get away from that stuff.

14. A: Like any human being, you want to live in a place that's comfortable.

N: Exactly. I would think they'd travel down here for their foraging and get out dodge when the time gets tough.

NORM YENNI

15. A: It would be interesting to see. There was quite a center up in the Tolay Creek watershed.

N: Tolay Valley.

16. A: Yeah. Up there where the Cardoza Ranch was. Up there was a lot, but that's not right on the marsh. But not too far.

N: Right. I'm sure that was a unique area up there. I've always thought that was a unique ranch up there.

[short discussion of the purpose of the filming)

17. A: So how did your family come to be down here?

N: When I was born, my parents had a dairy up the road here a few miles by the Smith Ranch. It was a small dairy, a Grade B dairy, a wooden floor and everything else. We delivered the milk from the cows to the tanks in buckets and we always had a little bit of farming going on. We farmed in the marsh. Up where the Kiser Ranch is now. In 1969 my Dad had the opportunity to partner with two other fellows to come down here and farm on Tubbs Island. Dad was scared to death of it. He'd never farmed this many acres. Not that he didn't think he could do it, it was just such a drastic change. He'd have to get rid of his cows—and he loved his cows—and go to full time farming. However, at that time, a Grade B dairy was not making much money. Grade B dairies are pretty much non-existent these days.

18. A: I imagine it would have been quite expensive to upgrade to a Grade A?

N: Yes. That was one of the big deals, yes. With a Grade A conversion, having to do everything in stainless steel pipes and pipeline milking systems, a lot of concrete you'd have to pour. So it was a decision—we either have to go big or get out. One of the two. My dad partnered with two other fellows. One that owned a feed mill and the other was an investor in a bunch of agricultural endeavors. With the money man, the sales/marketing man and the farmer, that being my dad, that's how they put the partnership together and it worked out pretty well for some time. Over time, the other two fellows went by the wayside and my Dad ended up with the entire business.

19. A: Was your Dad Peter Yenni?

N: My Dad was Glenn Yenni.

20. A: Right. Peter was his father?

N: No. Peter Yenni is several generations back. My grandfather was Jacob Yenni. I think before that was John Yenni. So Peter Yenni was quite a few generations back and a cousin off to the side.

21. A: OK. So the Yennis have been in this area quite a while.

N: Quite some time yeah. Since the late 1800s I believe. And that's about the time that this ranch was reclaimed from the Baylands.

22. A: Tell me what you know about the history on this place.

N: I think most of the ranches out here, the six ranches reclaimed by Senator Jones, as well as this ranch—I've heard, and I'm reasonably sure it's correct, that this was reclaimed by the Tubbs family about 1885, 1890, somewhere along in there. That is the Tubbs family which has since gotten out of the drayage business and went into cordage. In fact if you buy rope you'll see 'Tubbs Rope.' I believe that's the same family. Several people have told me that they'd gone that way.

23. A: What's drayage?

N: I believe drayage is hauling stuff, like drag line work and stuff like that. From what I've heard, Tubbs was never very successful down here. They had quite a few years and they could never quite do it. Frankly I'm sure the first few years it was miserable trying to get rid of all the tules, all the low spots, get it out to where you could work it and get a decent crop that's worth having anything. The reason it was reclaimed in the first place, if you would alleviate the government of this terrible mosquito problem out here, you could reclaim this land, start paying some taxes on your income and produce a usable product out here. So it was like a win-win situation. That was how most of these ranches got the enticement to be formed.

24. A: Did Tubbs use a steam dredger or hand labor?

N: I believe it was a steam dredger—I don't know that for a fact. I've heard that it took quite a few years to get it all done. I've heard that the levees at the time were not very tall at all. They didn't need very much levees. They could drain the whole ranch with flood gates at the time. And there were still some remnants of flood gates here until the year 2000. I threw out the last of the old wooden floodgates. They were non-functional.

25. A: Were those used if it rained a lot and it started to fill up on the inside? Tell me how the floodgates were used.

N: The floodgates were used for standing drainage. When the tide was low enough, the water level in the bay was low enough that the water would rush off the land and into the bay. When the tide came up, the floodgates on the outside would close and the water wouldn't come back in. So twice a day you'd drain the land. Over time as the ground got dry

and it shrunk down a little bit, and I guess wind erosion, the land subsided. Now we have to use pumps and physically remove it from the land.

26. A: How far has the land subsided, more or less?

N: Excellent question. I would guess maybe three feet, two or three feet. I know that back in the 'thirties or 'forties they were pumping water then. We still have one of their old pumps—it's a real cool old pump. It was just left here and it set in the levee just blocked off so it wouldn't block the water. Basically back then it had no historic value. We got to looking at it one time and said, 'You know what, that's really a pretty cool pump.' So we brought it up here and it's sitting in the yard over there [the Lunkenheimer] and someday maybe we'll put it on display.

27. A: I'll go check it out.

N: It's a cool looking old pump. Anyhow, when we came here in 1969 we drained the entire ranch from one location. As time went by, whether it was further subsidence or just wanting to do a better job, we've developed two pumping locations. So you can a little more accurately control your water level. We've tried to deepen the ditches. We've put in some new ditches. It's like any other business, as you go through time you try and do a better job. Try and have more consistent crops and just a better quality.

28. A: What crops have you grown out here?

N: My Dad grew just oats, oat hay. When it got really rainy and backed up we'd always have a bunch of volunteer rye grass come in. But predominately it was what he had [oats]. Marin Sanitation owns some of the property that I farm now on the other side of Highway 37, south Tubbs Island. That's changed the nature of the soil enough that we can grow wheat and barley down there now and grow them quite profitably.

29. A: So the soil has better nutrients, what's the difference?

N: It's diversification of the business for one. Some years the market is better for the grains. That being the wheat and the barley. Other years it's better for the hay. 2014 right now, you're happy to be in the hay business. I am not making near as much money on the grain. But that can change in a heartbeat. That's the nature of farming. So I always keep things diversified.

30. A: How far ahead do you think?

N: Since I have annual crops, as far as the cropping pattern, I go a year, maybe two years out. I'm experimenting with some new University of California varieties of oats. The oats that we've been using out here, somebody told me they were developed during World War Two. They've been serving us quite well. I believe all the other farmers around here are using that

era of oats. These UC oats were invented in the 2000s already. I kind of poo-pooed them because they're very high priced oats. But looking down the road, maybe somebody better take this silver bullet, if it's out there, better take it and run with it. So that's what I'm looking at. But with real expensive seed I'm only taking so many silver bullets! I'm not spending all my dollars in the one place. As far as other crops—we grow a little bit of rye grass. The market for rye grass has been hot the last few years. It's been highly desired.

31. A: Any idea why?

N: Yeah. It's the equine industry. Years and years ago the rye grass, since it doesn't have the nutrient value of the oat hay or any of the other grain hays, it was not nearly as desired when it was predominately going to cows. But for horses, they want something, number one, that they will eat, number two, that doesn't get them too fat. Course if you're raising cows you want to put some weight on them. Because that's the thing, put the energy in the cow where you're going to get milk out of them or get meat out of them. It's a business deal. Whereas the horses, a lot of horses just stand around. So you have to cater to the market, where you're playing to.

32. A: Like any business.

N: Yeah. Like any business. As far as other crops, I have tried, one year I tried garbanzo beans down here. I've heard, anecdotally, there were other dry beans, kidneys beans and stuff tried down here. I tried safflower one year. Safflower didn't yield me the net per acre and is a broadleaf plant. I had some real weed control issues with the safflower. The dry beans there was never any money that I could see to be made there. This ground seems suited to the small grains. So that's pretty much where we've stayed. I do know in the past, after participating in a couple study committees over the years, they talked about, 'Oh we could do this, we could do that.' All the wonderful things that could be done here in the marsh. I was always like, 'Hey, show me how. Get a pilot project, come on down. I'll give you twenty acres. Let's grow that salt water tomato or some sugar beets or I don't know what. Show me what to do, number one and show me how to market it. If I had sugar cane down here, how would I market sugar cane? I don't know.

33. A: Has that been suggested? Sugar cane?

N: Not in particular. I'm just throwing out a what if. One year we were flooded out really really bad, just had water everywhere. I got six tomato plants from the local garden center and I put them out back here. I watered them just with some tap water a couple times. And you know what? When the ground all dried up, by golly I got back out in the field and I forgot about the tomato plants. I come back out there about three months later and I had a beautiful crop of tomatoes. So I had this wonderful idea—'dry land tomatoes.' Could they work? Maybe I gotta pump a little bit of water. Well it's just a little bit of water. I could be able to make this work. But then I got to looking at the idea—OK, if you're going to go processing tomatoes—they don't get a lot of money for processing tomatoes. They put you on a tight schedule.

You're competing with the guys over in the valley there. I'm sure they're getting forty, fifty tons to the acre. If you're going to go with fresh market tomatoes, that's a lot of handwork. I personally don't want that intensive of an operation. I got looking at the whole thing and I thought, 'You know what? We're making a pretty good deal here. There's a lot of numbers to be crunched. I don't have the knowledge to do it all, do all the market research. I think I'm going to stay where I'm at with the small grains.

34. A: A lot of factors to consider.

N: There are. I suppose if I was a pure economist I might want to crunch all those numbers and do some experimental plots and everything else. But I've got a full time job with what I'm doing. As long as it makes money, you know, I'm happy with it. It's my heritage, it's what I know, what I'm comfortable with. I have the customer base I've had for years and years. I'm OK. Not every year. There's some bad years. Some years I think, 'Why in the heck am I doing this?' When the water's coming over the levee I sit there saying, 'Norm, you're shooting yourself in the foot. Get the heck out of the marsh.' But when it's good it can be very good.

35. A: I assume you have to actively maintain the levees?

N: Yup. The levees have to be maintained, have to be monitored. Keep the varmints out of the levees. It's an ongoing deal. I try to walk the entire ranch every year. We have about eight or ten miles of levee surrounding the whole ranch here. I try to do that every year—keep an eyeball on everything going on, make sure there isn't a bunch of squirrel holes. God knows what else. Washouts, whatever could happen. As far as the permitting for the levees, that's been a real concern. Through the Resource Conservation District, we've managed to keep permits in force pretty much continuously. But it certainly seems like a lot of the government agencies don't want us to maintain the levees. They make it so difficult with all the endangered species, all the regulations for turbidity in the water. What time of year we can work. They even claim that when we're taking the mud out of the channel, that's their mud. They own the mud and we're only renting it. You know, all we're trying to do is protect the property that we've had.

36. A: Yeah.

N: In 1995 I think it was, as a condition of one of the levee permits—because a permit's only good for five years—from 1995 we had to agree to mitigate for the loss of habitat which was done when the levees were created back in the 1880s, 1890s. So we had to mitigate for loss of habitat that happened over a hundred years ago. That just seemed very wrong to me. The project that they ended up doing for this loss of habitat, was ten million dollars or something like that.

37. A: Did that come out of your pocket, partially?

N: No. Fortunately that money did not come out of my pocket, or anyone else's pocket directly. It came out of the consortium with Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife [state and federal agencies] which were the ones that were mandating these deals. The Shell Oil mitigation fund for their spills. We had to chip in money, we had to chip in time. My landlord was pretty much forced to sell fifty-three acres of property for this mitigation thing. But that's what we had to do to continue with the levee maintenance operations. As wrong as I thought it was, and I maintain to this day that it is wrong to mitigate for a practice that's been carried on for a hundred years. It was carried on at the request of the government to drain this property in the first place to put it in active production. But attorneys have told me that, 'No, they can go back and make you mitigate for a hundred-years-ago practices.' Personally I would still take that to an attorney.

38. A: That does seem kind of crazy.

N: I'm sorry. It's a little bit much. In that process I've also learned that the idea of restoring a marsh, the whole practice is still in its infancy. When they restored that piece of property, that fifty-three acres, they told me that it would be intertidal. High tide it would be underwater, low tide it would be out of water. When the project was done it was a lake.

39. A: Is that the one up here, just up the road?

N: On the south side of Highway 37, just east of the railroad tracks.

40. A: Yeah, exactly. So that was a mitigation project then.

N: That was a mitigation project, yes. It was supposed to be out of the water at low tide. When it was first built it certainly wasn't that way. I asked them what's the big deal going on? 'Well, we'll have to research and find out.' They researched it and found out and they said, 'It is exactly what it is supposed to be.' I said, 'But you told me it was going to be out of water at low tide. At high tide it would be underwater. This is altogether different. The levee is two feet higher than Highway 37 is. If you look at that area out there, for a good portion of the distance, Highway 37 is the levee. Highway 37 keeps that water from rushing across and going further inland. And the response I got from the designers was, 'You don't understand. Water will seek its own level. And that water is just where it's going to be.' And I said, 'Well I guess you don't understand. I'm not entirely stupid. I understand that water will seek its own level. What went wrong with this project? Why is the highway two feet lower than it was supposed to be?' They told me, 'The water is the correct level, the ground around it is too low. The earth sank.' I said, 'The earth sank?' They said, 'Yeah.'

Where you come on to Tubbs Island, back by the railroad tracks, it's about two feet higher and Highway 37 goes down two feet over half a mile. It's not much, you can't hardly detect it. But it's much lower there. Once again the levee is higher than the road. So right now the weakest part in my entire levee system, on the ten miles of levee, is Highway 37. That's the first place the water will come over the top of the levee. Because Highway 37 is the levee. So I asked

them, 'So how do I fix my levee? How do I preserve things? How do I guard my interest?' Well nobody has an answer for that. What do you do about that? How do you build up the highway two feet?

41. A: Yeah.

N: If they're going to talk about global warming and sea level rise, hey we're doing what we can to address it based on the levees. We're not putting pavement out there, but we're building the levees up. And how 'bout this deal that the government opened up? It's not going to work as good as I think. I participated in this study a few years back about the future of Highway 37.

42. A: I was curious to ask you about that.

N: Yeah. There were four proposals brought up. First proposal, which I thought made some amount of sense, was we'll widen it to four lanes, build it up higher, and go all the way to Vallejo, from Sears Point to Vallejo, with four lanes.

43. A: Kind of a raised causeway kind of thing?

N: No, just a raised roadway. Just fill it in. Millions of tons of material for that. Then the update on that was, 'We shouldn't do that. We should put in a causeway' like you talked about. Like when you get to Sacramento, the Yolo causeway. Put it up on stilts, at least part of it up on stilts. Because that way it would be better for the tidal action to get through. You could restore the marshes on the other side. That made a lot of sense too. OK, fine. So you can have a causeway. Four lanes. Then other people say, 'No, what we really need to do is really think ahead. Sea level rise is going to be there. We can pour all this stuff in the bay. We should just abandon Highway 37, move all the traffic onto 580 down at Richmond or Highway 12 over here in Schellville.

44. A: Ouch!

N: If you've seen what Highway 37 looks like Friday afternoons, you will know why that can't hardly work. Because Highway 37 at two lanes is already plugged up. Highway 12 is already plugged up. 580 is probably not far behind it. If you think you're going to take away one of those vital links and improve matters any, I don't see how that could work. The fourth idea that was brought out, and I'm sure there were more, but these were the main ones. The fourth one, very interesting. Let's just not disturb the environment at all, at least on the surface, let's put a tunnel from Vallejo to Novato. Under the bay.

45. A: [chuckles]

N: You chuckle a little bit, we chuckled a lot! Who's going to fund that, how it that going to work? It's gotta be four lanes—two lanes doesn't do it now. We're still going to have as

many cars. What's the safety implications of a tunnel like that? It's like the English channel for gosh sakes!

46. A: And an earthquake, I'm sure that'd all liquefy during an earthquake.

N: Yeah, there's all sorts of problems with that. So I don't know where we're going with any of this but those are some of the ideas that are being thrown out there. Personally I think the idea of the causeway is what really needed to go. Anyhow, we spent like sixteen or eighteen months meeting off and on, on this Highway 37 Study Committee. At the very last meeting they says, 'OK. We'll compile all the information. You people should know it'll probably be twenty years before we decide on a project and then we'll get started with the implementation after that.

47. A: [chuckles]

N: Well what did I spend all this time for, you know?

48. A: Quite a timeline, yeah.

N: It's nothing in my useful working life. Why did I waste my time here? I understand the idea of getting input from the public, the idea of doing studies, but it's kind of a function of government I guess that everything has to move so slow that at some point it's not worth the problem.

49. A: I don't know if I ever really heard what happened to 37 in the 2006 flood, the New Year's Flood. The last real big flood. Mitch Mulas had some of his pasture flooded up north.

N: We had, over at Mare Island, the water came over the top of the road there. We had some water come out over my low point in the levee. Come out, run down Highway 37 and back into my ranch. All that water I had to pay to pump back out. Fortunately there's enough tidal action there that it only came over for a few hours. But when you look at a river a foot deep and twenty feet wide moving at five miles an hour, that's a lot of gallons. And to have to physically remove that by a pump, it takes a while.

Probably the biggest issue we've had as far as levees and pumping and the likes of that, was in 1998. I think it was February 7, 1998. We'd had a series of big storms. The mitigation site that we spoke of a few minutes ago, that fifty-three acres, the levee on that site broke. When the government took ownership of the property there, we made it very clear that that levee was in bad shape, it needs to be worked on. Sure enough the levee broke up there. It broke on a Saturday afternoon about one o'clock. We made a bunch of phone calls, got trucks, got bulldozers, got excavators. We had the hole plugged in twenty or twenty-two hours. It took us another forty days, with our three existing electric pumps and three diesel rental pumps to get the water off the property.

50. A: Wow.

N: We went to Fish and Game, who were the owners of the property and said, 'Look what your levee did to us.' And they said, 'Thanks for fixing it. We don't mind that you fixed it because you want to preserve your property.' I said, 'Well yeah, but how about all the damage that was caused to my property by your levee breaking.' They said, 'We don't mind if our land is flooded. Our land can flood any time.' I said, 'But yeah, it flooded my land.' [they said] 'Well that's your property. You should have built your levee on that.'

Eventually that's what the project did anyhow. But the fact that the levee was not in at the time and their levee failed before this levee got fixed, it's all wrong. Once again, I would think the government would have some responsibility for the property they own. But they accepted no responsibility at all. And that cost us—we had eighteen hundred acres under water, we lost everything that was planted at the time. We took a pretty good hit that year at the hands of our government.

51. A: Are there any issues like that between private landowners down here—somebody not maintaining their levee and it was flooding someone else's land?

N: Yeah. Some of the former occupants, further up the channel from here—if you look at the deeds on a lot of this property, very, very old deeds, and they say you own to the high water mark or the center of the creek or whatever else, before the creek became public domain. What they have done years and years ago, and it was even questionable back in the 'fifties—they would go out and take mud from the active channel and throw it up on the berm area outside of the levee and basically reclaim a little bit more land. We had a small portion of land that was done that way when we moved here to Tubbs Island. We farmed it a few years and it had so much salt in it, it was still kind of marginal ground. It constricted the creek, that was the big thing. The creek was restricted to just the active channel. What these marshlands need is the active channel plus the berm area for the floods to spread out over. Without that, there's some real problems. Further up the channel here there was a bunch of that land reclaimed and it restricted Sonoma Creek to a pretty narrow pathway. Over time, stuff backed up behind that. Further behind it and further behind it. Sonoma Creek was restricted. That was done probably in the 'seventies, something like that.

52. A: That wasn't Bisso was it?

N: Yes it was the Bisso property. The government was never active enough to do anything about it, to reclaim that land to restore Sonoma Creek. Why they weren't I don't know. If I would have done it I know I would have been in jail. I would probably have been hung from the walls of the jail. I believe from my knowledge of hydrology and the way things work, that that slowed down the flow and restricted the flow enough in Sonoma Creek that today I believe there are five logjams between Wingo and Highway 121.

53. A: Wow.

N: You cannot tell me that that's a functioning creek. They clog Sonoma Creek with five logjams in there. The logjams have been in there for years and years. Some of them possibly for decades. How can you say that's a functioning creek? There's all sorts of studies that have been done. I participated in a TMDL for some of it [Total Maximum Daily Load. Term used by the Environmental Protection Agency to measure impairment of waterways]

54. A: Yeah, I came to a couple of those meetings that you were on the board or whatever it was called, advisory committee.

N: Advisory committee, yeah. That was about the time I think the logjams were forming. Frankly, all the attention on Sonoma Creek has been from Highway 121 north. That's where the dollars are, where the slope comes down, the vineyards, the people are up there. When you get past 121 it seems like, politically, nobody gives a damn. And I'm sorry to say that because I know that a lot of the environmental concerns are down this way. I would think if you're down this way, one of the things you want to do is keep the creek functioning. But nobody seems to want to do a darn thing about it. Sonoma Creek is basically non-functional. It goes out through Larson's and then Mulas' property. That is where Sonoma Creek goes these days. Ray Mulas has some pictures he can show you of fish that swam up Railroad Slough and got up there to the head of Railroad Slough, which ends up near Highway 121 there by the railroad depot. There was big fish seeking to spawn, going up there. They're trying to go up Sonoma Creek, but that's where they went because that's the way they came out, through Hudeman Slough and that way. Those poor fish, they can't get up there to spawn. I always say the reason they can't spawn is because they haven't got a bus to carry them across the hayfields. They floated across the hayfield on the way out, but the hayfield's all dry when they're trying to come back and spawn. They can't walk across the hayfield!

55. A: Yeah.

N: So I can't take the restoration thing too seriously when they talk about this on one hand, but something entirely different on the other hand. The two of them have to go together—the health of the creek and the health of the fish. That's my way of thinking of it.

56. A: They're obviously linked very closely.

N: I would certainly think so. But nobody wants to clean out Sonoma Creek. They were studying Sonoma Creek and what to do with it before you or any of us were born. Other than a few dollars on private stuff, nothing's been done. Because politically it's not a really great thing. There's so much stuff coming down the creek over the years. I would have to agree that some of the vineyard practices from the 'sixties and possibly the 'seventies were atrocious. There was some god-awful silt coming down the creek back then.

57. A: You could tell, you could see the difference?

N: Oh yeah. The marshes were still there in the upper reaches of Sonoma Creek. That's where a lot of that silt came in. Since then, those guys up there have realized what's going on, they've lost a lot of their valuable vineyard land. They've cleaned up their act and they're doing a good job now. Sonoma County we have the VESCO, the Vineyard Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance. That has worked real well. So the last ten or fifteen years I think we're doing a pretty good job. So I'm not that concerned about the sediment coming down the stream now—I'm worried about the sediment that came down forty years ago. That's where the problem is; we need to get rid of that. I think we can live with what sediment is coming down today.

58. A: Yeah, a lot of times those legacy effects are causing more problems than what's happening now.

N: I think that's right. You can't restore something which is already broken beyond repair.

59. A: How would you describe the community down here, getting along with your neighbors . . . is there a strong sense of community or is it more like people doing their own thing?

N: You know I'm not a terribly social type of guy. But I'm very confident that if I need some help with something, if I got water coming over my levee, much as I can I would help Kisers or Jim Haire and those guys would help me. Fact of the matter is, if I got water coming over my levee they probably got the same thing. I have a couple other fellows that I more socially work with, but we have similar concerns, similar issues. We work together on some of the land use issues that we talked about. So there is a real strong sense of community there. As far as marketing the crops, we all grow pretty similar crops, so we're all together on that. I learn a lot about farming practices I've employed and stuff I've learned over the years. I say rather than look over the fence, look over the levee. That's where I get my best information about what new farming practices are going on. Just look over the levee.

60. A: So you guys trade a lot of information. It doesn't sound particularly competitive.

N: Not so much competitive. Especially the last twenty years or so, there's not a tremendous competition between us. Right now there's a lot of guys getting into the organic market. I have some organic hay. I'm not sure that it's the right thing for *me* because I have a very strong market for the conventional hay. Going to feed stores it has to be very high quality when it's going to go to the horse owner or horse stable. The main market for organic is the dairies. It's organic, you can get a better price for it, a quite a bit better price. You have to change your practices a little bit, but that's OK. Like I say, I have one field that's organic and it goes to an organic dairy and they're very happy with it. They told me if I had three times as much organic hay they'd buy it all. But if I can grow good, top quality horse hay, I can sell that too.

61. A: Are most of the dairies you sell to in Sonoma County?

N: The organic stuff goes directly to a dairy. It's actually the family of one of my employees. So that's actually going to Humboldt County. But it's just because he's a personal acquaintance. Otherwise there's two or three dairies here in Sonoma County to whom I've mentioned that I have organic hay. And they've said, 'Oh good. Can we buy it?' You know if I had it, yeah. But it's sold. So the demand is there. I think the feed supply for the organic is still catching up to the number of organic dairies. Some of my neighbors have converted to organic hay production. That's good. Like I say, it's a premium price. But I go for a premium market also, that being the feed stores. It's all what floats your boat, what makes things work. I like telling people that there's a little secret about farmers: We don't farm just because we like it. We don't do it just because that's what we know. We do it to make money. And people say, 'What do you mean you do it to make money?' I say, 'We have to feed our families. If we're not making money at it, we can't afford to do it. I know it seems very basic, but we have to make money at this deal.'

62. A: You can't eat hay yourself.

N: I can't eat hay myself. Yeah. So, it's a business. And it's not the business that it was a hundred years ago. We have a lot of high tech stuff going on here. I have three or four tractors now with auto-steer systems in them. When you want to diagnose what's wrong with the tractor—I had a guy come out here with his laptop and plugged it into a portal on the side of the tractor to diagnose what's wrong with it. I go, 'What's that thing?'

63. A: [Laughs]

N: Yeah, he got out his laptop to fix the tractor. It was his first time out fixing that particular problem and it took him two hours on the laptop to diagnose what's wrong with it. He says, 'You want to fix her or should I?' I said, 'Holy cow, how am I going to fix it?' He says, 'The part is about that big [shows with his fingers], it's an electromagnet and it takes one wire and one bolt. I said, 'Well I can fix that.' He says, 'OK, we just have to order it in. It takes three days to get in and it'll take about five minutes to fix it.' Once you figure out what the heck it is, it's simple. Since then I've learned some other things, diagnostic things. And I've gotten some of the testing equipment and I know what to look for now. I keep one of those little spare parts with the one wire and the one bolt just in case that happens.'

64. A: It's as easy to order two as it is to order one.

N: There you go, that's it. And as far as the auto-steering systems, I have some of the older fellows that work for me, they say, 'You don't need a computer on a tractor to alert you to what's wrong with it.' But this is one we add on to steer the tractor. It sounds kind of spooky. The guy says, 'I can drive a tractor, I don't need a computer to steer the tractor.' The thing is, if you're out there with a forty-foot-wide piece of equipment, if you can hold it at 38 or 39 feet all day, which is what I aim for, your efficiency is pretty good. If you're steering by hand and you can get to 35 feet all day, you've got to keep craning your neck all day long and that gets hard. The best of operators doing it by hand is not going to get much better than 35-

foot accuracy. With the steering mechanism you set it for 39 feet, just push the button and I can call people up on my cell phone, do an interview with you or whatever else. I can sell hay. So it makes life so much simpler. Anyhow, one of the two older fellows, I convinced him, 'You should try this. We'll set it up for you and see if you don't like it. ' Now he says, 'Show me how to do this. We made the one for the straight line, show me how to do the one for the curve.' Once he gets into it he realizes that this stuff is pretty good. It increases your efficiency and saves fuel.

65. A: Saves your neck.

N: Yeah. And the other thing is, it's more professional. I really like the idea of going out across a field and I can see these lines are perfectly straight. I think that's just taking pride in workmanship.

66. A: If you find a better technique, you've got to go with it.

N: That's it. I don't have the overlap when I'm seeding so much. And the other thing is, with ag chemicals, lower spraying. Other than the wheel marks of the tractor, the booms sit out there thirty or forty feet out there, so how do you know where you've sprayed? You can't tell.

67. A: You can't see, huh?

N: No. But this sucker it puts you dead on. So environmentally I think it's a very good thing.

68. A: [Turn tape over] So what's your understanding of what life was like at the camps out here? Camp Two or Camp Six or . . .

N: This was not a camp.

69. A: This was not a camp, right. But I was wondering if you've heard things about the camps?

N: When we came here in 1969, there was a bunkhouse over here by the levee—it's all gone now. There was the main house where probably the caretaker lived, the ranch foreman I guess. And maybe some of the upper managers. But they probably had twenty or thirty people here. I know there was two horse barns up here and one horse barn across the road.

70. A: And that's for work horses?

N: For work horses, yeah, plow horses. I'm sure it took quite a while to do that. I imagine a fair amount of the hay they grew here had to go back to the horses. Those horses, I'm sure, needed not only a lot of hay but a lot of energy, so probably a lot of oats too. You can't get a

lot of work out of strictly feeding just forage. Like any other athlete, he needs some energy. I would think that they probably grew what today would be considered some pretty low quality hay. I think wild oats is a fierce competitor. Even today we have a lot of problems with wild oats coming in, it competes with the domestic oats, does not make good quality stuff. Through the use of tillage in the late spring and chemical applications, like Round-up, we're able to get most of the wild oats worked out. But if you don't keep right on top of it, in about two or three years those wild oats will be right back. God did a wonderful job when he created the wild oats. They're very tenacious, they're tough.

71. A: Hence the term 'Sowing your wild oats.'

N: Yes, 'Sowing your wild oats.' They go everywhere.

72. A: Tillage, so that's when they're just starting to come up and you till the soil so it kind of knocks them back?

N: Yeah. I don't know in the old days. I would speculate that they probably didn't do near the tillage we do now. I don't know how they would have gotten rid of the wild oats. Especially when you're plowing with horses. I'm not sure how late they planted in the spring. I would think probably not near as late as we are now.

73. A: Is that because it took longer to plant, so they had to start earlier?

N: I think yeah, probably. When my dad came here in 1969, he would start planting sometime between Halloween and Thanksgiving, in that ballpark. And pretty much work whenever he could. I know he used to figure on trying to get through by his birthday, which was in early February. That was always the benchmark. When I came along and started managing the property, we kind of got into planting little bit later to try and get the better quality hay. We would sacrifice some of that early sprout that came up. We would disc it and kill it off. The old style farmer would say, 'Why kill it off?' Well kill it off if it isn't the crop you want to harvest. Because it's wild oats it's not the domestic oats. Nowadays we try to stop everything and try to get a kill on everything. Exception being the grain crops. We try to plant those early. If I plant wheat, there's a spray you can put on wheat which will kill off wild oats and leave the wheat growing. The interesting thing, if you see a seeding of oats and a seedling of wheat, you cannot tell the two apart. It's very, very difficult. There's some little botanical differences. But you've got to get down there, quite literally, with a microscope.

74. A: Wow.

N: The spray will just go and do it. It's really neat. That'll just clean up my wheat crop, make it nice and clean.

75. A: Has the wheat been bred for that, or does it just happen to be that way?

N: It just happens to be that way. There's enough biologic difference in it.

76. A: What time of year do you harvest?

N: Usually late May, June we're really, really busy with hay cutting. Depending on the year we're usually done sometime in June. I have cut hay into July before. That's the exception rather than the rule. Most years we start baling in June and we're done sometime in July, maybe by the end of July. We've gone into August with baling hay. Obviously some of that stuff that doesn't get cut until the tenth of July, it might not be ready, we have logistic problems getting it baled that fast.

77. A: How long does it take to dry usually?

N: Down here in the marsh, if you cut in May, I've baled hay in as little as six days. But down here we have so much moisture come in off the bay and just the cool climate. At night it gets cold, the fog comes in very often. It's a pretty good rule of thumb that you want to figure about two weeks. I've had some stuff that's been out three, three-and-a-half weeks and still isn't really dry enough to bale. Because it's just been too damp, too cold.

78. A: Does that ever cause problems with it starting to get fungus or anything on it?

N: It probably got a little bit of surface stuff on it, but it hasn't really affected the quality. More than anything there is a visual damage. It's bleached out. That doesn't work good. I've gotten in a lotta trouble over the years baling hay when my neighbors up the road, say in the Petaluma flats or even by Lakeville [were baling], they're just not on the bay. My ranch is on the bay. They get a few miles up there, they don't get quite the moisture I get and they can bale in six days pretty regularly or maybe ten days. And guess what? If I do that I can get moldy hay. A couple years ago we had a bunch of moldy hay. I just [have to say], 'You know what guys? I know you wanna get going.' My employees want to work, I want to get the stuff done, I want to make the best product we can. We have the machines ready to go, we have the men ready to go. Don't. OK. All the neighbors have six-day hay or ten-day hay, they're ready to go, they're making nice looking bales with good color. Down here in the marsh, if we're getting cool like that, hold off! 'Cause the quickest way to ruin your reputation is to get moldy hay. It's spreads like wildfire. If you got good hay, this guy'll tell that guy and slowly it'll spread around. You get moldy hay, everybody knows about it! It wasn't that way years ago because with cows—you know cows are ruminants. They aren't as affected by moldy hay. It isn't good for them. But they aren't going to roll over in colic and die like a horse. When I'm catering to the horse market, it's gotta be that better stuff. So quality is a big deal. That's why we plant later in the spring, that's why all this deal has to come together. It's kind of what we had to evolve into to keep the business alive.

When my dad was here, we used to do a lot of baling at night. Which is what they do still in the Sacramento Valley, when the moisture level is correct. I'm not a big advocate or fan of global warming, but I have seen some amount of climate change. We literally cannot bale at

night anymore. Because after about midnight, there's enough moisture on the hay in a typical night that, you cannot bale it. There'd be too much and the stuff would mold. We wait until the morning when the dew is gone and that might be nine o'clock, it might be eleven o'clock, it might be noon. That's when the moisture level is correct to bale the hay.

79. A: So you're saying that the air's warmer so it carries more moisture?

N: The dew on the hay as well as the humidity in the air. Thirty years ago the conditions were correct—typically we'd start at two a.m. Very often we would be up right from two a.m. right through, we'd shut down about, oh, maybe ten a.m. or noon. So we get in a good ten-hour working day. Right now, there's a lot of days we can't start until ten a.m.

80. A: You said you can work until the early evening, but not past midnight?

N: Depending on the weather. There are still days when we can go out and bale at night. But they're not very many days. Because of that I don't actively maintain all the lighting systems on the tractors and balers. I have one or two tractors ready to go, just in case. But the actual incidence of baling in the dark—you get pretty long days anyhow. You can start at five o'clock with no lights. If that isn't early enough to start, well, I'm sorry. I've been very tempted when you get these really, really hot days, I've been tempted to go out at two o'clock and start it. What I've found is that as the operator of the business, if I start at two o'clock I end up working until six that next night. So that's a sixteen-hour day.

81. A: That's a long day.

N: Yeah. If I start at six in the morning, I work until six at night or maybe seven at night. So then I only have a thirteen-hour day.

82. A: A little more reasonable.

N: Right now I typically try and start at seven in the morning. I try to be out of here by seven o'clock. I try to work a twelve-hour day. It very often turns into thirteen hours. But I can live with that. My wife so far hasn't abandoned me. So we're OK with that. When it gets dark earlier, for the most part we cut back on that. Although with these new tractors, with the air-conditioning, with the heaters, with the auto-steer and everything else, I will tell you that driving a tractor at night is not much different than driving your car at night. It's not dirty, it's not dusty. It's quiet. You can see, there's lights all over the place. Farming is not the dirty, nasty job it used to be. Maintaining the tractors is more of a technical job than it used to be.

83. A: Get out your laptop and plug it in or whatever.

N: That's it. I had to learn how to do air-conditioning. I can't afford to have an air-conditioning tech come down every time they break down. Air-conditioning, I used to think, 'Well that's a frivolity. It's just a frill, fruffy thing.' You know what--if you want to keep

employees these days you'd better have the air-conditioner working. And the tractors are really not made to run with the doors open. Some of them don't have enough ventilation even if you open all the doors and windows, there's not enough ventilation to keep your operator cool. So they plan on having that air-conditioner working. It's part of the deal.

84. A: [video camera being readjusted]

N: So Sonoma Rock is right over at the very edge of the Baylands, just past the railroad tracks. Just feet off the railroad tracks. That was reputed as being very high quality rock. When they ran out of rock from the surface level they actually dug down, I heard, fifty feet and got more of that high-quality rock out of there. When they got done they turned it into a storage pond. So that was a win-win situation.

85. A: Were they loading the rock right into the trains?

N: Some went out on trains for a little while. But almost all of it went out by truck. You know as far as road building or building pads for barns or anything else, we never realized how good we had it. Because that was so close and the people there were so good to us. We could weigh our trucks there with a certified public scale. With that gone, we have to go far away for gravel. As far as building up the infrastructures for our buildings, our roadways, that was a big help to us having Sonoma Rock there. But I understand, it can't go on forever. It was neat while it lasted.

At one point you'd asked about Highway 37 and its development. You probably know this better than I, Arthur—but Highway 37 was at one time a toll road.

86. A: I didn't know that actually.

N: You didn't? By golly I've got something on the historian. Highway 37 was a toll road between Tubbs Island and Vallejo. I guess since ever since it was reclaimed there was a road leading to Tubbs Island just as a driveway. Past that was just a marsh. I heard at one time it was seasonal. You could drive through there in the summertime but not in the wintertime. And then somebody developed it into a toll road.

87. A: Privately owned presumably?

N: I would assume so. That's a good question. It could have been a public toll road. I do know that when we came here in 1969 there was still the remnants of the drawbridge on Sonoma Creek, which was taken out I believe in the mid or late 'sixties. 'Cause there were a lot of pilings left from it and some huge timbers and everything else. I seem to recall when I was a young kid, that being a drawbridge on Sonoma Creek.

88. A: By the time you came along I'm sure the bigger boats were not coming up the creek any more.

N: Correct.

89. A: Did your dad remember any of that stuff?

N: My dad would have remembered some of that stuff, yeah. I did have a picture on the wall, it's just a sketch, but it was a barge loaded with hay to go to San Francisco. It never occurred to me, because I'm kind of myopic in my own little world here, that this area was very important to the city of San Francisco as a hay-producing region because to get up and down those hills they needed a lot of horses.

90. A: Right.

N: So this was the fuel for the horses. So that makes perfect sense. This was a very important area to San Francisco and they barged a lot of stuff out of here. I guess they went up quite a ways.

91. A: It'd be a quick shot across the bay, in good weather at least.

N: Yeah, good weather. I think those people probably knew the tides. Or maybe they didn't know them, but they appreciated the tides and worked with it much better than anybody does now. If you're on a barge . . .

92. A: You better know what's going on!

N: Or else you end up in the Pacific Ocean. But I think those old boys were pretty darn sharp. When the tide's going out, they could get out there. And then the incoming tide would push them right back around to the Ferry Building there.

93. A: They must have had some kind of engine on them, right?

N: I don't know Arthur. Once again you're the historian. Like I say, I've got a drawing of a barge. Fred Dickson gave me that.

94. A: Did you hear any stories about the steam dredgers?

N: Um, no I did not. But that turns another name up. I was talking about steam dredgers to Jim Wendler. Jim Wendler is about my age, maybe a year older than I, and he grew up in this area too. He worked for Kiser Brothers for years and years and he knows a fair amount of the history. He'd be a good person to talk to. Danny Manzoni, I don't know if you know Danny or not.

95. A: I don't know Danny, no.

N: Danny knows how to get ahold of him. Or maybe Rich Kiser. He worked for Kisers.

96. A: You know there's a whole dredging museum over in Rio Vista that's pretty interesting if you're ever over there. You might have to make an appointment, I can't remember. I can get you information if you're ever interested in checking it out.

N: You know, that interests me. I guess like most guys I like big machines. But it's also related to the history of stuff like this. How you do what you gotta do.

97. A: It has a surprising amount of stuff, in a nice old house. I'll dredge it up and send you the info.

N: The idea of the dredging and maintenance of the channels—I think I talked a little bit earlier about the obstacles to keeping them up. Nowadays we have endangered species—I don't want to harm any endangered species—and there's the interests of fish, we don't want to harm the habitat for the fish. In our latest levee maintenance permits I think we have seven or eight different agencies we had to go through. They don't always agree on what they want to do. Sometimes one has to wait for the other one to say what they want before the first one'll say what they want. They kind of go back and forth. They ask some pretty onerous requests of us. I was talking with a Fish and Game fellow about some of these requests and he says, 'You know, we've never really had a levee permit request from a guy just doing it for farming. Most of the levee maintenance permit requests we get is from like homeowner's associations where they're preserving millions and millions of dollars of homes.'

98. A: Like Bel Marin Keys or somewhere like that.

N: Bel Marin Keys or something high value. And how many miles of levees on Bel Marin Keys? Not near as many as there are on Tubbs Island. I can't afford what Bel Marin Keys can afford. Or the City of Alviso. To put this in perspective and make it fair, is it really fair to ask me the same amount of input, or protection? I understand the endangered species are going to be impacted by it. Sure, there's some consideration there. A lot of what we're trying to avoid is damage to a mouse, the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, which may or may not exist in this habitat. When they did the earthquake retrofit on Sonoma Creek bridge, they spent \$150,000 clearing an area under the footprint of the bridge with the idea that there could be some of these endangered Salt Marsh Harvest Mice down there. I asked the biologist that was working on that project, 'How many mice did you catch in that footprint underneath the bridge.' She said, 'You know, I probably caught 150 mice, I think.' I said, 'OK, 150 mice, it cost \$150,000. So that's \$1000 per mouse you spent on it.' [she said] 'Well I guess you could look at it that way. That was the fencing, the trapping and everything else.' I said, 'How many of those mice were Salt Marsh Harvest mice?' [she said] 'Well, I don't know.' I said, 'Did they look any different?' [she said] 'I didn't see any that looked different.' [Norm said] 'So they could have been regular field mice or voles or something.'

99. A: Yeah.

N: She says, 'You know what, we weren't supposed to look at that.' So I said, 'Well let's assume that every one of the 150 mice were this endangered mouse. Not that anybody's ever seen one. At least not out here.'

100. A: They like the pickleweed.

N: They like the pickleweed and there was a lot of pickleweed out there, so . . . But it's unknown how many of them were the Harvest Mouse. So I said, 'Let's assume they were all Harvest Mice. You still spent \$1000 a mouse.' I'm a farmer, I know a lot of neighbors who are farmers. For \$1000 a mouse, I will find a way to raise those things.'

101. A: [Laughs]

N: 'I will make them grow.' She said, 'You're a hay farmer.' I said, 'Yeah I'm a hay farmer. But you know what? For that kind of big money, I'll figure it out.' If you're going to dangle that kind of money out there, mice aren't that hard to grow. They don't eat that much. I'll get some pickleweed habitat in a tub out in my backyard or something. I don't know what I'll do, but . . .

102. A: Start planting pickleweed.

N: Start planting pickleweed. I'll figure it out for that kind of money--\$150,000. Anyhow, they all thought it was a good joke and maybe it was a good joke. I still don't know. I don't even know where I'd get my breeding pair to start them.

103. A: [Laughs] You'd have to get a permit for that.

N: Yeah, that's the other part of it.

104. A: On a completely different note, what do you know about the naval facility out at Skaggs? Any stories about that?

N: Skaggs Island—that was top security. It was very high tech stuff. It was all secret secret stuff. Both entrances had a guard sitting there twenty-four hours a day. When you came on the property or off the property you'd have to get checked in. They would deny entry to people that weren't supposed to be there.

105. A: Did people ever get in trouble for coming alongside in a boat?

N: I would imagine, yeah. I don't know because I'm not a fisherman. But I would imagine they did. It's pretty well known now that that was a listening post for the communications going back and forth between China and Russia and whatever else. The Middle East or Asia or wherever else. I know when they took the place apart, there was some pretty remarkable

stuff. Building 21, which is the huge white, it was just a block out there. Had walls like eighteen inches or two foot thick. You think, wow that's pretty high security. That was built, I guess, just prior to World War Two. I think it was built back in the 'thirties.

106. A: So it wasn't even built to withstand a nuclear blast. At first I was thinking Cold War, but even before that they were building pretty [bombproof].

N: Built pretty stout.

107. A: Any idea why it was built that way, or what was going on inside there?

N: It's government. I had a bunch of friends, because a bunch of kids from Skaggs Island went to school with me, at the Sonoma public schools—Sonoma High, Prestwood Elementary. And they said that they had a very nice little establishment out there. Skaggs Island had their own little bowling alley, they had a swimming pool, they had a movie theater, gas station, general store. Pretty much everything you need. A little town of sixty or eighty homes out there. Some of the homes, especially the commander's and the like, were very nice homes. The enlisted men had more basic, utilitarian homes. But they were all functional. Typical government they maintained them to adequate standards. They had a livable life out there.

108. A: Your friends that you went to school with, were they able to invite friends back?

N: I don't know that anyone ever went out there to visit, out to the base. I don't think so. The kids that went to school from Skaggs Island, they had a U.S. government bus that would haul them to school. Because the public school bus either was not allowed or was not commissioned to go out there. So they had this navy gray school bus that came in every day from Skaggs Island. I think they picked up the kids along Ramal Road also on the way in. That was nice of the government to do that for us.

109. A: That was the government limo I guess.

N: The government limo yes.

110. A: How about wildlife out here? What have you seen over the years? Have you noticed any changes?

N: You know, I'm not a hunter. I don't hunt birds or mammals or anything else. I have seen, years ago I don't know that we had coyotes out here very much. In the last fifteen or twenty years, there've been a lot of coyotes. They've moved in. Some foxes. There are deer out here now. I don't know if they've gotten pushed down out of the other areas, if they migrated down here. I don't know what they're getting for fresh water. They've got to be pretty tough animals to be drinking that brackish water we got out here. Some of them have to be residential south of Highway 37. Even here on the north side, they'd have to go a little ways, jump across Tolay Creek or Sonoma Creek to get to fresh water. I would think they must

be pretty tough animals. I talked to one guy who, years ago, shot a real nice, about 130-pound buck out here.

111. A: Wow.

N: He said the meat was no good. It was drinking salt water and it was covered with all sorts of hives and ticks and everything else. And he said the meat didn't taste good at all, so leave 'em alone. But there's some pretty fair-sized deer out here.

112. A: When you moved here in 'sixty-nine, was that something you wouldn't have seen?

N: You wouldn't have seen that in 'sixty-nine, no. Like I say, I don't recall the coyotes being here. My way of looking at it, the coyotes in particular, a lot of people see a coyote, shoot the coyote. You know what? They're not hurting me. They're probably keeping a lot of the gophers and rodents in check. The mice, the voles. If it wouldn't be for the coyotes and the foxes, we'd probably have more of them. That's nature's way of keeping things on the even. So while I don't especially like the big old holes they dig out there—I actually got a tractor stuck one time. The wheels fell in the hole where a coyote den was and I had to get another tractor to pull me out. I must have hit it dead right! [laughs]

I don't harbor any ill feelings. I lost one year, I betcha I lost three or four acres of grain production—so there's like eight or ten tons of grain to deer. I don't know why, but there was a real flush population that year. They trampled down some pretty substantial areas out there. Just flattened the grain totally, to where I couldn't harvest it at all.

113. A: And that's an unusual circumstance it sounds like.

N: Yeah, I haven't had it so much. We still get a little bit of it. But I don't think I lose an acre a year to that. Another interesting thing that has happened, and you only see it every once in a while, but we see an acre or two lost to ducks and maybe geese. They will go in and the last few years they seem to be increasing in population. Don't ask me what [type] 'cause I'm not a duck hunter. I just know they're pretty and especially with the babies swimming around in the ditches. On the edge of the field, where the crop tapers off, they will go and strip the edges bare. Once again, I lose an acre or two.

114. A: Not a big deal.

N: To me it's not a big deal. Others might think of it differently. They think if you invest the money you should harvest 100% of it. If that's the only loss I got on 2300 acres, that's fine. I can live with it. I like to see the wildlife out there. It ain't worth the fight for gosh sakes. Like I say, it's so neat watching them go along.

115. A: Do you get the migratory birds? Do they come through and hang out in this area for a while?

N: Well the geese are not migratory any more I don't think.

116. A: Yeah I see them in Glen Ellen. They stay all year.

N: They're residential. I used to like them, the first few years the geese were here. Now they're getting to be a mess. I don't like them as much as I used to. I like the ducks a lot more. As far as other migratory birds, I . . .

117. A: You don't see big flocks coming through?

N: No. Another bird species I haven't seen much in the past few years has been sea gulls. I don't know what's going on with them. I remember years and years ago, especially when we were plowing ground, the sea gulls would be all over the place. You had to dodge the sea gulls or else they'd dump on you! Not too many sea gulls any more. I have no idea what went on there.

118. A: I worked on Alcatraz about twenty years ago as a ranger and we used to call that the 'White Badge of Courage.'

N: Yes, yes. Do you have any idea what might have happened?

119. A: I don't, no.

N: Are they in biological decline? Or just local?

120. A: I don't know. I haven't heard anybody else say that. I'll keep my ears open.

N: Oh, egrets. I never knew what an egret was until about twenty years ago. I kind of like egrets. Very cool birds, they don't affect things. They clean up a few mice. I just love to watch them out there. They'll sit there, they look like a statue, and all of a sudden, boing! They get a mouse you know!

121. A: Like a lightning bolt, yeah.

N: Yeah, like a lightning bolt. They're cool. You got the crows and the ravens. They're not nearly as cool, but there's a bunch of them out there too.

122. A: How about ospreys? I remember years ago there were some ospreys nesting in some eucalyptus that were further over [on Tubbs Island].

N: I don't think so.

123. A: Hawks or eagles?

N: There's a few eagles and hawks around. I have a lease now with the Black Point Pheasant Club. Since they have a lot of pheasants and chukars around and they're raised in captivity, the hawks are doing pretty good now. Those are pretty stupid birds sometimes and the hawks clean up what the hunters don't get.

124. A: I had a rooster get picked off by a hawk one time.

N: Oh really.

125. A: All we found were his legs. My wife had seen this hawk flying overhead and then the rooster disappeared. Apparently that's what they'll do, they'll actually bite off the legs so they can't scratch them.

N: Really—bite off the legs?

126. A: Yeah.

N: I know that the hawks will dive from a distance and they will get their claws out and the impact will just stab their prey. I forget there was some statistic on how hard they can hit. But they can have a tremendous force.

127. A: Break the back a lot of times I think.

N: Maybe that's it. Break the back. Another bird—wild turkeys. Once again, at first I thought they were kind of neat. But you know what after a while you look at all the stuff they damage and I'm not a huge fan of them. They haven't gotten out of hand yet, so they're still OK. But I think hunting a few wild turkeys now and then, there's not a darn thing wrong with that.

128. A: That's why they were put out there in the first place. Fish and Game put out wild turkeys for hunting.

N: Right. But it's pretty regulated how much you can hunt them. I know especially in the vineyard type setting, they're getting out of hand. So they need to crank up some of that hunting.

129. A: Is that something else that you've seen since 1969?

N: Definitely. There were no turkeys here in 1969 that I ever saw. Turkeys weren't here. I didn't see any egrets if they were here. I didn't see as many ducks. My great uncle had a hunt club up in the wetlands which is now Cline Farms, next to Viansa Winery?

130. A: Yeah.

N: Back in the early 1900s he said that was so rich with ducks that the sky would darken at times when the ducks would all take off. My great uncle supposedly was such a good shot that at times he could make six shots and down eight birds.

131. A: Wow. Incredible!

N: Yeah. He'd get two of them lined up. I don't know how he could pick them off, or if it was just the spray of the bullet or what.

132. A: That's impressive. So why don't we wrap up with what you enjoy most about living and working out here?

N: What I enjoy about living and working out here, it's what I've enjoyed all my life. I don't go to Reno and gamble. When the gambling in farming pays off well, it feels very very good. When it doesn't, it hurts a lot. It's the lifestyle that I've had. I guess you could say that fulfillment for me, the enjoyable part, is satisfied customers. I like the idea of being out here. I like working by myself. I'm kind of addicted to all this wonderful machinery I have out here. Farming twenty-three hundred acres and four, five, six employees depending on the time of year. I really like to drive a tractor. I don't like to be the boss, I don't like to make out bills. I like to drive the tractors.

133. A: You like being out there.

N: Yeah, yeah!

134. A: Does your wife help with operations?

N: My wife does not do too much. She's a parts runner now and then. She's a city girl. But she takes care of the home front. She has a few horses up there and she walks the property up there and she watches the home place like a hawk. If there's a cow out there that's got a little limp, if there's a strand of barbed wire broken, or whatever else, she's on top of it. While she's not a farm girl, up there where we live she's right on top of that.

135. A: What are your thoughts for the future out here? Both for yourself and the Baylands in general and people who've been living out here?

N: In order to keep the business going here, and I think like most other farmers, I'm kind of a purist, I like to think you should be able to do it just on farming. If you do a good job of farming you should be able to keep going. That's not quite reality anymore. I got two cell tower sites on the property. That sure helps a lot. We take in bio-solids from the city of Santa Rosa on the property I own and the property I lease is owned by the City of Vallejo. It's fertilizer coming in that fashion. That's a tremendous advantage. Other people have some of their farm worker housing and they're generating some supplemental income off of that. It

seems like nowadays that's what you have to do to really make the deal out here. Or maybe you do some custom farming on the outside, or rent a space for somebody to park their trucks out here, or whatever else.

So, integration of your operation. We've got into different crops, so diversification. At one time we made a bunch of silage for the dairies here. That worked very well for about ten years. We made the silage on the property here, delivered it on a daily basis. That has kind of come and gone, matured and left because the dairies like to have the product onsite and they use as much of that product as they need on a daily basis. When we have it here, we have to deliver it to them on a daily basis. Silage is a perishable product and the time it sits there, between the time we deliver it and the time they use it, it deteriorates in quality. It starts to mold. So they'd rather have it at the dairy. They can use as much or as little as they want and if it's still packed in the silo it's pretty well preserved. Like I say, that has come and gone.

As we mentioned earlier, I tried a couple different crops. The grain hays are what have worked for us. The organic is something which has, probably, a lot of potential for the area as a whole. Since a lot of the ground I farm is owned by Vallejo Sanitation, they put bio-solids down there and it *cannot* be organic. I have asked a number of different people, how I would, for instance, in the ground that I own, how I would grow organic grain crops and get them as clean as people want. I don't know. I know what I've been doing for forty years. I know what my neighbors have been doing. I know what the other people have. But as far as a lot of this other stuff, if you show me, I can go for it. But I don't know how to do it. I have some ideas.

As far as the future—yes organic. There's always the potential for some new crops coming in. The use of bio-solids on the land is becoming more accepted. I personally feel that that is a big advantage to the area. It's taking what is otherwise a waste and making a beneficial use of it. Along with the bio-solids, they put lime on, which makes the soil such that it can use the nutrients. That, in time, develops the land into something which can grow some alternate crops, some higher value crops potentially. So that's good. There is a real stigma in the agricultural community, as well as the public, about using poop. People poop. So you have to make sure you represent it appropriately. I know that the people I'm dealing with, whether it's Vallejo Sanitation or the City of Santa Rosa, do everything by the book. There is nothing that's not according to the regs. I have looked through the regulations and we are so far in the safe zone—we're multiple multiples of where we need to be as far as toxicity. So I think that's an important thing we can provide for the future.

136. A: Has anybody successfully grown grapes out on former marshland?

N: Yeah. I think it's Robledos. They have some grapes over on the Manzoni Ranch. Thinking as a farmer, if it was such a great idea, everybody'd be doing it. Robledo's the only one that's doing it that I know of. If there's a lot of money in it, if you could get \$50,000 worth of land for \$5,000, everybody'd be doing it. But not everybody's doing it. So apparently it's not quite that great. I do know they bring in the water for that. They have some District water going for that—most marshes don't have that water available. So that's a portion of it. I don't

know if they have an incredibly brilliant winemaker there at Robledo or if they can just make a silk purse out of a sow's ear . . . I don't know. But if they can make it work, more power to them.

Of course the other big potential future here for the marsh is restoration for habitat for endangered species or just wildlife. As a farmer I've been really resisting that, mainly on the idea that I don't want to be forced off the property. If I can go out in my own time and my own style that's one thing, but I don't like being thrown off the land that's been here for a hundred-and-some years. There was a quote in the Index-Tribune awhile back by a fellow working for California Fish and Game. They were talking about the flooding out here and the quote was, 'Those people don't belong out there in the first place.' The day after that came out I was on the phone saying, 'What in heck is Fish and Game doing saying this?' They said it was a private individual's response as an employee of Fish and Game. It sure sounded to me like it was the opinion of Fish and Game. Whether we belong out here or not, we have fee simple deeds to the property out here, we own it. If you want to take it away from us or buy it from us, do it on a fair market basis. Don't regulate us the hell off the property. Make me a reasonable deal or show me how to do something else. I want to continue farming, but I can't be stupid about things.

Some years back when they were talking about putting the casino down here in the marsh, my Dad was approached by an unnamed real estate developer. He offered to give him \$8,000 an acre down here. My Dad says, 'No. My boys and I want to continue farming.' So they came back with a price of \$10,000 and then \$12,000 an acre. So he took it to an attorney and said, 'Should we start negotiating?' I said, 'Dad, if they have \$12,000 an acre cash, for Tubbs Island property, we can't be stupid. We have to get out of the farming if that's the money they're going to give us.'

This was back in the 1990s. And Dad says, 'Let's tell them if they can give us \$15,000 an acre we'll sell it.' Well they disappeared. They just disappeared. Bottom line, I think it was just a fishing expedition. They were just fishing. I don't know if they would have even paid us \$8,000 an acre. I don't know if any of those numbers were good. Then they found something over on the Lakeville side and everybody knows the frenzy that came from that. I believe it was the same outfit because it was about the same time. Very interesting all that stuff going on. I said at the time, 'I don't think this is at all the right place for a casino. Frankly, Bel Marin Keys, I don't think that's a reasonable use of the land. There was some talk years ago about a north bay airport.'

137. A: I think I heard something about that.

N: If you look at where all the good airports are, the planes come in over water so that if a plane crashes you don't kill that many people. So I think the infrastructure for an airport here could be reasonable. I don't know if we need it. One of the best spots in the north bay for an airport was over there at Hamilton, but Marin County did not want it. I thought that was the waste of a great asset. In the event of a major disaster like an earthquake that knocks

out the Golden Gate Bridge, the Richmond Bridge, we have no major airport up here for getting relief supplies in. That's politics for you. I don't know if I'd want to see it here, but I could see it being a reasonable use.

There's a report that came out yesterday in the Press-Democrat about the equine industry in Sonoma County and how it has just blossomed the last few years. I believe there's more horses now than there were cows years ago. They eat a lot of oat hay. That's what we grow here. The more of this land you take out of production, the more hay you've got to haul in from further away—increasing the carbon footprint. You have to balance that with the value of restoring the habitat. If you drive out Highway 37 over the Sonoma Creek Bridge and look out towards the bay and see how far out it goes before you get to the open water. It wasn't like that when we came here in 1969. The bay is thousands of acres smaller than it was.

138. A: The silt coming in?

N: The silt coming down. I guess there's still silt coming down from the upper reaches.

139. A: I guess that's good news for sea level rise.

N: A buffer yeah. But there's all these statistics they like to tout about all the Baylands that have been lost to reclamation since the 1880s. That's true, but I'd like to see a study on how much Bayland has been created from natural causes.

140. A: Good question.

N: I'm not here to run down anyone, the environmentalists or anyone else. But I firmly believe we need to work together. I was at a meeting the other day and they were talking about our farming practices here in the Baylands and this woman was asking me, 'What are your best management practices?' I got to thinking about it and that kind of offends me. What damages am I causing? They were specifically talking about erosion. When we pump water off of this property, it's cleaner than the bay water. It's virtually clear. I did the old-farmer-seat-of-the-pants experiment. I went out to my ditch and stuck my arm in the water until I couldn't see the tip of my fingers. It went up to where I'm really pale [nearly his whole arm]. Then I went down to the bay water and barely got my watch wet. So you tell me which water is cleaner. And how much erosion am I getting out of there if you can see, three feet?

So maybe the best management practice is what I've been doing all along.

141. A: It seems like anyone who's been farming for a long time has to be doing things that are sustaining, otherwise you won't be successful as a farmer.

N: Right. In the drought of '76, '77, we had an old fellow working for us. His philosophy was, 'If you own the land, by golly you farm it.' You're paying taxes on it, don't go throwing it away. So there's some areas on the edges of the fields that we'd never farmed before. And he

plowed right up to the edge of the ditch. He plowed up some god-awful salt grass and sod. It probably hadn't been farmed in forty years. For the next two or three years we worked that stuff just trying to get it to where we could farm. On the wet years we couldn't get in there, we'd get stuck. I came to the conclusion that that ground doesn't want to be farmed. It'll take quite a while to get it back in shape and some years we *cannot* farm it. So let's just stay out of there. That's my nature preserve. Some years I can make money on it, some years I can't. It's a pain in the butt. The environmental concerns don't want me out there and I don't want to make a big mess. I stay out. It's a win-win deal for both of us.

142. A: Any last words on anything we haven't covered?

N: Unfortunately the government agencies have a different agenda than the farmers. I think as a farm owner it's pretty much accepted that the worst neighbor you can have is a government agency. They want to have unlimited public access. They don't mind if the land floods. They have different ideas about what should be going on out here. I have people from the agencies ask me, 'Does your airplane have to fly over our property?' I say, 'What do you mean?' 'The crop duster scares the birds.' The crop duster comes over once, maybe twice a year, over the fields. Is it that big an issue? How many birds are going to be killed if the airplane goes overhead once or twice? That's an example.

I have trouble with a lot of public access because the public doesn't understand the ways of agriculture. If people are talking to me in this context that we have, you and I, we can put it into reasonable terms. I can explain what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. But to somebody just driving by watching, without the dialogue to explain what's going on, it becomes very difficult. It's not that I don't want the public out here.

We already have a public trail down the west side of Tubbs Island. BCDC wanted to put a trail around the south side and up the east side. My comment was, 'What's the advantage to us?' I see nothing but disadvantage. When you have a crop duster, a 600-horsepower airplane, flying along at a hundred miles an hour, if you're standing on top of a levee and that pilot is coming at you at eye level, it's pretty intimidating!

143. A: [Chuckles]

N: It'll scare the crap out of you. That's where the guy has to be to get proper application of that pesticide. That's his job. We spray all Category Two and Category Three, which are not terribly toxic. He keeps his buffers of course. But some people will get sick not from the pesticide but from the rush of the air and psych themselves into being sick. They'll get dizzy because they're scared. It is intimidating. If it were explained to them, they'd just stay the heck out or have some dialogue to learn what's going on, it's not that bad.

As the public gets further and further removed from the agricultural roots, it's more and more difficult.

144. A: Bigger gap to get across, to get understanding.

N: Yes, thank you. I know with the Farm Bureau and other organizations, we've put a lot of money in the last twenty, thirty years, into public education. What we're doing, why we do it, some of the practices we use. We're not bad guys, we try not to be bad guys. In every industry there's a few bad actors. Unfortunately the bad actors get a lot of press. But the vast majority of farmers are very conscious of what they're doing, they don't want to make any trouble. They're just out there as another businessman doing their thing and trying to get along.

One of the biggest things I have right now, with the influx of grapes in the last twenty, thirty years, they cut back on my usage of 2-4D, which is a tremendously effective broadleaf herbicide. I cannot spray 2-4D after the grapes have sprouted. I used to be able to do that because the grapes were far enough away. Now I've got grapes basically bordering my property. Little by little they've ratcheted me down. That makes my job that much tougher. The airplane does get a little more drift, so I've gotten away from using the airplane. Plus the public perception of the plane. 2-4D volatilizes, that is it steams off into the air. So I'm using slower means of application, less effective chemicals. It's just getting a little bit tougher to do things. Meanwhile the public wants a higher quality product.

145. A: It's tough, yeah.

N: It's tough. I think every other business is getting tougher too and I guess we've got to keep up with it.

146. A: I think that's good unless there's something else you want to say.

N: As far as the future here, the Black Point Pheasant Club has expressed interest in buying my property. If they do, they'd let me stay on as the resident farmer. Some of their hunting takes place in agricultural fields. So that idea really appeals to me. So that could work out pretty good. My son is not interested in being a farmer. He's chosen other areas of study. So what's going to happen to the farm when I pass away? I could farm until I'm eighty years old, my son's not interested, my back is so bent that I can't stand up straight and what happens? Is the government going to gobble it up and flood it out? Are they going to buy it at a fire sale because my wife needs it for medical costs or something? So the whole concept of selling it to a business that wants to keep it in agriculture, that's become pretty desirable. And if they want to hire me back to maintain it, that'd be pretty cool.

147. A: Thanks Norm. I really appreciate your taking the time and sharing your knowledge.

N: I'll probably think of something more tonight.

148. A: If you got a couple minutes I'd like to see that old pump you were talking about.

N: Sure, I'd like to show it to you.



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Descriptions of the Jones Ranch Camps

CAMP ONE

“It’s right across the slough” from Camp Six. “There was a bridge. Jones built a bridge across there, so they could go back and forth.”

—Jim Haire (126)

“I think Camp One was Base Camp. That’s where the cookhouse was.”

—Sam Jones (34)

“The workers probably came from other camps for meals. “I don’t know [for certain] because I never crossed one of those canals. I don’t know how they got across them as opposed to going around. They may have taken some meals out to them in the fields.”

—Sam Jones (35)

“The two largest hay barns when I was a kid, were there.”

—Sam Jones (37)

“There was a gentleman by the name of Axel Christiansen that worked for my grandfather for years, lived in the bunkhouse out on Camp 1.”

—Sam Jones (132)

“Where Maffei Road goes down to get to the slaughterhouse. On the east side of the slaughterhouse was the Maffei property and it was the beginning of Camp One. The Maffeis bought Camp One when it came up for sale.”

—Newt DalPoggetto (89)

CAMP TWO

“Ig Vella’s father owned a piece of ground down there, probably on Camp Two along with Ben Behler and Rico Gallo, they owned a part of Camp Two. I think Joe Redding did— he lived right next to Millericks.”

—Newt DalPoggetto (89)

CAMP THREE

“My mom’s father was a Millerick and they were related somehow to these here. My uncle Jim, Rose’s [Millerick] husband, he was a pilot in World War Two, a bomber pilot. Jim has passed on. But the ranch— you’ve been in the restaurant there—that’s where the rodeos were. Like you were headed down to Camp Two or Camp Three, Wingo.”

—Jim Haire (121)

CAMP FOUR

“Along Ramal Road there was a stop for the train. There was a dairy on Camp Four, out in the middle of it and there was a railcar that was taken the wheels off of it and set to the side of the track and the train would put water in there. That was their water for the dairy. A dairy in them days was probably thirty or forty cows. So it wasn’t big. And there was a siding there, they would also pick the milk up every morning.”

—Jim Haire (126)

APPENDIX

“Mazzanotta’s is on Ramal Road, off of 37. Go down Ramal Road and right before it turns to the east, on the right is Mazzanotta’s Dairy. And then the tidelands start right there and Ringstrom’s Bay is right there. And the top of Camp Four is right there. Camp Four of the Jones Ranch”

—Newt DalPoggetto (43)

“Oh yeah. They each had bunkhouses in them. One bunkhouse that I know still survives is on Camp Four. That 1200 acres is owned by the Leveroni family, 1183 acres. There’s a bunkhouse there and I’ve been in it many times. During Bob Leveroni’s time we used to have annual parties down there. So that’s why they had it divided into six camps, they were work camps. Finally they built redwood houses. But I suppose they originally camped down there.”

—Newt DalPoggetto (53)

“Leveroni’s Camp Four, which was well-leveed, became a lake. I used to call it Lake Victoria for Vic Leveroni [laughs]. Bob didn’t like that. He was one of my best friends. Then they would have a levee breach sometimes. I’ve taken my boat down and motored to get to the bunkhouse. I’d take my boat down and putter around Lake Victoria from Ramal Road over there.”

—Newt DalPoggetto (84)

“Leveronis bought Camp Four”

—Newt DalPoggetto (89)

CAMP FIVE

Jim Haire’s “Dad bought some land at Camp Five from the Bissos, across the slough from Skaggs Island.”

—Jim Haire (126)

CAMP SIX

“Camp Six, when it was built, it was the biggest of the Camps. It’s just short of 4500 acres. Most of the rest of them are less than 2000, roughly. It’s right across the slough from Camp One, which was Headquarters. There was a bridge. Jones built a bridge across there, so they could go back and forth.

—Jim Haire (126)

“At Camp Six there was a wharf and it was Sunday afternoon, nice August afternoon. We were casting off the wharf into the water into the slough, Hudeman Slough. I was showing her [sister] how to cast and standing next to her. She leaned back and she got her hook in the back of my leg [makes a painful sound].

“It hurt! And she broke out laughing and she couldn’t stand up she was laughing so hard at me. I got madder and madder at her. She said I was the biggest fish she ever caught! So that’s when we were about twelve, thirteen years old.”

—Newt DalPoggetto(136)

“and the government bought Skaggs—Camp Six.”

—Newt DalPoggetto(89)