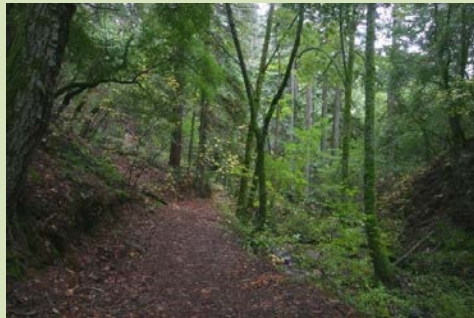


CALABAZAS CREEK PRESERVE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



FINAL REPORT

including indexed transcripts

Arthur Dawson, Baseline Consulting

for the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

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Acknowledgments: Cover photos (clockwise from upper left) Nunns' Canyon Road, courtesy of Gary Hundt; bottle at Crosby home site, Arthur Dawson; picket gate at Secret Meadow, Arthur Dawson; Ralph Heins, courtesy of the Wood family. Much appreciation to Rosemary and Alexa Wood for generously sharing their memories and perspectives on the Calabazas Preserve. Appreciation also to Calabazas Preserve patrol members Lauren Johannessen, Lynne Clary and Rory Pool; Open Space District staff Sorrel Allen, Kim Batchelder, Leslie Lew and Tom Robinson; and finally to Maureen Hawkins and Walt Ritzmann, whose previous work greatly enriched this project.

Contact Information:

Arthur Dawson, Historical Consultant
Baseline Consulting; P.O. Box 207; 13750 Arnold Drive, Suite 3; Glen Ellen, CA 95442
(707) 996-9967; baseline@vom.com

SUMMARY

The goal of the Calabazas Creek Preserve Oral History Project was to tap the knowledge and memories of long-time residents familiar with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District's (the District, or OSD) Calabazas Creek Preserve (the Preserve) and the vicinity. The focus was to collect information valuable to the management, preservation, and interpretation of District lands at the Preserve. Interviews were conducted with Rosemary and Alexa Wood. These interviews were recorded, transcribed, indexed, and finally distilled into the 'Detailed Findings' and maps contained in this report. An additional oral history from Walt Ritzmann, collected by Maureen Hawkins in 1979, was transcribed into electronic form, indexed and also extensively quoted and referenced in the 'Detailed Findings.' Some additional sources were also consulted and cited.

Overview of Findings:

Native Era: The elders reported that few artifacts have been found on the Preserve, suggesting it was only lightly used. It is likely that Nunns' Canyon Road follows the route of an indigenous trail. The Preserve occupies an ethnographic border between groups who spoke the Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo languages; and those speaking Wappo. In native times the Preserve appears to have been mainly a pass-through area where occasional trading or other interactions took place between these groups.

Settlers & Homesteads: The elders identified many early settlers within the Preserve, including brothers Hugh and Alexander Nunn, Crosby, Wilson, and Johnson. Walt Ritzmann described the Nunn and Crosby homes as they appeared when they were still standing as well as their destruction by wildfires between 1923 and 1964. Walt also gave some details about the settlers' lives, their agricultural practices and their survival on a primarily barter economy.

Roads: A number of changes to the roads were detailed. The original Nunns' Canyon Road continued east, providing access to Napa Valley. It had many small bridges and was steep, crooked and dangerous—at least two people lost their lives on it. It followed the north side of Calabazas Creek in the upper part of the canyon. Spur roads provided access to individual homesteads and another spur probably existed to the Nunns' hayfields. After most of the bridges were lost in a wildfire (probably 1923) and never rebuilt, the road was abandoned. The current road, on the south side of the creek through the upper canyon, was put in around the time of the 1964 fire; it was intended to provide access for firefighters, and was also used by logging trucks for a short time.

Wildlife: For many years, deer were very abundant on the lands of the Preserve, commonly roaming in herds of fifteen or twenty. In recent years their numbers have noticeably declined. Coyotes were present in the 1930s but may have declined by the mid-20th century, then reappeared in the 1970s. Bobcats and fox were mentioned as currently abundant on the Preserve and nearby. No black bear, mink, fishers or martens were reported. Mountain lions have been sighted a number of times in recent years, a change from the 1950s and '60s when they were never seen. Trout were described as very abundant in the early and mid-20th century, with a possible decline since. Some planting of trout was reported in the earlier years. White-tailed kites used to be abundant, especially around The Bowl, but have become much less common in the last two decades. Quail were also mentioned as

being less numerous than before. A lot of Golden Eagles are still seen in the area. Wild turkeys were unknown in the 1930s and probably arrived in the last two or three decades.

Vegetation: Fire and grazing were the two factors reported to have the most noticeable effect on the Preserve's vegetation. A successional pattern was noted on the forested slopes south of Calabazas Creek. Within a few years after a wildfire, this area becomes quite brushy. As decades pass, it becomes more open, possibly due to growing trees shading out the brush. Doug firs have recently become much more numerous and growing in thick stands, possibly due to the lack of fire. Star thistle was absent on the Preserve until the late 1990s. Since grazing stopped in 2002, it has been spreading rapidly over the meadows. Harding grass has also been increasing. The riparian zone along Calabazas Creek is apparently quite stable and has seen no obvious change in the last fifty years.

Hydrology, Geomorphology & Channel Alterations: The channel of Calabazas Creek has been quite stable within living memory. There has not been any noticeable widening or deepening since the 1930s and even big storms have caused only small changes in its course. Depending on how much gravel there is at the bottom, the depth of the pool below the waterfall varies substantially from year to year. Human alterations to the channel have been minimal, with the road culvert in the upper canyon probably being the most significant.

Fire: Fire has caused shifts in vegetation, human occupation, and human uses of the land. The biggest fires recounted by the elders occurred in 1923, 'the late 1930s,' and 1964 (see 'Vegetation' section for details on plant succession after fire). The 1923 fire led to the closing of Nunns' Canyon Road, and the 1964 fire led to the construction of the current main road into the Preserve. Wildfires also eventually destroyed the homes, barns and other structures constructed by the early settlers. The absence of fire in recent years has contributed to an increase in Douglas fir and star thistle, which are encroaching on the meadows and oak woodlands.

Land Use: Land use at the Preserve has included small-scale subsistence agriculture that produced hay, grain, apples, pears, grapes, olives, cherries, almonds and chestnuts. Livestock included cattle, milk cows, chickens, and horses. Most agricultural uses did not continue after about 1900, but cattle grazing was practiced up until 2002. Small-scale logging was undertaken by early homesteaders in the 19th century and a cycle of salvage logging occurred after the 1964 fire. Cutting of hardwoods for firewood and charcoal probably lasted up into the 1920s. A shaft for a mercury mine exists on the Preserve (probably dug during the Mercury Rush of the 1870s). The quarry at the west end of the Preserve operated from the 1950s to the early 1970s. The property has also served as a recreational spot for at least 75 years, being used for fishing, hiking, horseback riding and hunting. The Boy Scouts had a campsite in the canyon. The Preserve has also been used for less desirable purposes such as poaching, and in recent years, large-scale pot growing.

METHODS

Both the District's long-standing relationship with the former owners of the Calabazas Creek Preserve, as well as my own connections with them over many years, I contacted Alexa Wood to see if she and her mother, Rosemary, would be interested in providing oral histories on the property. Both women were very willing to take part in the project. Rosemary's aunt and uncle, Ralph and Effia Heins, purchased the original Beltane Ranch (over 1600 acres) in the 1930s; ownership remained in the family until the District purchased the upper portion of about 1200 acres in 2004. Alexa and Rosemary's knowledge of the property, gleaned over many decades, as well as their keen interest in its history and management, made them ideal sources. The first contact I had with Alexa was in 1989, when I asked her for permission to hike on the Beltane Ranch property, which she generously granted. My own familiarity with the Preserve and its history also benefited this project.

After contacting Alexa, I revised a list of questions used in other oral histories, making them as specific as possible to the Preserve (see Appendix). These questions provided a loose framework for the interviews, but I allowed Rosemary and Alexa's unique knowledge and experiences to guide our conversations in whatever directions seemed most interesting and fruitful. I also discovered three oral histories collected by Maureen Hawkins in 1979, along with an accompanying report, 'The History of Beltane Ranch.' She interviewed Barbara Gallo, whose family sold Beltane Ranch to the Heins; Rosemary Wood (this was soon after she had moved to the ranch and started the Bed & Breakfast); and Walt Ritzmann, who was born in 1909, had worked for Teresa Bell, and whose grandfather had homesteaded near Nunns' Canyon in the 1850s. There was enough funding to bring one these interviews into the current effort—Walt's was chosen because his memories went back the furthest and thus are a unique record.

The interviews with Rosemary and Alexa lasted about an hour and a half and were conducted at Beltane Ranch. Then 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 other eras and ways of thinking. In the case of Walt's interview, I took photocopies of the original hardcopy at the History Annex of the County Library, and transcribed them into electronic form. Maureen Hawkins' approach to transcription seems to have been close to mine—it appears that editing was kept to a minimum while creating a readable text that preserves something of Walt's personal way of speaking.

Once the transcriptions were complete, they were given to Rosemary and Alexa for comments and corrections. As the interviews were a joint creation of all of us, we all signed release forms gifting the material to the public domain. The interviews were indexed under both specific topics, like 'Mountain lions,' and under more general ones like 'Agricultural Economy.' 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 (for specific topics, a simple word search might work as well, but using such a search for complicated topics would miss important material).

It's important to keep in mind that while the focus of this effort was to gather information on the Calabazas Creek Preserve, for most of the time Alexa and Rosemary have known the property, it was part of the larger

Beltane Ranch. This is doubly true for Walt Ritzmann, who only knew it as part of the ranch. While the delineation of the Preserve makes sense in many ways, it is not the way the interviewees necessarily tend to divide up the landscape in their minds. Memory works largely through context and connection: thus I didn't restrict our conversations to the Preserve, but rather encouraged recollections on many subjects while gently guiding it toward the topics I was most interested in. This approach also helps develop a context for the property within the larger landscape.

While this report focuses on the information provided during the interviews, a few additional sources have been cited, particularly Maureen Hawkins' "A History of Beltane Ranch." These other sources generally support or expand on Walt, Alexa, and Rosemary's recollections. I am currently putting together a detailed treatment of the Homestead Era in Nunns' Canyon based on a wide variety of sources—this is scheduled to be completed in October 2013. For readability, some of the quotes in the 'Detailed Findings' which follow have been edited slightly from what appears in the transcripts.

Notes On the Value and Limitations of Oral Histories

Historical ecology is a multi-disciplinary field which studies the relationship between humans and the environment over long periods of time. Whenever possible, historical ecology incorporates scientific data involving relatively precise observations collected under controlled conditions. Where this is lacking, we must turn to information gathered under less exacting circumstances, such as explorer's journals, newspaper accounts, and oral histories. These sources are based on human experiences and interpretations and rely on individuals' memories and perceptions. While this information is almost always less precise, it provides something strict scientific data usually cannot—a more or less continuous record of the landscape over many decades or even centuries.

Elders' observations, as recorded by oral histories, were created without scientific protocols or controls. The only available controls come after the fact. There are several complementary avenues for evaluating oral histories for accuracy. These include: 1) assessing the information according to an elder's life experiences—e.g. a lifelong carpenter, someone who's work requires making frequent measurements, is probably a better judge of the size of trees or the width of a creek than people in most other professions; 2) comparing oral histories with each other, looking for consistencies and inconsistencies; and 3) testing oral histories against other types of sources. By these standards, trends and conditions identified by elders in previous efforts, such as the Sonoma Ecology Center's Sonoma Creek Oral History Project (<http://knowledge.sonomacreek.net/node/155>) have proven to be generally trustworthy and reliable. Obvious misinformation was rare and tended to be cancelled out by the consensus of other elders.

I wondered, when I began the Sonoma Creek Oral History Project, if various elders' recollections would contradict each other, making the results inconclusive. I discovered, to the contrary, that the oral narrative, developed with contributions from ten people, showed a high degree of internal consistency. With allowances for slightly different time periods and locations, there was general agreement as to the ecological history of the last six or seven decades. The story they told of landscape conditions, wildlife populations, land use and other changes was surprisingly complete. In the years since that project, this information has proved its reliability again and again when compared to other types of sources, such as historical maps, photographs, Department of Fish and Game stream surveys, and written records such as newspapers and journals. For example, reaches of Sonoma Creek reported by elders as having abundant trout in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, closely matched the results of Fish and Game stream

surveys conducted in the 1960s and '70s. A 2002 fish count also identified many of the same reaches as having abundant fish and good habitat. This information has been used to focus salmonid restoration efforts.

The interviews collected during the Calabazas Creek Oral History Project also proved to be internally consistent and to generally agree with other historical sources. A unique aspect of this particular project is that all the elders are closely connected through family or friendship. The consistency in their story could be partly attributed to participants sharing information. On the other hand, the trends and changes observed by these elders are in line with other oral histories for the region as well as with other types of sources. There is every indication that these interviews are as reliable as the ones collected for the Sonoma Creek Oral History Project.

Successful land management and conservation require a deep understanding of a landscape over time. Oral histories are a unique source of information covering many decades, framed within a human context. This in itself is significant, as the activities of people have profoundly shaped the landscape we have today. Oral histories are, by nature, more qualitative than quantitative. They have much to teach us about what to look for, how to see the landscape as an ever-changing whole, always in the process of responding to natural and human forces. As a complement to other sources of knowledge, oral histories are a valuable tool for placing other forms of data in context, helping to frame questions pertinent to decisions affecting the long-term health of the land. Questions which other, often more scientific, approaches may be best suited to answer.

The Calabazas Creek Preserve Oral History Project is a repository for the stories, accounts, and memories of those who have chosen to share their experiences. The viewpoints and findings expressed in this report do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (“the District”) or any of its officers, agents, employees, or volunteers. The District makes no warranty as to the accuracy or completeness of any information contained in the interviews, or the findings extrapolated from them, and expressly disclaim any liability therefore.

THE ELDERS

Walt Ritzmann was born in 1909, just one-half-mile north of Nunns' Canyon, on property his grandfather, Christian Weise, homesteaded in the 1850s. Weise was of the same generation as the early homesteaders of Nunns' Canyon, and his experiences were probably quite similar to theirs. When Walt's mother was born on the 'old homestead' in 1880, some of these settlers were still there. Her first-hand memories went back to at least 1889 and she was probably the original source for much of the information Walt gave about 19th-century life in Nunns' Canyon.

Rosemary Wood's aunt and uncle, Ralph and Effia Heins bought Beltane Ranch from Ben Behler in the mid-1930s. Her family often visited the ranch and her earliest memories of it are as a young girl. When her family moved up from Hillsborough to Sonoma Valley in the late 'thirties, they lived at Beltane Ranch for a year before getting a place on Lawndale Road in Kenwood. By her early teens, Rosemary was helping her aunt and uncle herd cattle on what is now the Preserve. After high school, she left Sonoma Valley for many years, coming back occasionally to visit. As Ralph and Effia's health began to seriously decline, Rosemary returned to help care for them and her mother, who also lived on the ranch. After their passing, she opened up a Bed & Breakfast in the old ranch house.

Like her mother, Alexa Wood first got to know Beltane Ranch as a child. Beginning in the 1950s, she and her family came out every summer from Illinois to spend a week or two visiting her great aunt and uncle. Alexa first lived on the ranch as a young woman in the early 1970s and took over running the Bed & Breakfast from her mother in the early 1990s. Alexa has a unique perspective on the Preserve property, having heard family stories going back many years, known it first-hand as part of a working ranch, and having witnessed the changes associated with its becoming public land.



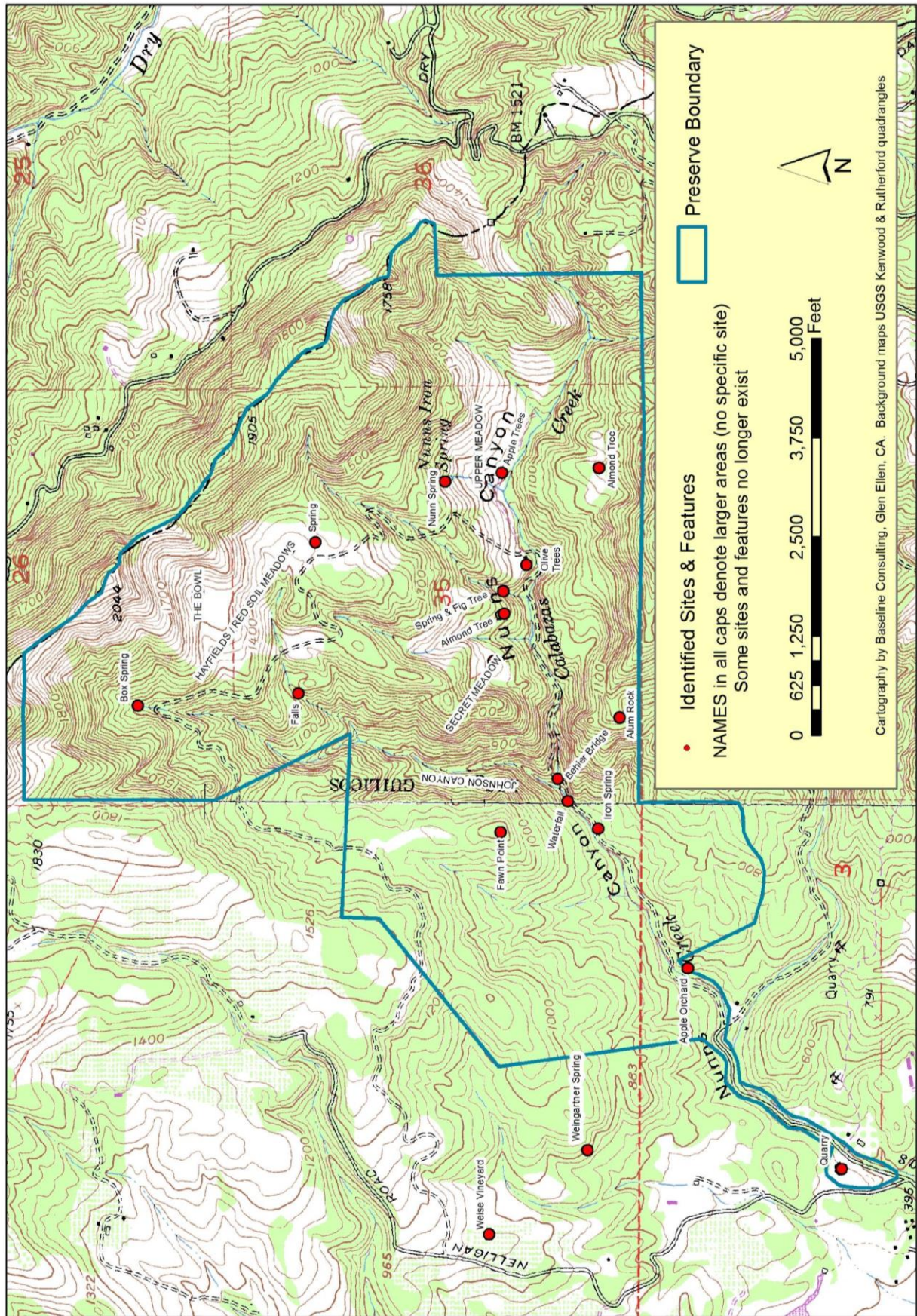
Rosemary Wood



Alexa Wood, daughter Lauren Benward Krause & grandson Carlos

Calabazas Creek Preserve

Features, sites and place names identified by elders during the Calabazas Creek Preserve Oral History Project and/or shown on the 3-dimensional map of Beltane Ranch commissioned by Ralph Heins



DETAILED FINDINGS

NATIVE ERA

It seems likely that Nunns' Canyon Road follows an old indigenous trail between the upper Sonoma and Napa Valleys. The fact that Alexa and Rosemary, who have spent a lot of time over many years exploring what is now the Preserve, have found few artifacts, suggests that it was lightly used in pre-European times. Kate Green, one of the archaeologists currently surveying the Preserve for the District, confirmed that few artifacts have been found within the Preserve itself to date. The Preserve appears to have been mainly a pass-through area in native times, with a few small (possibly seasonal) occupation sites. The mountains that lie between Sonoma and Napa were also an ethnographic boundary between linguistic groups. The Coast Miwok/Southern Pomo held territory to the west, while Wappo groups occupied the east. This may mean that the Preserve was a border region where occasional trading or other interactions took place, with neither side occupying the land.

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Wood—52, 144

OTHER SOURCES

Green, Kate Erickson. 2013. Personal communication by email.

Wood, Alexa. 2013 Personal communication.

SETTLERS & HOMESTEADS: The Nunns' Canyon Community

"Somebody told Alexa what a wilderness it was up there," said Rosemary Wood. "There was a community up Nunns' Canyon! A whole community." Walt Ritzmann recounted how his "grandfather came here in the 1850s and he homesteaded the adjoining ranch to the Beltane Ranch up there on the mountain." Though he settled slightly outside of Nunns' Canyon, Christian Weise (Walt's grandfather), was of the same generation as those who homesteaded there, and probably had very similar experiences. Walt's mother was born in the 1880s on the family homestead, while some of the early settlers of Nunns' Canyon were still there. Her first-hand memories went back to at least 1889 and she was probably the original source for much of the information Walt gave about 19th-century life in Nunns' Canyon.

Walt remembered the Nunn house as a "well-built . . . single level dwelling . . . with open fields around it." Rosemary said there were two Nunn brothers; homestead patents show Hugh and Alexander Nunn as the original owners of adjoining homesteads. Besides building a house, barn and outbuildings for their operation, the Nunns also put up fences, and planted olives as well as the orchard nearby, which still has two bearing apple trees. As these are now heavily shaded by redwoods growing along Calabazas Creek, it seems likely that the Nunns logged the original trees before the orchard was planted. These redwoods were probably a source of lumber for the structures on their property.

Rosemary disagreed with the story that Mary Ellen Pleasant lived in the Nunn house when she first bought the property, reasoning that its remoteness and lack of creature comforts would not have attracted a wealthy person used to living in San Francisco. The Drummond house, near the railroad station on the valley floor, seems a much more likely choice. Walt said the Crosby house was "a fairly nice house too. It was a two-story affair . . . It was more or less in the timber, trees all around it."

Lottie Howard's place was in lower Nunns' Canyon. Her home, near Calabazas Creek, survived into 1990s and perhaps even later. Lottie was "the last teacher at Dunbar School when it was a one-room school [c. early 1930s]," recalled Rosemary. "I remember her . . . she was quite a character" and said she'd heard a story about when Ben Behler was on the school board. As he was riding by the house, "Lottie Howard, the formidable teacher, went out demanding to know what he would do with a boy who urinated in the water pail!"

To make a living homesteading in Nunns' Canyon, the settlers "lived really simply," said Rosemary. She described making a living in the 1930s as "more desperate . . . than now." It must have been even tougher seventy or eighty years earlier, especially on marginal land in the mountains. Walt described the settlers' lives as he had heard about them second-hand:

"In the wintertime if they couldn't get out any other way they had to walk and I've been told that up there on the old Nunn ranch, old Mr. Nunn he'd come down to town here and he'd carry a 100-pound sack of flour back up on his back, you know, when it was raining. And it must have been an awful hard life, but they didn't seem to think anything of it—hard work was something that they thought had to

be done, that's all. They didn't have the machinery at that time like we do now, tractors to do the plowing, and it was all done by hand, like cutting down trees for instance. They didn't have chainsaws. They had to do it all by hand. They had to clear the land to begin with and take these rocks and build walls with them. That was all done by hand. It must have been really pretty rough.

"They'd bring a cord of wood down to town and exchange it for staples, different kinds of groceries. They'd raise chickens and have their eggs, bringing their eggs into town. There wasn't an awful lot of money changing hands at the time . . . people would [barter;] bring something to town and take something home."

"Fruit would be the same way, and, of course . . . they probably got money for the grain. Those that made wine, why they sold their wine . . . Now the women didn't have it as easy as today either. Everything was done by hand. They washed clothes by hand. They didn't have electricity to help them with everything. Everything was done by hand . . . there never was electricity."

The Nunns also grew and harvested hay, which may have also been bartered or sold. They must have had cattle, milk cows, and horses; and probably oxen (for heavy hauling and plowing) and hogs. Alexa guessed that the Nunns might have sown some of the non-native grasses, like wild oats and rye, when they were planting their hayfields.

Walt mentioned a number of other families in the vicinity of Nunns' Canyon, but outside the Preserve. These included the Weingartners, who were "burnt out before I was born" and moved away. He said they had a vineyard. He also recalled a few homesteads on Wall Road, including "one old woman that had a place up there at the end of Wall Road—Hendley."

After the property passed to Teresa Bell, Walt said, "There wasn't anybody living back in there." The last of the homesteaders, James Hamilton, was there until about 1910, when he sold his property to Bell. By the time Walt first saw the Nunn home, as a child in the 'teens, the windows had all been broken out by "vandals." "Then the cattle started taking over the building." Wildfires eventually destroyed all the old settlers' buildings. He said the Crosby house burned down before the Nunn house—likely in either the 1923 fire or the next one in the late 1930s. As for the Nunn house, "it wasn't until the last big fire they had up there that that actually burned down," which would have been the 1964 fire (given that Walt was interviewed in 1979). According to Rosemary Wood, a corner of the old Nunn house, about three or four feet high, was the last of it to go.

NOTE: for a more details on this era, drawn from a wider variety of sources, see: "Settlers and Homesteads of Calabazas Preserve," a separate report submitted to the District in October 2013.

(sources on following page)

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Ritzmann—1-3, 27-35, 40, 46, 47, 74-77, 91

Wood—51-57, 60-65, 69, 70, 79-81, 105-109, 114-118, 165, 188

Wood A— 95-99, 132

OTHER SOURCES

General Land Office. 1872. Land Patents to Hugh and Alexander Nunn. Section 35. Accessed via www.glorerecords@blm.gov. August 2012.

Hawkins, Maureen. 1979. "A History of the Beltane Ranch." Unpublished manuscript at the Sonoma County Library History Annex. R 979.418 Hawkins.

U.S. Geological Survey. 1916. 'Santa Rosa' 15-minute quadrangle. Surveyed in 1914.

ROADS

“The road going over the mountain, the old Nunns’ Canyon Road, came up the canyon and went over the mountain to Trinity,” said Walt Ritzmann, recalling a time when it was still in regular use. It was “a crooked road” that crossed and re-crossed Calabazas Creek on “ten or twelve bridges” before “it joined on to the Trinity Road on top of Trinity Mountain.” Walt remembered traveling on it “all the way to Napa” as a child in the early 20th century. Rosemary Wood heard that Jack London got “his first look at Sonoma Valley, coming down that road.”

As rough a road as it was in Walt’s memory, in the mid-19th century it was so bad that it sometimes became impassable to horses. “In the wintertime, if they couldn’t get out any other way, they had to walk,” said Walt. “I’ve been told that . . . old Mr. Nunn he’d come down to town here and he’d carry a 100-pound sack of flour back up on his back, you know, when it was raining.” This would have been before 1875, the year Nunn died.

It appears the old road followed the alignment of the current road through the lower canyon as far as ‘Behler Bridge,’ which was built by Ben Behler and Rosemary’s uncle Ralph. She said that above Behler Bridge, the road through the canyon was originally on the north side of the creek. Rosemary said if you stand by the culvert [where the current road crosses the creek below the Nunn home site] “you’ll still see . . . unless too many years have gone by, the road was on this side [north].”

The Parker family used to live on Trinity Road near the top of the ranch, Rosemary said, “Mr. Parker told me that when he was a boy, they went by horse maybe once a month to Glen Ellen to get sacks of feed or flour or sugar—just basic things. There’s a very steep part back there. He brought a third horse that he tied at the bottom of that hill so that when he came home he had some extra pull to get up. ‘Then,’ he said, ‘We got a Model T car.’ Imagine coming [over that]; . . . that stretch of it is just terribly rocky even for a horse. Cars didn’t have fuel pumps, so they’d have to maybe take out half of the groceries or whatever they had, and back up and then come back and get the rest of them! Because the gas wouldn’t stay in the engine. I’ll never forget that story.”

The old road through the canyon was not only steep and crooked, it was dangerous. At least two people died on it and several more were injured. Walt described one incident in about 1911:

“This school teacher had this old horse and buggy and she wanted to take the youngsters on a picnic up in Nunns’ Canyon. They got going up that road and she couldn’t find a place to turn around and she just kept on a-going and got way up and just this side, in fact, right where you turn off to go on up to the Crosby ranch. The horse shied and wanted to turn around and go back, come downhill I guess. And she couldn’t do nothing about it. And the horse started backing and backed the buggy over the bank and the horse and buggy and kids all went down into the creek and it was quite a drop-off. One little boy was pinned underneath the buggy. He had the horse and buggy and everything on top of him. So he got killed and there were several others that had broken arms and they were all pretty badly shook up and injured.”

Walt's oldest brother, who was about ten years old at the time, "had gone up there with the rescue party and brought them out." Walt's interviewer, Maureen Hawkins, recounted how Emmanuel Rommel was killed in a similar accident when "his horse and cart backed over the steep grade and into the creek below."

According to Walt, the road was closed in the 1920s or '30s after a fire went through and "burned out all the bridges . . . They [the county] figured it would cost too much money to re-open the old road, so after it hadn't been used in so long, Mr. Behler, who owned the ranch, had the road closed and that was in the twenties or early thirties." This was probably in the aftermath of the 1923 fire.

Rosemary recalled the next "big change" in the road system: "My uncle sold logging rights to somebody after the '64 fire and all of a sudden here was this road that had always been on the left side of the creek and it was on the right. And it was to get the logs. But big trucks made it look much more like a roadway than anything we'd ever seen. So all of a sudden, here's the road." Alexa also said the new road went in after the '64 fire, but believed it was constructed by the Forest Service for better access. She recalled how they "used to maintain that road . . . Every couple years they'd go up there and do some road work. They'd do the whole loop around." The culvert in Calabazas Creek just below the Nunn home site probably went in at this time and possibly also the one near the bottom of the preserve that is now blown out. Alexa said the road above the upper culvert has "always been an erosion problem."

Alexa also mentioned how Nunns' Canyon Road (in both its current and former alignments) was also used for driving cattle, from at least the time of Ben Behler's ownership (c. 1930) up to its purchase by the District.

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Ritzmann— 36-38, 54, 61, 74, 90, 91

Wood— 77-84, 119, 120

Wood A—75, 112, 113, 138, 139

OTHER SOURCES

Hawkins, Maureen. 1979. "A History of the Beltane Ranch." Unpublished manuscript at the Sonoma County Library History Annex. R 979.418 Hawkins.

WILDLIFE

Mammals

"There's coyotes and bobcats . . . an awful lot of coyotes now which there hadn't been for years," recalled Walt Ritzmann in 1979, whose experiences at Beltane Ranch spanned six decades. "And of course, deer and smaller animals, rabbits and raccoons." He described walking the fence line after deer season with Ben Behler, who owned the ranch before the Heinses. One time they came across "seven dead deer, big bucks that had died, crippled" after being shot by poachers. "And that was just on the fence line. How many more were off in the bushes it's hard to say." This was in the 1920s or early 'thirties, and suggests that deer were abundant at that time.

Alexa Wood described how "deer in sizeable groups" were commonly seen in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. She has "many memories" of going up to 'the Bowl' for an evening picnic and seeing herds of "fifteen or twenty." Rosemary Wood recalled how Ben Behler, who owned the property for about 15 years in the 1920s and '30s, used the upper part of the ranch for hunting. Alexa described 'Deer Camp,' high in what is now the Preserve, as a place where "the local hunt club, deer hunters, had their own little camp." She said in her memories "there were a whole lot more deer . . . You really don't see that anymore." Having noticed an increase in coyotes and mountain lions since the 1970s, she guesses the decline might be caused by the fact that there are more of these predators around.

Rosemary remembered how coyotes caused problems for her aunt and uncles' turkey farm. The turkeys were kept in fields on the lower part of Beltane Ranch and "a man lived in each field because . . . if a coyote chased them, they'd pile up in the corner of the fence on top of each other and suffocate." Alexa doesn't recall coyotes in her early memories of the ranch, which begin in the 1950s. She said that the first time she ever heard a coyote in Sonoma Valley was "probably in the late 'seventies . . . we'd lived here for several years. We'd come from Arizona . . . where we heard them all the time, and I'd never heard one here. So I think they were pretty much non-existent. Sure they were in the county, but in this area here nobody heard them." A similar difference of opinion on the presence of coyotes showed up in the *North Slope Oral History Project*—possibly coyotes are now reestablishing themselves after a decline in the middle of the 20th century.

As for other small predators, Alexa noted that "we have quite a few" bobcats around. She's often seen them "shoot across the road, down in that steep 'Brockman Canyon' (referring to the upper portion of Nelligan Road, above 1000' elevation and a ½ mile or less west of the Preserve). She also noted that there were "a lot of foxes . . . all over the ranch," and went on to describe a recent sighting: "We were riding in the canyon several months ago, and some old fox, I think he was scared, ran up a tree that was leaning over and barked at us!" Alexa did not recall ever seeing small predators like mink, fisher or marten. (Rosemary was not specifically asked about these animals.)

"We certainly didn't have any mountain lions" Alexa recalled from her early years at the ranch. She added that Ralph and Effia Heins, her great uncle and aunt, never talked of them, suggesting that "from the 'thirties on they were probably wiped out along with the coyote population. Kept down to a rare thing." Walt Ritzmann did report seeing "mountain lions at three different times," but didn't say when these sightings occurred (they could have been in the 1920s, before the Heinses acquired the property). Like coyotes, mountain lions also seem to be more common now than they were in the middle of the twentieth century. Rosemary recalled how some of her bed-and-breakfast guests returned from a walk up Nelligan Road and

told her, “We just saw a big cat!” Rosemary dismissed it, saying it was her sister’s, who lived up there and had a big housecat: “They looked at me like ‘geez this woman!’ They said, ‘We mean a *big* cat.’” Alexa also recounted a lion sighting (perhaps the same one): “We did have some guests . . . who were hiking up Nelligan Road early in the morning and they looked up and they saw a mountain lion, kind of following along in the brush. They were outdoors people, they knew what they were seeing.” Alexa has never seen a lion herself, but has found what appears to be lion scat “up and down the canyon” and along a small tributary of Calabazas Creek, on the valley floor west of the ranch house. Her closest encounter came “One time when I was hiking late in the afternoon with a friend . . . a few years ago,” she said. “I’m quite sure we heard a mountain lion. I’ve heard the bobcats and this was different. That was way up top.” Alexa also noted that mountain lions were not a concern when cattle were still being grazed up in what is now the Preserve.

Neither Rosemary nor Alexa has seen any black bear on the District’s Calabazas property. Speaking of the greater Glen Ellen area, Alexa recalled that “there’ve been a few that have roamed through and caused a big public hoopla [one showed up in a tree behind a local inn in 1999, near the confluence of Calabazas and Sonoma Creeks].” Speaking of upper Calabazas, Alexa said, “I’d think it’d be pretty OK bear country up there . . . plenty of water and shade, but not too helplessly brushy.”

Salmonids

“When we were youngsters we used to fish all the time up there and it was no job at all to get a limit of trout” remembered Walt, referring to the late ‘teens and early 1920s (the limit at that time was 25). “There was certainly wonderful trout fishing,” Rosemary confirmed, remembering how much she enjoyed fishing with her father on Calabazas Creek in the 1940s:

“He’d wake me up and I was about twelve, fourteen . . . and we’d go down to the kitchen and start the wood stove and have something to eat. Maybe we drove to the bridge where Lottie’s Howard’s house was, climbed over the fence and walked up the canyon from there. But we’d be back in time for breakfast. We’d have six, eight, ten trout. They weren’t big, they were probably ten inches, nine, ten inches. My aunt would put a big skillet on the wood fire. Heavenly breakfast.”

She said that there were locals who’d been fishing Calabazas “for so long they couldn’t imagine not doing it . . . there were generations who’d been going up there. There wasn’t much you could do about it.” One of her first guests at the Bed & Breakfast (late 1970s) “told me about seeing steelhead spawning” below the mouth of the canyon. “Would have been right out where the mailboxes are on Nunns’ Canyon Road, not as far up as Lottie Howard’s.”

Like her mother, Alexa remembers fishing as a kid. Her comments suggest the trout population may have declined since Walt’s and Rosemary’s childhoods:

“I don’t remember catching a lot, but it would be fun to go up there with my grandpa. I can remember a couple of fish in pans down here. We’d be getting back and everybody’d be just getting up. My grandmother would be frying venison steaks on the woodstove. It was really exciting for somebody from the Midwest. That was pretty cool . . . There were always fish in that creek, I’d see them darting around in there.”

Like most other streams in Sonoma Valley, the trout population in Calabazas Creek was supplemented by planting hatchery fish. For much of the 20th century it was common for the California Department of Fish & Game (now Fish & Wildlife) to distribute fingerlings to any fisherman who wanted them. Rosemary recalled how George Nicholas (founder of Nicholas Turkey Farm) “planted some trout at some point.” She guessed it was in the 1940s or ‘50s. Alexa, whose memories begin around the time that Fish & Game was phasing out planting, doesn’t recall anyone planting trout in Calabazas. In later years (c. 1993), Rob Leidy, who surveyed

streams throughout the Bay Area for the Environmental Protection Agency, told Alexa that Calabazas had “one of the last native steelhead populations” in Sonoma Valley. (It would be interesting to conduct genetic tests on Calabazas trout to see how much impact planting has had on its native trout population.) Neither Rosemary nor Alexa reported seeing any Chinook salmon.

Birds

“There’s a big rock, one big rock,” said Rosemary, describing a spot at the base of ‘the Bowl.’ “If you were ever up there, in the little crevices of the rock, there will be little tiny toenails from the rodents. You know what a kite is? . . . They just hang up there and swoosh down and the meadow is just littered with gopher holes. They drop down and get one and take it up on the rock and pull it apart. The little holes in the rock would be full of toenails.” Alexa remembered how the same rock was “just blanketed on top with little tiny skeletons. Kites sat there and ate. There were always white-tailed kites. It was just guaranteed that there’d be several doing that little funny thing that they do. Then they’d sit on that rock to eat.”

Alexa noted how this has changed in recent years: “The last time . . . I rode over with some friends and we sat out and had lunch and there wasn’t a skeleton on it. I see a kite every once a while down here. For a while we must have been kite central. Ten or fifteen years ago. They’d be out here over these front fields often in the evening, and always up there.” Another bird which may be in decline are quail: “There isn’t as many quail as there used to be,” observed Rosemary. “I miss them. “

Alexa said there are a “lot of eagles” in the area, and identified them as Golden Eagles. She believes they nest “up above Trinity [Road]” and “come out and sail around. I have a friend who could call them, make the same noise they make and it was fascinating to go out. You could get several out there and they’d all be answering.” Rosemary said her brother, who “was a great birder,” saw hawks and Golden Eagles. Neither Rosemary nor Alexa reported any Bald Eagles in the vicinity (they have been spotted in Kenwood and Glen Ellen in the last few years).

Introduced Animals

Rosemary said there was “no such thing” as wild turkeys when she was young, suggesting they are a fairly recent arrival on the property [AD—the first time I ever saw wild turkeys in Sonoma Valley was on what is now the Preserve in about 1992].

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Ritzmann—62-64, 89,

Wood—35, 36, 119-130, 175, 182, 183, 187

Wood A—45-58, 59-72, 82, 86-99, 104-109, 123-126, 152, 153

OTHER SOURCES

Podger, Pamela. 1999. “Lost Bear Stirs Up A Fuss in Glen Ellen: Cub taken to Lake County after walk at Tony B&B.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. July 2.

Dawson, Arthur. 2002. ‘The Oral History Project: a report on the findings of the Sonoma Ecology Center’s Oral History Project, focusing on Sonoma Creek and the historical ecology of Sonoma Valley.’ Sonoma Ecology Center. Shirley Churchill reported that 25 was the limit for trout in the 1930s.

VEGETATION

When asked about changes she's seen in the Preserve's vegetation, Rosemary Wood said, "I don't think anything changed except what's been damaged by fire." Describing how she had to hunt for missing cattle when she was about fourteen years old [early 1940s], Rosemary said:

"I mean sixteen hundred acres! You'd have to go with your horse to awful places. The worst of all was the right-hand side of the canyon because of the fire. It was hell to go up there on a horse . . . My old pinto was very snorty about going over big dead logs. I can remember having to get off—I was probably fourteen or something, and standing trying to hold things down. I'd be up there by myself. There'd be one cow you're going after, and to get that horse to walk over it [log] because he wasn't going to go, these branches were going to snap at him."

Rosemary's recollections cover an earlier period than Alexa's, who continues to visit the Preserve. Speaking of the same area as her mother, Alexa described how the forest has gone through several transformations over the last half century:

"I can remember it being more open, and then there was a time when it was much brushier underneath. Now some of that underbrush is sort being shaded out. You can see in there better. The cattle used to spend a lot of time up there, according to my mother . . . Other than looking for shade there's no reason they'd go up on that whole ridge anymore." Elaborating on the changes since about 1990, Alexa said: "On the high side, you just couldn't see in. Now it's starting to thin out and you're seeing trunks and the trees are taller. A lot of it was just lower firs [that used to block the view but now have grown taller]."

Both Rosemary's and Alexa's observations can probably be attributed to the effects and aftermath of wildfire. As Rosemary observes, the brushiness she remembers in the early 1940s was just a few years after a wildfire swept through in the late 1930s (Walt Ritzmann mentioned this fire as well as the 1923 fire). The next major fire was in 1964; the openness that Alexa recalls in her early memories could have been soon after this event, followed by two or three decades when it was noticeably brushier than it is today. Today, nearly fifty years after the 1964 fire, the forest has grown back enough to shade out much of the underbrush. It may be that firs are thriving especially well in places that burned in '64, but have not had a fire since.

"There's so many more Doug firs than there used to be," observed Alexa, describing one of the most visible changes she's seen in her lifetime. "They're really encroaching on the meadows and up through the oaks. I'm not an expert, but I guess that's from a lack of fire . . . they're thick." She also expressed concern about Douglas firs threatening the redwoods just below Nunn's orchard:

"There's some beautiful stands of redwood down in the creek. Now they're all surrounded by firs that are maybe twenty feet high. I didn't really notice them before. I mean the sun was on them and they

were beautiful and green and everything. You know if they burn they'll take those redwoods with them." (While redwoods are adapted to survive moderate fires, they do suffer damage when the intensity of a wildfire is too great.)

The Preserve has several large expanses of grassland, including the 'Upper Meadow,' The 'Bowl,' 'Red Soil Meadows,' and 'Hayfields.' Alexa described Red Soil Meadows as "A beautiful series of meadows, especially if you get off the road and work your way through the back of them." She said the grasses in the meadows were "mostly rye and oats . . . it would be these clean high stands when it was dry. There's a picture of my daughter riding her horse down in there, with his tail sort of dragging on top of the oats behind him."

Alexa has also seen substantial changes in the meadows over the last ten years, changes which she attributes, at least in part, to the lack of grazing. She said the grasses have become "thatched . . . matted down. It certainly keeps a lot of other things growing, but I can't imagine there's the wildflowers up there that there used to be." She's also noticed "more and more" Harding grass. "That used to be kind of localized." As for star thistle, "It was the late 'nineties before I saw any of it. Later 'nineties for sure. I had to drive some woman from the state parks around. She was flabbergasted at the lack of star thistle . . . This was some of cleanest property that she'd seen. It was 'cleaner than anything in our system.' Those were her words." Pointing to a painting of cows grazing just below the Bowl, she said, "My feeling was that it got started there. I could be completely wrong about this, but that's one of the spots where the Kundes would drive hay up. Dump out a bunch of bales, [to] supplement [their diet]. I have a feeling that's where it came in and that was pretty much the only place it was. Then after a couple years, that had spread 'til you could see it from the highway—it turns that kind of olive-grey weird color."

In contrast to other vegetation types in the Preserve, the riparian zone has seen no obvious change in the last fifty years: "The canyon looks pretty much the same to me," Alexa observed. A recent study of the Sonoma Land Trust's Santa Rosa Creek Headwaters Conservation Easement, just six miles northwest of Calabazas Creek Preserve and with similar topography and vegetation, also concluded that this habitat type appears to be stable. The Headwaters' study observed that Douglas fir "does not appear to be taking over this habitat type [Montane Riparian Forest] as it is others. There may be limiting factors which keep these trees in check in this particular habitat type, which appears to be the most stable one at Headwaters." Going back many decades, Rosemary remembered how her "aunt used to have pots of five-finger ferns that we got up Johnson Canyon . . . Right there around that waterfall, five-fingered ferns. Beautiful." (While not officially listed, *A Flora of Sonoma County* describes this fern, *Adiantum aleuticum*, as "rare.")

NOTE: See the 'Land Use' section for impacts on the Preserve from woodcutting, logging and agriculture.

(sources on following page)

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Ritzmann— 28, 31, 36, 69

Wood—70, 77, 95-97, 108, 143, 165, 186, 189

Wood A—86-104, 115-136, 162, 171

OTHER SOURCES

Dawson, Arthur. 2012. "An Ecological and Land-Use History of the Headwaters Property, Sonoma County, California." Report prepared for the landowner; the property is under a conservation easement with the Sonoma Land Trust.

Best, Catherine; John Thomas Howell, Walter & Irja Knight, and Mary Wells. 1996. *A Flora of Sonoma County*. Published by the California Native Plant Society. Sacramento.

HYDROLOGY, GEOMORPHOLOGY & CHANNEL ALTERATIONS

Remembering fishing with her Dad along Calabazas Creek when she was a girl in the 1930s and '40s, Rosemary Wood said, "The creek was so small. But there were great pools and overhanging rocks." She hasn't noticed any appreciable deepening or widening of the channel since then. Likewise, Alexa observed, "The canyon looks pretty much the same to me . . . The water level seems the same at the end of summer, just keeps right on up. [In a] real hot spell it'll dry up down here [near the highway] but not up there."

The channel of Calabazas Creek has been quite stable within living memory, despite many major storms in the last fifty years. Rosemary didn't recall any landslides in the canyon. Alexa said she hasn't seen much change—even a "big storm" would only "alter certain stretches of it a little bit. There's certain places that seem to get altered every year. Creek would move it over here and then it'd move back." The only reach that has shown some instability is "where the road dips right down there [by the creek] and they did a pretty good job of stabilizing that. It would just flood all over there and then the water would recede. All we would ever do is . . . roll the boulders back so you could drive. Where the roadbed is, is just this much [barely] above the creek. We just did hand work. One time we did pull [out] a logjam right in there and we cut a couple of downed trees that were forming a dam."

Alexa has noticed how the gravel level in the pool below the waterfall (Calabazas mainstem, next to road) changes from year to year. She said that sometimes this pool has been over her head, sometimes it is much shallower. Walt Ritzmann recalled this as a swimming hole in the early twentieth century: "The water was awful cold but it was a good skinny-dipping hole for the kids. We always went skinny-dipping up there." He didn't say what the depth was, but its use for a cold 'dip' suggests it was three feet deep or more.

Human alterations to the channel over the last 150 years appear to be fairly minimal. No dams were reported. Speaking of the original road, Walt said, "There was something like ten or twelve bridges that crossed the Nunns' Canyon stream—going up through the canyon." This road was north of the current main road and followed Calabazas Creek more closely. While it must have had some impact on the creek, bridges tend to preserve natural channels better than culverts. During field work for this project, Alexa described how during and after the 1964 fire the California Department of Forestry (CDF) bulldozed new roads for firefighting and maintained them until about 1990. They were also used by a private logger who took out a lot of standing dead Doug Fir. What is now the main road above the site of Behler Bridge is one of these new roads; the culvert below the Nunn home site was installed at that time (1964) and is probably the most significant human alteration of the channel in the last half century.

Rosemary said there were no areas of seasonal wetland on the ranch (neither Alexa nor Walt were specifically asked this question).

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Ritzmann— 36, 66-68

Wood—47, 48, 125, 163, 164, 174, 175, 180, 181

Wood A—111, 112, 129, 130, 138, 139

OTHER SOURCES

Field Notes, Calabazas Creek Oral History Project (see 'Maps & Field Notes' section)

FIRE

Since the beginning of living memory, and probably long before, fire has reshaped the natural and human environment of the Preserve. It has caused shifts in vegetation [see the 'Vegetation' section for details] and in human uses and occupation as well. The biggest fires recounted by Rosemary and Alexa Wood, and Walt Ritzmann, were in 1923, 'the late 1930s,' and 1964. Of the 1923 fire, Walt said, "It was a big strong north wind a-blowing and this fire come over . . . from Napa, come over the hills and just burnt pretty near all them people out in the mountains." Both the 1923 and 1964 fires happened in September, far along into the dry season.

Walt also described the fire in the 1930s as coming "over the hill." That one he said, "burnt half of Boyes Springs up." Rosemary said that fire happened a year or two after her aunt and uncle bought the ranch:

"It was in December, that I remember definitely. And it was very scary. Probably those damned Santa Ana winds, it's always those . . . It was a bad fire and it burned a lot, but it was the same places. It burned the southeast side of Nunns' Canyon. It was a bad fire, but it was up in that same area [as the 1964 fire]."

Rosemary said that during the 1964 fire "My aunt and uncle were told they should evacuate, but I don't think they did." In the aftermath of that fire, the California Department of Forestry put in a new road across the creek from the old one and continued to maintain it for several decades. Rosemary's uncle Ralph "sold logging rights to somebody after the '64 fire" and the new road was used by big logging trucks to get out the cut timber [see the 'Roads' section for more on this].

Besides burning trees and brush, Walt said "the fires . . . wiped out the old buildings that were there. They've had quite a few fires destroy the buildings." He said the Crosby house burned down before the Nunn house because "It was more or less in the timber," while the Nunn house had "open fields around it." He said the Nunn house didn't burn until the 1964 fire—so the Crosby house probably burned in 1923 or the late 1930s (since Walt, born in 1909, had a recollection of it still standing). Walt also said that the 1923 fire "burned out all the bridges," which ultimately contributed to the county's decision to abandon Nunns' Canyon Road because it would have cost too much to rebuild them.

Alexa said there haven't been any serious fires since 1964. She described a couple of controlled burns set by the fire department. "They were so nervous," she said, "I think because of all the houses up the hill that they only burned an area about the size of this living room." She said those were set on the Nelligan Road side, in a "high scrubby area." She said one time "a young guy" coming over from Wall Road, rolled his jeep . . . and started a fire." But it was "not much of a fire."

Alexa described how the absence of fire in recent years has led to an increase in Douglas fir and star thistle, which are encroaching on the meadows and oak woodlands (see the 'Vegetation' section for more on the effects of the absence of fire).

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Ritzmann—28, 31, 36, 69

Wood—70, 77, 85-91

Wood A—113-117, 122, 138

LAND USE

Agriculture

“There was a community up Nunns’ Canyon,” said Rosemary, talking of the 19th century. “About all they could do for a living was live very simply, which they did. Plant things, raise a few animals, build a fence out of rock . . . They cut firewood and hauled it down the road to Glen Ellen. They didn’t have anything to do [to make money]. They could sell some of those apples, have a cow.”

During the homestead years, small-scale agriculture was practiced wherever it was feasible (and probably many places which were marginal at best). In addition to what Rosemary mentions above, Nunn harvested hay from the ‘Hayfields’ high in the preserve; raised grain; grazed cattle and horses, and probably oxen (some pastures may have been fenced); raised chickens; and had pears, olives, cherries, and possibly other fruit besides apples. Chestnuts and almonds were also grown by early settlers. As Rosemary describes it, it was primarily a subsistence form of agriculture. Only relatively non-perishable products, like firewood, apples and olives would have survived the trip down the mountain to be bartered or sold in Glen Ellen.

Speaking of how things have changed, Rosemary said, “Making a living was more desperate in my time than now. I think a lot of things now that are considered really important—like I don’t think anybody ever thought about a cow standing in the middle of a stream pooping and where does the water go? We just hadn’t gotten to that.”

Grazing

“There were always cattle on the back,” said Rosemary. “My uncle and Ben Behler were kind of partners in raising cattle on the back of the ranch.” She said Ben liked raising cattle. Rosemary described how her uncle and Ben Behler would separate out about eight head of cattle and then Rosemary and her brother and mother would drive them down to the Beltane Station to be loaded on a cattle car. Rosemary also talked of rounding up cattle all over what is now the Preserve; often they would wander into some pretty inaccessible places.

In later years, Alexa remembers a succession of people who grazed cattle on what is now the Preserve: “Gordenkers, then Kunde, and then a guy named Mark Fratessa and then Barry Shone. There is some good grazing up there but it’s hard to get to. It’s so remote that getting the cattle in and out and getting up there to check on them . . . [is difficult] . . . it’s not a real practical thing.” She remembers there being “twenty, twenty-five cattle up there year round. Mostly year round, sometimes they would bring them out at the end. If they got real hungry, they’d come down behind [garbled]’s house, coming out looking for feed, so they’d take them out for a while and then send them back up. The Kundes had cattle up there a lot.”

Grazing continued up until 2002, when the District acquired the property. Alexa has noticed a number of changes she attributes to the lack of grazing, including increased ‘thatch’ in the meadows and rapidly spreading star thistle, which had been notably absent from most of the property up until that time (see the ‘Vegetation’ section for more details).

Logging & Woodcutting

It seems likely that at least some of the redwoods along Calabazas Creek were cut in the mid-19th century by homesteaders for their own use. Nunn would have planted his orchard in a sunny spot—the fact that it is

now heavily shaded by redwoods suggests these trees were not there, or at least were much smaller when the fruit trees were planted. Presumably the orchard was planted before Nunn died in 1875, so cutting of this redwood grove would have preceded that.

According to Walt, there was no logging on the ranch during the time Teresa Bell owned it in the first two decades of the 20th century. The only logging reported was after the 1964 fire when Rosemary's uncle "sold the logging rights." Logging trucks used the new road that had been put in by the California Department of Forestry.

Like many other places in the area, woodcutting for firewood, and probably charcoal, was done in the early 20th century. Walt said this was being done during the time that he worked on the ranch for Teresa Bell, around 1920. Preferred trees for firewood were hardwoods like oak and madrone.

Mining & Quarrying

"I guess they were looking for mercury," said Walt, referring to a mine shaft in a remote part of the Preserve. He admitted that nobody really knew much about it, not even "Mr. Behler [who] was born and raised here. He owned the ranch before Rosemary's uncle bought it. He sold it to them and he didn't know anything of it. He often wondered himself. I used to ride horseback up there with him a lot and . . . he told me that he never knew what it was." Rosemary also remembers the mercury mine and how her father 'had a fit' when they moved to the ranch because he was afraid someone would fall in. She said that no one has been able to relocate it recently.

Walt said the quarry didn't begin operation until "later years." Alexa guessed that it started in the 1950s and remembers it in operation through her childhood and teen years. She said it was running until about 1970 or '72. "It paid a lot of bills around here. It was very beneficial as Ralph and Effie needed a lot of care . . . financially the quarry was a real boon in those days."

Hunting, Fishing and Recreation

"When we were youngsters," Walt remembered, "we used to fish all the time up there." On hot days, "we always went skinny-dipping up there" in the pool below the waterfall. He also recalled hunting with "Mr. Gallo and Mr. Behler, too," members of the family that owned the ranch before the Heins bought it. Rosemary confirmed that "Ben Behler liked to hunt," which was why he kept the upper part of the ranch when it was divided with the Kundes in the 1920s.

"Horseback riding, trout fishing and mushrooming" were what Rosemary "enjoyed the most." She described how her family liked to go for evening picnics, usually two or three generations together, on what is now the Preserve. Alexa also has fond memories of horseback riding and trout fishing, and how the evening picnics were "really fun . . . Everyone, the whole family, had always been devoted to picnicking, anything outside."

Community Use

Rosemary and Alexa's family were quite generous when it came to allowing others to enjoy the property. "We used to let a lot of people use it," said Alexa. "It seemed like you ought to share it, as long as everybody was responsible and also I think it was good. Those are eyes." This attitude and tradition probably began before Rosemary's aunt and uncle bought the ranch in the 1930s. Even then, "There were generations who'd been going up there," she said, describing how the property was used by the local community, particularly for fishing. "There were people who'd been going up there for so long they couldn't imagine not doing it."

Alexa recalled how the local hunt club had their own little camp up there." This was known as 'Deer Camp.' She went on to say, "We always gave permission to just about any group. Valley of the Moon Trail Riders, and

the Oakmont Hikers, and there was a Sierra Club group that used to come and hike. Scout groups. Various artist groups.” Ralph Heins gave the Boy Scouts permission to use a camping spot “about halfway up the canyon.”

After Rosemary started the Bed and Breakfast, she used to send anyone that wanted a good hike to do “the loop.” Alexa said so many people did that hike that Beltane “got kind of famous for that. We still have people that come and want to know if they can do the loop.”

Some members of the community also used the property in ways that the Wood family tried to discourage: “We had problems with pot gardens, but smaller problems than we have now,” said Alexa. “I pulled any number of them out. If you were off trail doing something, you’d see a little drip line and there it’d be. The biggest of these grows had about thirty plants. The growers were “high school kids” and “local guys.”

Poaching & Pot Growing

“There’s always been poachers. Hardly anything you can do about it,” observed Walt. Speaking of Teresa Bell, he said, “I don’t know if she’s ever had anyone arrested for poaching, but I know she’s driven a lot of people off the ranch. And that’s what most of them [the owners] have done. They still have that problem up there.” He described walking the fence line with Ben Behler after the end of deer season and finding “seven dead deer, big bucks that had died, crippled, you know. And that was just on the fence line. How many more were off in the bushes it’s hard to say.”

Alexa believes the more recent problem of pot grows probably started in the 1960s. At first, she said, it was high school kids. Then it became “slightly more commercial, though it was still just local guys. I imagine it just continued to pick up speed. When there’s a presence up there, someone’s up there checking cattle, and enough guys lose their gardens, it doesn’t get out of hand. I don’t really care if a kid’s got a dozen plants.”

About twenty years ago, she began to see a shift: “It used to be somebody with thirty plants.” In the early 1990s, a SWAT team spotted something from the air, came in, and took out a much larger grow. The next day a pregnant heifer was found shot:

“After they shot the cow, I changed my tune about the whole thing. There’s another spring up there that we used to use when we needed water for sulfur for the upper vineyards. Filling up the tank, we started way back in the hills and the guy that worked for us had to go back in there and start up a pump to pump up to the vineyard.

“A guy with a gun told him, ‘Get out and don’t come back’. . . I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t want to get him in trouble, I didn’t want them coming after [anyone] . . . So I waited a month, ‘til I figured it was closer to harvest and maybe he wouldn’t be directly suspected. The sheriff and I went in and there were about a thousand plants. That was the first big one. That was probably ’92. That was the first time you got the feeling that there was violence associated with it. On that big of a scale. Now it’s gone way way way beyond that.”

In recent years she’s seen it become a “big operation with a lot of money behind it.” There’ve been “huge gardens” on either side of Johnson Canyon: “Like a mirror image almost. The amount of underbrush they cleared, the amount of labor that had been done, unbelievable. Just phenomenal. Kind of randomly terraced and what did they figure? Ten to twelve thousand plants in each one? . . . And big camps with hammocks and big propane tanks. Tons of garbage, sleeping bags, tents, pesticide containers, rifle shells, hollow point shells and miles and miles and miles of drip line. I don’t know how they get it all there. It’s so steep, hand over hand, to even get up there to see them, I do not know how they get it all in there.”

As for trying to control it, Alexa said, “You can fly over it and try to look, but they’re hard to spot from the air. I mean these guys had cleaned it meticulously and it was all madrones, maybe fifteen, twenty-foot high madrones, and they had been cleaned up their trunks so it just left this perfect screen over the top . . . they worked really hard. “

TRANSCRIPT ENTRIES

Ritzmann—18, 22, 40, 60-68, 74-76, 89

Wood—51, 76-80, 93-95, 99-109, 128, 129, 143, 165, 175-177, 188

Wood A—20, 32, 51, 73-95, 112, 128, 138, 151-170

TRANSCRIPTS

Interview with Walt Ritzmann

conducted and transcribed by Maureen Hawkins in Glen Ellen

September 29, 1979

1. Maureen: Do you want to tell me a little bit about yourself and your family, how they first came to the valley?

Walt: Well, my grandfather came here in the 1850s and he homesteaded the adjoining ranch to the Beltane Ranch up there on the mountain.

2. Maureen: What was his name?

Walt: Weiss, Christian Weiss, and he had bought a section of the ranch from Mr. Drummond for the water rights. He didn't have very much water on the ranch at the time, so he bought this section. I don't really know how many acres, but that's the canyon in the back for the water. Then he started with raising grapes and he had a grape vineyard there on the ranch. So Mrs. Bell has always mistrusted that deed that he had for the property. She thought that he had stole the property, but it is on record where he had bought this . . . for the record, you know . . . they call it the abstract. It's a book and it's on record where he had bought a section of the ranch.

3. Maureen: So you've lived here all your life then? Your family's been here ever since that time?

Walt: Yes. I was born on that place, my mother was born on that section of land. We always called it the old homestead. And I was born there and my sister was born there. The rest of the family weren't. So . . .

4. Maureen: When did you first start to work at the Beltane Ranch? How did you get the job?

Walt: A fellow by the name of Mr. Moore, Charlie Moore, come there, that she had hired, and the ranch was awfully run down at the time. There wasn't very much at the time that he come and he was very industrious. He built the ranch up. He built all new fences and he got all kinds of livestock. He had cows, milk cows, and the whole lower fields down here in corn and grain and he had a little bit of everything, ranch stock, like pigs. And he really brought the ranch up and it looked good at the time. I was about ten years old then.

5. Maureen: And what year would that be?

Walt: Well, about 1919. He had me do chore work. I went to school, the little Dunbar School down there below the ranch. And I milked the cows, separated the milk, and on Saturdays I'd work out there in the corn and things like that. And I lived on the ranch with

them. Mrs. Bell used to come up from the city. She had her section of the house that she had for her own private use, you know, in the big house. She always had that for when she'd come up from the city. And she'd get off the train there at the old Beltane Station and I would go down and get her with the carriage or Mr. Moore would go down and bring her up to the house.

6. Maureen: Did they tear that station down?

Walt: They took the passenger service off. The passenger service was still running in the twenties. I don't know just exactly the date, but then they run freight through there for a long time after the passenger route was taken off. And it was still in the twenties that they tore that down, I guess in the late twenties or early thirties that they tore the old station down . . . that station was burnt down.

7. Maureen: What about on the farm? Were there grapes, was there a vineyard at that time?

Walt: There wasn't any grapes at the time. Whether Mr. Drummond who owned the ranch before had grapes, I'm not sure. But there had been on what they call the old Weingartner place. There was grapes, but that was before Mrs. Bell bought that property.

8. Maureen: I kind of had the idea from Helen Holdredge's book that Mammy Pleasant made wine?

Walt: Not that I know of. There wasn't any grapes on the ranch, not when I was small.

9. Maureen: What was Mrs. Bell like?

Walt: Well, she was a very kind woman, but I was always a little bit afraid of her. She'd come up there on the ranch and go on a drinking spree and she was, I think, using dope at the time. And at one time, I'd seen pictures of her, she was a very beautiful woman when she was young.

10. Maureen: How old would she have been then?

Walt: At the time she was on the ranch?

11. Maureen: Yes, at the time you were there?

Walt: It's awful hard to tell ages. She was getting along in years then. She was a little rough, but she was awfully good to me and she liked children. My brothers, she always treated them very good, too, and whenever we did anything for her why she always had a

big silver dollar for us and that was really a lot of money at that time. Didn't seem like no matter what we did, she always had that silver dollar.

When she'd go on these rampages, you know, when she'd be drinking, why she'd start running everybody off the ranch. She fire all the people on the ranch. Mr. Moore, he knew what she was like. He'd just see that she got to bed and then the next morning why she'd be alright again and so he was on the ranch for quite a few years.

12. Maureen: Rosemary said something about Mrs. Bell dragging the housekeeper around by the hair, that you saw that.

Walt: I had a small bedroom up in the upper part of the building. You know there are small rooms all the way around the ranch house. I had one of those for my bedroom. On night I heard an awful rumpus downstairs, dishes a-crashing and furniture being smashed, screaming and hollering. Now she is the first woman I ever heard use foul language. And when I was a small boy women didn't use foul language and I was quite shocked at the time.

I got out of bed and crawled down the stairway that goes right on the outside of the window where you could look right in the kitchen and she had Mrs. Moore by the hair, dragging her around the kitchen floor just a screaming and a hollering. And she was a good-sized woman, pretty hard to handle.

13. Maureen: Mrs. Bell?

Walt: Yes. She was a fair-sized woman. So they finally got cooled down and put her to bed. Of course I went home and told my mother this. And it wasn't long before, you know women, well, she told the schoolteacher we had there at the time. And the first time I was on the road with Mrs. Moore, you know, we were still driving horses at that time, here comes the schoolteacher along the road and we stopped and they started talking and right away she says, "I hear Mrs. Bell was dragging you around the kitchen by the hair." Boy, I just wilted. I knew darn well that she would know I was the one carrying tales. Boy, that was one of my most embarrassing moments I think.

14. Maureen: I guess everybody has those at some time or another in their lives.

Walt: Mrs. Moore never said a word, but I know that she was embarrassed too at the time, to know that everybody knew about it. She didn't want it to be known.

Mrs. Bell also had a butler. He was supposedly blind but we always had a feeling that he could see a little more than he pretended, because he would come up from the city and it was always my job to go down and get him because he would just go along with a cane and I'd have to lead him up to the house by his hand.

15. Maureen: What was his name?

Walt: Well, we only knew him by “Blind Billy.” What his last name was I’m not sure, but he was her butler there at the big old house in San Francisco, the House of Mystery. He’d come up to the ranch without her at times and then when he went back home, back down to the city, why Mrs. Bell seemed to know everything that was going on at the ranch and he would have had to see a lot of things. That’s the reason we decided he wasn’t quite as blind as he pretended.

16. Maureen: Who else lived there? Were there a lot of farm workers?

Walt: There wasn’t quite a few men. It all depends on Mr. Moore, he did an awful lot of work himself. He did most of the daily work around the ranch, but he would hire help every once in a while. If he was harvesting or you know, picking fruit or something like that, then he would hire help.

17. Maureen: What was done on the ranch? You said they raised corn and they had livestock. What kind of livestock?

Walt: They had cows. It wasn’t a big dairy, but he always sold the cream and I used to have the job of running the separator, milk the cows, and he had pigs. They butchered their own hogs, made their own sausages and ham on the ranch . . . chickens. Of course, a lot of this went to the city too, you know, to Mrs. Bell’s place in San Francisco.

18. Maureen: What about any other industry on the ranch? Was there any quarrying done? I know there’s a quarry, but is that on the ranch?

Walt: That’s on the ranch, but that’s just later years that they had the quarry. They didn’t have any at the time that they were here.

There was one incident that happened after I had left the ranch. Evidently, Mr. Moore finally gave up and he quit—went off and left the ranch and here was all the cows to be milked and everything to be fed and there wasn’t anybody to do it. So she contacted me and got me to come up there to the ranch and [I] took care of the stock and milked the cows until she got another caretaker. And from that time on, the ranch gradually went downhill. None of them worked like Mr. Moore did. She was very good at that, too, because she sent me a nice check. I’ve forgotten what it was, but it was a lot of money at that time for taking care of the things on the ranch there.

19. Maureen: And then what finally happened to her? How long did you work on the ranch?

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Walt: I only took care of the place for about a week before she finally got a caretaker to come up. Of course, I had to show him what there was on there and what had to be done. I was only about twelve years old then so I never worked on the place after that.

20. Maureen: You only worked there for about two years altogether?

Walt: Yes.

21. Maureen: And then did she die soon after that?

Walt: Well, it was a few years later. The family moved to Berkeley in 1922 and she was still alive then. She must have passed on about '25 or '26 I think. Because I had contacted the Moores. They moved to San Francisco and opened a bakery down there and I contacted them. I used to go to see them once in a while from Berkeley to San Francisco and they were the ones that told me at the time that Mrs. Bell had passed away.

22. Maureen: What about logging? Was there ever any logging done on the ranch at all?

Walt: Mrs. Bell never did, no. Firewood.

23. Maureen: I had heard that after she had moved from the ranch that she leased it to a Senator Ashe and he was going to use it for a race track. Do you know anything about that?

Walt: No. It must have been before my time because I know they had race horses there on the ranch and they had a race track there.

24. Maureen: I think this was between the time that Mammy Pleasant died and the time that you were there. Like 1900?

Walt: Well, I was born in 1909 and being about ten years old, it was about 1919 to '20 and '21 that I was on the ranch.

25. Maureen: But can you remember seeing anything of where there was a track or hearing anything about it?

Walt: Well, there wasn't anything, a track, there at the time, but my oldest brother has known about that track. He got into trouble for going down through there when he was on his way to school. He used to cut down through the property. We lived on the hill above the ranch. He used to cut through the ranch to go to school and he scared some of the race horses one time when they were practicing on the track. He got in trouble for that naturally, and couldn't go through there anymore and had to go around. He remembers the track.

26. Maureen: Was that down towards the highway then?

Walt: Yes, it is. Down [in] that flat, beyond the rock wall there.

27. Maureen: Can we talk about the home sites that are up in the back of the ranch, on the hill? When you worked on the ranch were there any people living in any of those houses back up there or were they all gone by then?

Walt: They were all gone. That's back in Nunns' Canyon?

28. Maureen: Right.

Walt: There wasn't anybody living up in there I guess after Mrs. Bell had bought the property. I believe Mammy Pleasant's the one that bought the property and then she left it to Mrs. Bell. There wasn't anybody living back in there at all after that. Then the fires had wiped out the old buildings that were there. They've had quite a few fires destroy the buildings.

29. Maureen: Were there some of the buildings that you can remember?

Walt: Oh yes.

30. Maureen: Could you tell me about some of them?

Walt: Well, the old Nunn ranch was a well-built house. Of course, there wasn't any windows or anything. The was the first thing that got broken out . . . vandals.

31. Maureen: It still happens today.

Walt: And then the cattle started taking over the building. So then the Crosby house across the canyon was a fairly nice house too. It was a two-story affair. The old Nunn house was always a single level dwelling. The Crosby was two-storied. It burned down before the Nunn house. It was more or less in the timber, trees all around it, and the Nunn house is kind of all with open fields around it, so it wasn't until the last big fire they had up there that that actually burned down. And Rosemary and I found foundations of another house that I didn't even know was there. So that's been gone for a long time.

32. Maureen: What about people named Wilson?

Walt: There was a Tom Wilson. But that was another house, just the old foundation is all that I've ever known of. Never saw any part of the house and there wasn't anything there much more than a few old fruit trees and they're gone now I think. I don't think there's any trace of the fruit trees any more.

33. Maureen: Rosemary mentioned about somebody killing somebody else with an ax. Who was that?

Walt: I have to think of the fellow's name now. Two Swedes and they got into a fight and I guess they had been drinking too. Johnson was the name.

34. Maureen: Charlie Johnson?

Walt: Charlie Johnson and Tom Wilson. Which one killed the other I don't know, but one killed the other with an ax.

35. Maureen: When would that have been?

Walt: Well, my mother tells me this and she was just a very little girl at that time living up there on the old homestead. She was pretty small then herself but she says she remembers when it happened.

36. Maureen: Can you remember when the road stopped going across Napa, the Nunns' Canyon Road. Was that in your lifetime?

Walt: Well, after . . . I'm not sure whether it was the last big fire, but one of the fires went through there. It burned out all the bridges. There was something like ten or twelve bridges that crossed the Nunns' Canyon stream—going up through the canyon. They figured it would cost too much money to re-open the old road, so after it hadn't been used in so long, Mr. Behler, who owned the ranch, had the road closed and that was in the twenties or early thirties that the road was closed.

37. Maureen: Did you ever take that road all the way to Napa?

Walt: Oh yes. It joined on to the Trinity Road on top of Trinity Mountain and it continued on Trinity Road to Napa.

38. Maureen: It seems like that would be an easier way to get to Napa than the way we go now, so round about.

Walt: Well, it's a crooked road too.

39. Maureen: Yes, that's right. How about the Clarks? Is that name familiar to you, Clark?

Walt: Clark? No, it is not.

40. Maureen: What about Weingartner?

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Walt: The Weingartners were burnt out before I was born and they had moved away. I didn't know them myself. Evidently they did have a vineyard in there, traces of a vineyard, close to Rosemary's sister's place.

41. Maureen: How about Geary, G-e-a-r-y? The Geary place?

Walt: No.

42. Maureen: And then your grandfather, he had a vineyard and winery? Was that a big one?

Walt: No. In fact, he made the wine outside and had a cellar down under the house where he kept the wine. He never actually had a wine cellar up there on the hill, the old homestead. Later on he had a wine cellar down at the lower ranch.

43. Maureen: Who owns you grandfather's property now?

Walt: Harold Weiss. Yes, he owns it.

44. Maureen: Is he a relative of yours?

Walt: Yes, my cousin.

45. Maureen: And is he still producing wine, growing grapes?

Walt: They just harvested the grapes up there and they sell the grapes or somebody's contracting the grapes now. I think the Kenwood Winery, I believe, is the one who's contracting the grapes. They get the grapes on the hill and from the lower ranch too now.

46. Maureen: All those old homesteads back in Nunns' Canyon, you have no idea what happened to those people? None of them are still here?

Walt: No idea.

47. Maureen: What about Senator Barnes? Do you know anything about him? It's said that Mammy Pleasant had bought some acreage from a Senator Barnes?

Walt: No.

48. Maureen: How about Captain Drummond and the house that was down, that's not there anymore, but was on the Behler ranch. Was that Captain Drummond's house?

Walt: No, I understand that Mammy Pleasant is the one built that one down there.

49. Maureen: Oh, she built the one down there?

Walt: Yes.

50. Maureen: Can you tell me about it?

Walt: Well, it burnt down not too many years ago, about in the forties it was still there I guess. It was quite a nice place at one time. She had a great big barn. Mr. Gallo had just tore that barn down here about two years ago and that was the only building that was left from the time that Mammy Pleasant was there. See, he rebuilt his new home right about the spot where Mammy Pleasant's house was. And it was quite a show place I guess at one time because there's still old palm trees planted and magnolias, and some of the old fruit trees are still growing—quince trees that she planted. It must have been really a beautiful place at one time.

She also had peacocks. She had them in this great big aviary. It was a great big building where the peacocks were kept and had a lot of room to fly around. The peacocks would get out every once in a while and she'd get Mr. Behler to round up her peacocks. Whether she had any other birds I'm not sure. She had a big lake where Mr. Gallo rebuilt the dam in recent years. She had a big lake there and a lot of ducks and geese and it really was, from what I understand, a very beautiful place when she had it.

51. Maureen: So Mammy lived in that house?

Walt: Yes.

52. Maureen: Did she ever live in the big ranch house that you know?

Walt: Not that I know. From the way I understand it, Mrs. Bell had built that house up there.

53. Maureen: The big ranch house?

Walt: I'm not positive now.

54. Maureen: Rosemary told me a little bit about the school teacher and some children that had an accident back in Nunns' Canyon.

Walt: Yes, they were from Agua Caliente, I think, and she had, this school teacher, had this old horse and buggy and she wanted to take the youngsters on a picnic up in Nunns' Canyon. And they got going up that road and she couldn't find a place to turn around and she just kept on a-going and got way up and just this side, in fact, right where you turnoff to

go on up to go to the Crosby ranch. The horse shied and wanted to turn around and go back, come downhill I guess. And she couldn't do nothing about it.

And the horse started backing and backed the buggy over the bank and the horse and buggy and kids all went down into the creek and it was quite a drop-off. One little boy was pinned underneath the buggy. He had the horse and buggy and everything on top of him. So he got killed and there were several others that had broken arms and they were all pretty badly shook up and injured.

55. Maureen: Can you remember approximately when this would have been? How old were you?

Walt: Well, my oldest brother was about ten years old at the time. 'Cause he had gone up there with the rescue party and brought them out. Let's see . . .

56. Maureen: How old is your brother now?

Walt: He's 78.

57. Maureen: So it would have been about 68 years ago? So it would have been about 1918?

Walt: Well it was before that.

58. Maureen: 1911?

Walt: Yes. I felt sorry for the teacher. She meant well, but it was an awful thing to have to live with after. It really was just too bad it happened.

59. Maureen: Yesterday when we went on the tour Rosemary pointed out an old mine, a quicksilver or mercury mine. Do you know anything about it?

Walt: No, I don't. That's where that deep hole is in the mountain?

60. Maureen: Yes.

Walt: Nobody seems to know when that was dug or what it was dug for. I guess they were looking for mercury at the time. Mr. Behler was born and raised here. He owned the ranch before Rosemary's uncle bought it. He sold it to them and he didn't know anything of it. He often wondered himself. I used to ride horseback up there with him a lot and that was the only way back up in there, 'cause there were no roads. I know he told me that he never knew what it was.

61. Maureen: What kind of animals were around? I know we saw some deer yesterday.

Walt: I've seen mountain lions at three different times up there myself. And there's coyotes and bobcats. They say there's an awful lot of coyotes there now which there hadn't been for years—just come in recent years, and of course , deer and smaller animals, rabbits and raccoons.

62. Maureen: Did you ever do any hunting up there?

Walt: Yes, I've hunted with Mr. Gallo and Mr. Behler, too.

63. Maureen: How about fishing in the creek for trout?

Walt: When we were youngsters we used to fish all the time up there and it was no job at all to get a limit of trout.

64. Maureen: Did you ever have a swimming hole?

Walt: Yes. You didn't come down the canyon?

65. Maureen: Yes, through Nunns' Canyon, yes.

Walt: Well you know the waterfall, did she show you the waterfall?

66. Maureen: Yes, she did.

Walt: That was one of ours. The water was awful cold but it was a good skinny-dipping hole for the kids.

67. Maureen: On a hot afternoon that would be nice.

Walt: Yep. We always went skinny-dipping up there.

68. Maureen: How about the fires? Can you say anything more? Can you remember certain years when there was a really bad fire?

Walt: I missed most of the fires myself. I was never here. It was in '23 or '24 a big fire went through. I was living in Berkeley at the time. See, we moved to Berkeley in 1922 and they had a great big fire that very day in Berkeley and half of Berkeley burned up at that same time. It was a big strong north wind a-blowing and this fire come over the mountains here from Napa, come over the hills and just burnt out pretty near all them people out in the mountains.

And then they had another fire in the thirties that come over the hill down into Boyes Springs and burnt half of Boyes Springs up. It was kind of a comical sight to see even the fire house burn down. It was kind of comical to see the fire engine sitting on the slab there in Boyes Springs without the fire house.

69. Maureen: What about storms? Rosemary said there was a bad snow storm about 1973 that left a lot of branches, debris.

Walt: It was pretty much so all over. We had quite a bit of snow right here in the valley that time. Of course, lots and lots of these old oak trees that couldn't stand the weight, it broke their limbs down and there was an awful lot of rubble that was on the ground. It was very dangerous, a fire hazard.

70. Maureen: Do you have any picture of the ranch, or pictures of yourself with any of the people?

Walt: No.

71. Maureen: Any notes or diaries or books or?

Walt: No.

72. Maureen: Can think of any other incidents that you might remember?

Walt: No really.

73. Maureen: Okay.

Walt: . . . in the wintertime if they couldn't get out any other way they had to walk and I've been told that up there on the old Nunn ranch, old Mr. Nunn he'd come down to town here and he'd carry a 100-pound sack of flour back up on his back, you know, when it was raining. And it must have been an awful hard life, but they didn't seem to think anything of it—hard work was something that they thought had to be done, that's all. They didn't have the machinery at that time like we do now, tractors to do the plowing, and it was all done by hand, like cutting down trees for instance. They didn't have chainsaws. They had to do it all by hand. They had to clear the land to begin with and take these rocks and build walls with them. That was all done by hand. It must have been really pretty rough.

74. Maureen: How do you think they supported themselves? Like the Nunns, was it with cattle and hay, selling hay?

Walt: They probably sold part of their crop but they had to depend, like they'd bring a cord of wood down to town and exchange it for staples, different kinds of groceries. They'd

raise chickens and have their eggs, bringing their eggs into town. There wasn't an awful lot of money changing hands at the time. It would just be, people would bring something to town and take something home.

75. Maureen: Barter?

Walt: Yes. Fruit would be the same way, and eggs and, of course, the grain and that, they probably got money for the grain. Those that made wine, why they sold their wine. So it would have been really interesting knowing . . . Now the women didn't have it as easy as today either. Everything was done by hand. They washed clothes by hand. They didn't have electricity to help them with everything. Everything was done by hand.

76. Maureen: I guess there never was any electricity way back up there at all?

Walt: No there never was. We've got it now though. We've got it clean over the mountains now.

77. Maureen: When did you come back to the valley? You lived in Berkeley and then came back recently?

Walt: My brothers all got jobs down there in the city so we decided to move the family down there. I didn't actually come back here to Glen Ellen until after I served my stretch in the Army, after the war was over. I was over in Germany during the war.

78. Maureen: You're talking about World War II?

Walt: Yes. So my mother was living here. She moved back from Berkeley while I was overseas and then when I came home I came back here and stayed.

79. Maureen: Have you seen lots of changes?

Walt: Yes I've seen a lot of changes right in this little old town here. I remember the old trains that used to come in here. That was quite a deal.

80. Maureen: What about steamers coming up the creek?

Walt: Well, no, that was before my time. They'd come in down below Sonoma there. That's how the steamers would come and that was a little before my time.

81. Maureen: What things would you like to see go back? What would you like to have come back from the earlier days if you could change things?

Walt: Well, I'd like to see the old steam trains again. Of course, they've, the railroad companies don't own much of their right-aways. They've sold their right-aways to the people that have property nearest you know. But you can still see a lot of places where the old railroad went through. You can see it up there at Beltane ranch even where the old railroad went through.

82. Maureen: There's one place on the highway I can see that looks like a trestle.

Walt: Yes, that's just this side of Nunns' Canyon.

83. Maureen: Yes. What was your day like when you lived on the ranch? Did you have to get up awfully early to milk those cows?

Walt: Yes, I did. I had to do all those chores before I went to school—feed the stock and milk the cows, feed the chickens and like that before I went to school. And then, of course, when I got home from school it was the same thing over again you know. Of course, I really didn't think anything of it at the time, but when I see the way youngsters work today I just wonder sometimes.

84. Maureen: What do you mean?

Walt: Well, like everything that the youngsters do today they got to be paid for and at that time I was working just for my keep, clothes and my keep, I never did see any money. I didn't have any money to spend like the kids today. That's the difference. Kids have just too much money as far as I can see.

85. Maureen: Was it pleasant living there?

Walt: Yes, it was. The Moores were very nice people. Mrs. Moore was just a big, motherly, jolly woman.

86. Maureen: Well, there's one other thing. Rosemary mentioned something about Mrs. Bell carrying a gun.

Walt: Yes, she'd always carry a gun. She'd bring these parties up from the city and they always kept a string of saddle horses on the ranch and that was another one of my jobs. If they'd want to get out early in the morning I'd get up early and saddle all the horses and have all the horses ready for them to . . . a lot of these "dudes," as we called them, they never knew how to put a saddle on a horse even. So they'd go for horseback rides up through the hills there and Mrs. Bell always rode a side-saddle. She always carried a pistol and a dagger too. She had a dagger.

87. Maureen: Did you ever see her use them?

Walt: No, I never saw her use them. That's another thing that scared me about her. She was kind of a mysterious type to me. Although she was awfully good to me, as I say. She's the only one that used to pay me. I can see those silver dollars yet.

88. Maureen: Did Mrs. Bell ever have trouble with poachers on the ranch?

Walt: There's always been poachers. Hardly anything you can do about it. I don't know if she's ever had anyone arrested for poaching, but I know she's driven a lot of people off the ranch. And that's what most of them have done. They still have that problem up there.

Ben Behler, the man that owned the ranch before Rosemary's uncle, he and I used to walk the fence line after deer season. We'd start out real early just about daylight from his house. It took all day to walk clean up Nunns' Canyon. At that time the fence line went down on the other side of the mountain, I think before the Heins bought it. But we used to go all the way around that fence line. That's all we did was just patch up holes where somebody had cut the wire to go in, go hunting. And I know on one of these times we found something like seven dead deer, big bucks that had died, crippled, you know. And that was just on the fence line. How many more were off in the bushes it's hard to say.

89. Maureen: Well, did Mrs. Bell's property extend over into Napa County?

Walt: Oh yes. It went down almost to that Wall Road. That 's the road that goes up Dry Creek. We hiked that all the way clean up to Wall Road to the end and the fence line was very close to the road.

90. Maureen: Were there other homesteads back on Wall Road?

Walt: Oh yes. No too many, I guess. There was one old woman that had a place up there at the end of Wall Road—Hendley. In later years it was Diece that bought it.

Interview with Rosemary Wood

at Beltane Ranch, Glen Ellen
(in the cottage near the main house)

May 9, 2013

R = Rosemary Wood

A = Arthur Dawson

1. R: [speaking of reasons for granting the interview] . . . and I have a great-grandson and I want him to know all about it. I don't know whether you know Lauren or not?

2. A: Does she work in the same building as I do? I think I may see her go by. Is she blond-haired?

R: Yeah.

3. A: I saw your great-grandson the other day. I noticed she was carrying a baby and it was the first time I'd seen him.

R: He's just three months old. She has an office for working on the wine sales, upstairs over the . . . I don't know what that old building is called.

4. A: The Poppe building.

R: When I was in high school, the bus stopped there and the Glen Ellen post office was in the corner of that building. The corner of Jack London Ranch Road and Arnold Drive. It was about as big as this room; I would say *hardly* as big as this room [laughs]. Teeny. that was the Glen Ellen post office.

5. A: Wow. Who was the postmaster, do you remember?

R: No.

6. A: I wonder if they were the Poppes? The Poppes might have still been there.

R: I don't know. The Shepard family—Mrs. Irving Shepard used to come down the hill with all the [kids]. Did you know Milo Shepard?

7. A: Yeah, I knew Milo.

R: He was a year or two younger than I am. Milo and his brother and his two sisters would all be in the car. Mrs. Shepard looking fairly harried—and the dust! There was no pavement on that road and she would come down so fast that the whole car would go, dust rolling up behind it, put on the brakes and all four of the doors would open and all the Shepard kids with their lunches and books would fall out! [laughter] They would stop right at the post office. I

never went in because picking up the mail was a ritual of my uncle [Ralph Heins]. We actually lived here for a year in the 'thirties and then my father bought a little place up on Lawndale Road out of Kenwood. My brother and I used to drive a Model A Ford from there to the store in Glen Ellen and then get on the bus and go to Sonoma.

8. A: I moved to Glen Ellen in 1989 and the store was still there at that time.

R: It's Shones, now it's across the road, yeah.

9. A: I still think of that as the new market across the street even though it's been there for twenty years.

R: Certainly. I do.

10. A: So how did your aunt and uncle come to acquire Beltane Ranch?

R: Do you realize how long ago you're talking about? You'll get so tired of listening to me.

11. A: Oh no, I really enjoy talking to people and hearing their memories.

R: I did think of something this morning I thought would help you. When I first opened the bed and breakfast, I asked my brother, who's a year-and-a-half younger but his memory is always really good, to write about the turkey days here. This was a big turkey ranch. Like ten thousand birds.

12. A: Really—wow.

R: At times, you know it varied during the year. Just this morning I went over and got this at the B & B ['Turkey Time at the Beltane Ranch' see photos], I have a copy in each room. I thought it'd be fun for people to read about it. He writes well and then he drew little [sketches]. I swear [points to one] it looks like that man, just exactly.

13. A: OK, so they started the turkey business in the Sacramento Valley.

R: In Glenn County during the Depression. They shipped fertile eggs, I know, as far as Salt Lake City.

14. A: Was that a pretty lucrative business, at least for a while?

R: Yeah. That reminds me, just the other day in Mendocino where I live, just for a moment I looked at a used book sale? And there was a book about the chicken business in the Petaluma Sonoma area. Most of the families were Jewish, did you ever . . .?

15. A: I've heard of it, *The Jewish Chicken Farmers of Petaluma*?

R: Yeah. Have you ever seen the book?

16. A: I may have, I haven't read it, but I've certainly heard about it.

R: It's absolutely fantastic. It's a page turner—for me anyway, very interesting.

17. A: Wow—I'll have to get it.

R: A lot of them had very fascinating early lives, just to get here from Europe was an adventure. My best old high school friend in Sonoma is a Jewish girl—age! She'll be ninety next month. Muriel Shainsky. In telling her just a couple weeks ago, about finding this book—I said 'I know you've read this.' She said, 'I remember my father being interviewed. You know my father got out of Russia at seventeen, hiding under a haystack on a wagon that was crossing the border.'

18. A: That's classic.

R: I don't know who the first Jewish family was here, but they were a close, just a naturally close group of people who kept track of each other. They had big problems and they needed each other. So when somebody got to New York, they called whatever friend or relative they knew of. Many of them found one of these people to be already out here and they all said, 'Come on, it's great.' You know—land, just build a shed. And they're all hardworking people, so that wasn't a problem. The hills are just littered out there, west of Sonoma.

19. A: There's a lot of old chicken barns around.

R: There are many still standing.

20. A: I lived in one in college up in Arcata [laughs]. It'd been converted to a house. So when this was a turkey farm, where did you put all the turkeys?

R: They lived in large fields, 10 acres or more, with open-sided shelters. I think my aunt and uncle had gone to Mexico in 1901 when they were married. My uncle was in the lumber business. He was very much an entrepreneur type of person. The revolution, in 1906 about? They had to leave—they were down around Veracruz. They came to Santa Cruz maybe because my mother . . . it all goes back too far. My mother came to Santa Cruz in 1906.

21. A: Was that after the earthquake in San Francisco?

R: About two weeks before.

22. A: She just missed it!

R: She remembered it very well—the piano went shooting across the floor. My father was a stockbroker in San Francisco. He heard about a tax sale of property in Glenn County. My aunt and uncle, they weren't really ranchers, but they were up for anything and both hardworking. Anyway, I don't know how they got into turkeys. Who guided them? I have no idea. I don't think I can remember that. Maybe my brother could.

23. A: Do you know if the Gordenkers were already here when your aunt and uncle came.

R: Oh yeah.

24. A: So they were established.

R: Yeah. Yes, I remember Roddy when he was a kid. He was my age. His brother Alan was my brother's age. There weren't too many girls around then. Kundes were all boys, Gordenkers were all boys, and Weises.

25. A: You were the one girl.

R: At first we were living in Hillsborough and we came up here to visit for a couple of years. And then, because the stock market crashed, my father sold our house in Hillsborough and my aunt and uncle had just, maybe a couple of years no more, been here. This house was absolute disaster. There was no electricity, no running water—[the house was] just a redwood box, didn't have a pipe in it. Then if you moved turkeys, like having a dairy, you can't call a moment your own. You're on duty, twenty-four seven.

26. A: Up at dawn or before.

R: There's no day off, ever. That's the way turkeys are. They brought them all, I don't know how they got them all down. They had a big old flatbed truck and hauled them down from Glenn County. They bought this place because, funny you said Gordenker—the Tietjens, did you ever hear that name?

27. A: I think I have.

R: They were related to the Gordenkers, I forget how. It's I think a Russian name?

28. A: Sounds like it could be Russian.

R: What is the street in Glen Ellen that runs one street over from Arnold Drive on the west?

29. A: Henno Road?

R: Henno, yeah. Tietjens lived on Henno Road. My aunt and uncle used to sell them turkeys. It was breeding stock. They weren't to eat, they were for eggs. This whole thing was

for eggs. They knew the Tietjens because they used to buy turkeys. They were friends, they were two couples who liked each other. So my aunt and uncle enjoyed occasionally getting to see them. Not very often, because all he did was work on the ranch. My aunt was a fabulous gardener, a natural horticulturalist. And this climate, if you've ever been to Glenn County, is so superior for gardening.

30. A: I been in Chico, it's quite different than here.

R: Horrible gravelly soil, baking hot and if you love to garden, it's not the place. So my aunt just thought this looked like heaven. And this ranch was for sale, sixteen hundred acres—until just a few years ago, it stayed the same. Sad, but it couldn't stay that size forever; but it's not going to be built on. So they bought it; if you knew what sixteen hundred acres cost in the 'thirties you'd be just sick.

31. A: Do you remember what it cost?

R: I swear it was sixteen thousand dollars, but I'm probably wrong.

32. A: Couldn't even buy an outhouse today for that [laughter]

R: No, that's true. You couldn't buy a doghouse. So my uncle bought it and somehow they got moved down here. There was no such thing in those days as having a tractor or a moving van go to Glenn County to get your stuff. Somehow they got things here. But in the meantime, the turkeys have to eat, be housed, and everything. Nothing was ever raised in confinement then, so the fields—it was open. Like that whole thing [points out the window].

33. A: Where the vineyard is now that was all open?

R: Yes. And then the field across the driveway, all the way down to the highway, all the way up to the house, one big field.

34. A: So all those oak trees in there, which aren't all that big, they weren't here?

R: They were small, but they were there. They made high chicken wire fences and then each turkey had feathers on one wing clipped. That throws them off and they can't fly over. More important, a man lived in each field because turkeys are kind of crazy and if a coyote chased them, they'd pile up in the corner of the fence on top of each other and suffocate. Each man had a very clever dog.

35. A: Was that a big problem, the coyotes coming after the flocks?

R: My daughter's chickens they're . . .

36. A: They're still coming, yeah. We have chickens and I have a problem with foxes.

R: We have everything. Right now our worst problem are bluejays flying into the henhouse, pecking holes in the eggs and sucking the egg out. Then they go regurgitate it in the nest to their babies or something like that.

37. A: I never heard of that.

R: Me neither, but it's happening right now. So, anyway, it was turkeys everywhere, but only four or five big pens, big you know.

38. A: Yeah, acres.

R: Like that whole thing [pointing out the window], that whole thing, that whole thing and then up the road a ways. So a little shack would be in each [pen]. It wasn't even fastened to the ground. It was on runners maybe. Maybe it was as big as this [room]. Just barely.

39. A: Ten by twelve, something like that.

R: A bed and a chair. No light, no water. Somehow they got those down from Glenn County on this old flatbed truck.

40. A: So would your aunt and uncle feed the men?

R: It was easy to hire a man because it was during the Depression. They'd walk up the driveway from the highway, hoping to split wood and get breakfast you know. If they looked like they didn't mind working, they got hired. There were four or five men taking care of the turkeys. There was an outhouse up by the barn. There was a cookhouse and a woman from what was known as Eldridge in those days, the state hospital. You could hire very cheap help there. There were certain patients that were considered . . .

41. A: High functioning?

R: Able to take care of themselves, but not able to be out in the world. So you could hire a woman to cook, maybe a horrible cook [laughter]. We thought it was great. My brother and I loved eating at the cookhouse, it was up by the barn, because the table manners were so bad [laughter]. My father was so firm about table manners and we'd go up there and we'd just . . . oh brother.

42. A: Just let loose huh? [laughing]

R: Oh my gosh, guys were pouring syrup on their fried eggs and when they wanted a piece of bread they took their fork like this [holds it like a dagger]. You would just be reaching yourself and this fork would come down!

43. A: Do you remember these men's names?

R: Oh my heavens, yes. But they died about a hundred years ago.

44. A: I was just curious if they were any particular group of people? Just to give you an example, I've been interviewing people up on Sonoma Mountain Road and apparently there were a lot of Italian bachelor farmers up there. So I was just curious if these men were . . .

R: I don't think they were Italian. There was an old guy named Walter.

45. A: Oh, Walter Ritzmann? I saw an interview with him, found one at the library talking about Beltane Ranch. You're in there also, you were interviewed back in the 'seventies by, what was her name—Maureen Hawkins?

R: Never heard of her. I did not know Walt Ritzmann until the mid-70s.

46. A: A fairly short interview. I'll send you a copy.

R: In the seventies. About all I can say about the 'seventies is that I bit off a really big bite. My uncle had died and my aunt was ninety-seven and still owned the ranch and still very sharp. I had been living for twenty-five or thirty years in the Midwest and the East. I was married during World War Two. So I was long gone. But we'd come to a time when my aunt was well into her nineties. My mother was in a retirement home, but she was still very sharp. She called me and she said, "Rosemary, you've got to come out here."

I don't think I realized how much there was to do here; my aunt was not going to last much longer, so what was going to happen to the ranch? It never really occurred to me that everybody wouldn't want to keep the ranch. I'll show you how it looked—not when I came, it wasn't that bad [but when her aunt and uncle bought it].

This is just a scrapbook. This is how it looked when my aunt and uncle bought it. You can see that they'd already put a new roof on. My mother said the roof sagged and they thought they should just push it over. Isn't that terrible? I just love the house.

47. A: It's a great house.

R: They put a new roof on and they've got the props for the porch. They were starting to work on it. Looks like maybe they've painted this or something [pointing to part of the photo]. It hadn't a fireplace and they built a chimney. There was a cold water faucet in the kitchen that came by gravity from a spring one mile up the road and that was the water. Later a well was drilled.

48. A: Is that spring up in the canyon?

R: No, it's up Nelligan Road, off to the right. Anyway, a guy had been camping here, who was a horse dealer, he was grazing his horses in the garden! The garden right now is so beautiful. Anyway, that's how it looked and they had already started some work at this point.

[next photo] This is a wonderful picture of my aunt. My family liked to camp and this was up at Mount Lassen or someplace like that. This is my aunt stirring a pot.

[next photo] This is this house (cottage in which interview is taking place). This house was built about 'thirty-nine for my grandmother. That was my grandmother [photo]. She moved here, with her horse, from Santa Cruz, just before World War Two.

49. A: Is that your mom's mom?

R: My mother's mother. It got a little grown up on the front of the house at one point. Anyway, this goes on forever, you don't really want to see everything. Your printout said you wanted to see some pictures. This was walking up the canyon, which was something we all looked forward to. Do you know Alex, my grandson? He's a fireman in Glen Ellen.

50. A: I don't think I do.

R: This was the back of the ranch, Kenwood Winery had a party and a picnic.

51. A: This is up by the Nunns' home site?

R: Yeah. I just kind of quick went through looking for pictures. These were kind of pretty. There's the apple tree. There's an olive orchard back there.

52. A: Yeah, I know that area fairly well—but you can tell me about it.

R: Alexa's better than I am about the back. She remembers better. I haven't been back for quite a while; I don't get around that well.

53. A: Do you remember any of the old homestead cabins up there, like Nunn's?

R: There weren't any really. A corner of the old Nunn house used to be so about high [3-4 feet].

54. A: Nothing left now except for the foundation.

R: It was just a corner. I know where a foundation is not far from the apple orchard. I was talking last night to Alexa about that. I don't know if, without a map, I could really describe it.

55. A: I've got some maps.

R: Unless you knew where to look, I don't know that you'd find anything. But I know that there was something there.

56. A: You know I came across an old map from 1902 that shows four buildings around where the Nunns' home site was. Do you remember any of those buildings?

R: No, but I would love to know—they were definitely not there in the late 1930s. There were two Nunns—the brother who first acquired the property, he acquired a homestead. A hundred-forty acres?

57. A: Maybe 160?

R: Whatever. Then he got his brother to come, I think from Scotland, to get one next to his, so they had a bigger holding. When this property was purchased, not by my uncle, but by Mary Ellen Pleasant and Thomas Bell. She really did it I think. If you look at tax records in Santa Rosa, it's Mary Ellen Pleasant. I think it was his money. She bought property, I think Shaw was up Nelligan Road. Up Nunns' Canyon was Crosby and Johnson and Wilson, two Nunns. There were a bunch of properties and she put it all together.

This was the Drummond Ranch [valley floor portion], the largest one. The Kunde Winery ruins, which was the Drummond Winery, are used a lot for events now.

58. A: I haven't been back there but I've heard of them.

R: You could almost hit it with a rock from here. It's a great old building. Has no roof, just sides. Great old stone building.

59. A: That was Drummond's winery originally?

R: Yes.

60. A: The other foundation you mentioned—I'll show you, this map still shows Nunn's house right there. Here's the road going up Redwood Canyon [by lower gate], Redwood Creek goes off to the right. There's that road.

R: This is up at the end of Nunns' Canyon Road [meaning the currently paved portion]?

61. A: Exactly. There's a gate right there.

R: Lottie Howard, who was the last teacher at Dunbar School when it was a one-room school [c. early 1930s]. I remember her, she lived right there.

62. A: I remember that building.

R: It's not been gone long.

63. A: I've been in Glen Ellen almost twenty-five years.

R: You'd remember it, yeah. That was Lottie Howard and she was quite a character. Have you heard of the Behlers? Ben lived at the crossing of Dunbar Road over Calabazas Creek, behind Dunbar School.

64. A: Exactly. There's an old barn there.

R: Ben lived there. Beltane Ranch ended there. There wasn't the highway as we now know it. You know everything starts another [story].

65. A: [Laughs] That's OK. That's great that your brother wrote about . . . [interruption]

R: [reading her brother's words] 'There happened to be a fellow who years before was a pupil at Dunbar when Ben [Behler] was on the board. He recalled the time when Ben rode by and Lottie Howard, the formidable teacher, went out demanding to know what he would do with a boy who urinated in the water pail!' [laughter] Poor Ben. Anyway, you can have that [hands Arthur the pages written by her brother.].

The water pail—I guess you drew from the well and it had a communal dipper.

66. A: I knew someone in Kenwood, Al Guffanti? I don't know if you ever met him. He was probably gone before you got here. He went to Dunbar when it was still a one-room school house. He died maybe two or three years ago. He lived on the Pagani Ranch and used to walk down the train tracks to Dunbar School. He talked about the tin cups they had—you'd scratch your name on the outside. That's where they'd get their water.

R: Did you know Olive Pagani?

67. A: No. I haven't met her. Is she still around?

R: She died I believe, several years ago. I remember her telling me one day—I wanted her to come over and reminisce. I knew there was probably a good story there that I didn't know. She was pretty cute. She and one of her brothers, she had several, stayed home. She told me one of her greatest memories was going to dances in Glen Ellen, walking down the tracks from Pagani Ranch to Glen Ellen and 'we'd come home singing all the way.'

68. A: That's great.

R: I always remember that.

69. A: So that's Lottie Howard's place [looking at map] and then as you went up the canyon, would the next house have been the Crosby's? [orients Rosemary to map]

R: Yes. I've got it now. There's a wonderful thing called 'The Grave of a Little Boy' that I was told about when I first came back here. (I came back from the East in about '74, but I'd lived here in '38 and '39.) I can't imagine what it looks like now. It's an oval, not as big as this room say, of rock that are probably more out of place than they were. Probably in the late 1800s, a little boy had died and he was buried there, and this rock oval was around the grave. Big rocks.

70. A: I heard there was other graves in that area, like Alec Nunn's grave, there's a headstone or something?

R: I don't know about the headstone but a guy in Glen Ellen, Walt Ritzmann, told me a lot of things. He told me there was a white picket fence which was lost in a forest fire (probably 1923 or '39), it's gone. A white picket fence enclosed Nunn graves. There weren't fences you know much. People didn't have posts and wires. In fact Alexa is better than I, she can point out remnants of stone walls, which is what they all had plenty of. There's something I want to ask somebody—why aren't there more stone houses in the valley?

71. A: There's plenty of rock.

R: Why? It was all they had, I mean for building material.

72. A: I guess maybe there was enough lumber on the Russian River they could bring it in.

R: But up here? No way.

73. A: That's true, yeah.

R: Why didn't they [use stone]? Have you ever thought of that?

74. A: That's a good question. No I hadn't.

R: I think I remember hearing that the Drummond house near the railroad was built of stone. Do you know where that was?

75. A: I don't, no. I haven't looked into that.

R: I remember the railroad but it went out of service about the time we first came up here to see my aunt and uncle. And it was probably operating for a year after we moved here in the late 'thirties, just for freight. The station was on the ranch. But Ben Behler kept the piece between the railroad and Dunbar Road, a strip. He didn't sell that to my [aunt and uncle]. We

just went to the highway. He just kept that over there. But the ranch had previously gone to Dunbar Road because that was the highway then.

76. A: I've heard about Nunn's hayfield, where was that?

R: Alexa can show you that. I don't think I could do that on the map. It's been too long.

77. A: You mentioned another foundation for a house? Was that beyond Nunn's, up the creek further?

R: The road got changed, there was a big change after the '64 fire. My uncle sold logging rights to somebody after the '64 fire and all of a sudden here was this road that had always been on the left side of the creek and it was on the right. And it was to get the logs. But big trucks made it look much more like a roadway than anything we'd ever seen. So all of a sudden, here's the road.

If you stand on this side [of the culvert] you'll still see, you will make out I'm sure, unless too many years have gone by, the road was on this side [north].

78. A: I've been on most of that road, explored it.

R: Little parts of it. The last time I was up you could stand at the culvert and you could see it.

79. A: It looks like it came up on this side of Nunn's house maybe originally [above it]. There's a little stone wall.

R: Yes. A little piece in a little dip. Alexa and I were talking about that last night.

80. A: Yeah, it crosses those little drainages.

R: Out in here there's an almond tree and you know somebody was there. There's kind of an open space.

81. A: Is that at the base of a cliff? [referring to Secret Meadow area] It's kind of a little hidden place, it's above the old road. There's kind of a cliff coming down and a little knoll.

R: We were talking about that too. The Johnsons lived on one side and the Wilsons on the other and one of them killed the other one with an ax. How's that for a story?

[orienting on map]

82. A: I think this is Johnson Canyon. There's a burned out old bridge right there.

R: It was called the Behler bridge. My uncle helped him build it—the two of them together I think.

83. A: So the road stays on this side of the creek now, all the way up to the culvert here.

R: Right, but it was on the other side.

84. A: Then there's this road here in purple, which supposedly means it's new, although I know the road used to go over to Napa long ago. So this is probably that old road.

R: This road went to Wall Road. There was a gate up there. Wall Road ran up across the back side of the Mayacamas Range.

[Discussion of map features and orientation]

85. A: Did you hear any stories about the 1964 fire?

R: I was living in the east then. My aunt and uncle were told they should evacuate, but I don't think they did.

86. A: Any idea how far down the canyon [it came]? You can still see some burned trunks up there.

R: In reading your thing [questions], you didn't mention a fire in the late 'thirties.

87. A: I haven't heard about that one. Tell me about that one.

R: It was right after my aunt and uncle bought the place, which was in the mid-thirties. This was just a year or two later and it was in December, that I remember definitely. And it was very scary. Probably those damned Santa Ana winds, it's always those. Everybody always gets creepy feelings. We were living in Hillsborough—you get on the phone and hear about it—"Oh my gosh!" It was a bad fire and it burned a lot, but it was the same places. It burned the southeast side of Nunns' Canyon. It was a bad fire, but it was up in that same area.

88. A: As 1964?

R: Yeah.

89. A: The 1923 fire, did that get down [into the ranch]?

R: I was reading that in your thing too. A woman who lived up on Trinity Road a long time ago, wrote up that fire.

90. A: I've seen that little book, yeah. One of the Fraziers I think. [*The 1923 Fire, East of Sonoma Valley*, by Mrs. James D. Frazier. Published by Regeneration Resources, Glen Ellen. 1999].

R: Yes. Correct, you got it. That tells about that fire doesn't it?

91. A: Yeah it does. It's got a good description of it.

R: Some of the original families, like the Dericksons—generations in the Fire Department. They knew their fires.

92. A: So you had turkeys for quite a while and then . . .

R: The turkeys were all around here [ranch house area]. Cattle on the back and then sheep. My uncle met a man in Canada (my uncle never raised a sheep). He got this family to move down. This was sort of later in the turkey business. He probably still had turkeys but he got into sheep in a pretty big way. Suffolk sheep, which are a meat breed.

93. A: What part of the ranch were those kept on?

R: Not on the back, nearer the ranch buildings. There were always cattle on the back. My uncle and Ben Behler were kind of partners in raising cattle on the back of the ranch. I couldn't tell you the exact year Ben Behler and the Kundes bought Beltane together. Say 1920, somewhere around there. They had a falling out and they divided the property. Ben Behler liked to hunt and raise cattle and he kept the big part of the back and this narrow part we have—we just go out about as far as you can see in the vineyard and south to Calabazas Creek. He kept the big back and this pie-shaped piece. That's what my uncle bought from Ben Behler. The rest had already been divided with the Kundes. They kept the tillable land right up to the rock.

94. A: So Ben Behler was more interested in the cattle and the hunting and Kundes were interested in tilling the soil.

R: Oh yes.

95. A: Do remember the forests, the trees, you mentioned the oaks down here were a lot smaller and it was more open. How about on the back part of the ranch, what was that like as far as the trees and the forest?

R: I don't think anything changed except what's been damaged by fire. I can remember a corral of sorts built by my uncle and Ben. We kids—my sister, my brother and I, and my mother, and my aunt did the rounding up of the cattle on horseback. Some neighbor said, 'Heinz does his ranching with women and children.' [Laughter]

I mean sixteen hundred acres! You'd have to go with your horse to awful places. The worst of all was the right-hand side of the canyon because of the fire. It was hell to go up there on a horse.

96. A: The downed wood and stuff?

R: My old pinto was very snorty about going over big dead logs. I can remember having to get off—I was probably fourteen or something, and standing trying to hold things down. I'd be up there by myself. There'd be one cow you're going after, and to get that horse to walk over it [log] because he wasn't going to go, these branches were going to snap at him.

97. A: Spook him, yeah.

R: So trying to hold everything down and lead him at the same time. My uncle wouldn't have done it for anything. He wasn't really a great rider, but we all liked to ride. My mother had always been a good rider.

98. A: So I take it there was no fence around the property up there? So they might have just wandered off into Napa.

R: There were a couple of spots where—he had one long-horned cow. She'd just lead everybody up some gully and all your work [would be for nothing]. Maybe a couple of days.

99. A: Really? Wow.

R: Finally we had this sort of a corral we'd get them in and Uncle Ralph and Ben Behler would go out and walk around and hem and haw over which ones were worth bringing down. This was up near the Nunns' [home site], by the olives?

100. A: Yeah. Is that where the corral was, up there?

R: It was between there and the culvert [over Calabazas Creek], roughly. They chose which ones they wanted. There was still the train to reach. We drove them, these women and children, drove maybe eight of them that they would have collected. It's a heck of a long way, keeping them together.

101. A: So you were doing a cattle drive basically.

R: Well yes, it was. Uncle Ralph must have already made a hole in the stone wall—we'd drive them through that opening in the stone wall, down to the creek. There's a little bridge, there's a creek that runs up.

102. A: I think I know where you mean. I've seen it from the highway.

R: It's not a year-round creek.

103. A: There's a couple trees along it.

R: There's a highway bridge over it. I told my son-in-law that we drove them under highway 12 to a corral over at the station. (There were still freight cars until about 'thirty-nine.) He said, 'You didn't drive them under the highway.' I said, 'Don't tell me that. Yes we did. We drove them under the highway.' Now I guess there's not enough space under there at all.

It wasn't exactly roomy then. In fact the very bottom of it would have been some water and rocks. So the cows had made a little path up the side a little bit. Unfortunately the path went up. I had to bend way down to go under there on my horse and I didn't notice that my horse was moving closer to the [underside of the bridge]. Old western saddles had a high cantle on the front. So I was leaning way down and a rafter hooked on it. Of course the horse was rather terrified and she reared up and that rafter hit me right across the tailbone. I only remember because I couldn't sit through a double feature movie all through high school [laughter].

104. A: Probably cracked your tailbone there.

R: I wasn't good date material.

[looking at photos in the family album]

105. A: Were there more fruit trees up in Nunn's orchard?

R: Yes. They were pretty old then. We always went up to pick apples in fall.

106. A: I still get apples up there every once in a while.

R: There's probably two trees left.

107. A: That's about right yeah.

[looking at photos in the family album]

108. A: This is the orchard, right? I have a question for you. I've noticed that the trees that are left are really in the shade of these redwoods, which makes me think that they wouldn't have planted apple trees in the shade—do you think they'd already logged down the redwoods?

R: I agree about the shade, but don't know about logging. Redwood trees grow faster than you think. Over at the Beltane house, on the other side of the house, out in the garden area, there's a redwood that's a lot taller than the oak trees. I planted it there out of a coffee can in

1975 when it was about that high [demonstrates with hand]. I can't believe my eyes when I see that thing.

109. A: I noticed there's a bunch of old fence posts up there. Do you have any idea if they're related to Nunn or Behler or both?

R: Nunn I would say. In my time they were solitary and old.

The Beltane house, you know it has the strangest architecture.

110. A: Yeah. The rooms are all separated and small.

R: [Draws an outline of room layout—two rows of five rooms] It was like this see? It's still almost this way. We didn't move this middle wall. That's what holds the house up, right down the middle [laughter]. It went like this, like an egg crate, like you're looking into an egg box, except there weren't six, there were five. Ten feet [width of each room], ten feet, ten feet . . . fifty feet. Five, five, five, five—you think, 'Twenty rooms, that's a real big house.

111. A: Yeah.

R: There wasn't a stairway in the house, they were on the porches at each end. There were no inside stairways at all. You had to go outside. There are no stairways, there are no halls, there are no closets . . .

112. A: So it doesn't sound like Mary Ellen Pleasant would have really, it wasn't really the kind of place you'd build for a country estate.

R: It sounds like the only kind of house she knew [house of prostitution]. I mean all those little rooms, each with a door and a window. It was all she knew. It was kind of later in her career and I don't know that it ever really bloomed as such. I just don't know. But the station was right there. And the little boy to drive the surrey down to pick people up [laughter].

113. A: Everything you need.

R: That's all we know.

114. A: I heard that Mary Ellen Pleasant lived in Nunn's house at first, when she first got here? Before she bought the lower ranch, she bought Nunn's property.

R: I don't know, I've not heard that.

115. A: I saw that somewhere.

R: Really.

116. A: It does seem a little surprising that she would have been up there.

R: How the heck would she have gotten up there?

117. A: Of course that was when that was still the road over to Napa, so maybe it would have been easier, more commonly traveled.

R: Yeah, you know Jack London came over that road. That was his first look at Sonoma Valley, was coming down that road. One of the neatest stories about that road (of course all those roads were just trails at one time)—there used to be a family up on Trinity Road, which is very close at the corner of the ranch. The Parker family lived up there and Mr. Parker used to stop by and visit with me when I was first here in the 'seventies. He told me that when he was a boy, they went by horse and wagon maybe once a month to Glen Ellen to get sacks of feed or flour or sugar—just basic things. There's a very steep part back there. He brought a third horse that he tied at the bottom of that hill so that when he came home he had some extra pull to get up. 'Then,' he said, 'We got a Model T car.' It is just terribly steep and rocky even for a horse. Cars didn't have fuel pumps, so they'd have to take out half of the groceries or whatever they had, and back up[hill] and then come back and get the rest of them! Isn't that funny? [laughter]

118. A: That's wild!

R: Because the gas wouldn't stay in the engine. I'll never forget that story. Some of these apple trees I remember thirty, forty years ago, you could look up through the middle of the trunk and they had no core. So naturally they've fallen down [speaking of Nunn's orchard]. But you could look right up at the sky, look through the whole tree and they were awfully old, but productive.

119. A: Do you remember ever seeing any bears up there? Or any sign of bears? Black bear?

R: I don't think so. But there was certainly wonderful trout fishing.

120. A: How far did the trout fishing go up? Could you fish up by the Nunns' home site, or was it below the waterfall that it was good?

R: I suppose it was below.

[Looking at more photos]

This is up in a great bowl area.

121. A: I think I know that spot.

R: There's a big rock, one big rock. If you were ever up on top, in the little crevices of the rock, there will be little tiny toenails and teeth from the rodents. You know what a kite is? A white hawk? They just hang up there and swoosh down and the meadow is just littered with gopher holes. They just drop down and get one and take it up on the rock and pull it apart. The little holes in the rock would be full of toenails.

122. A: You said your dad did a lot of trout fishing?

R: Trout season opened May First. I was the only one who would get up at four, which was his idea of when to go. He'd wake me up and I was about twelve, fourteen. He'd wake me up and we'd go down to the kitchen and start the wood stove and have something to eat. Maybe we drove to the bridge where Lottie's Howard's house was. We may have driven there, climbed over the fence and walked up the canyon from there. But we'd be back in time for breakfast. We'd have six, eight, ten trout. They weren't big, they were probably ten inches, nine, ten inches. My aunt would put a big skillet on the wood fire. Heavenly breakfast.

123. A: Did you ever see any salmon? Bigger [fish]. I've seen salmon in Calabazas lower down.

R: Steelhead?

124. A: No, not steelhead, actual salmon. Chinook salmon.

R: Where?

125. A: Down off of Henno Road, I've seen them down there.

R: I remember having guests—I started the B&B in 'eight-one. One of my first guests told me about seeing steelhead spawning. Would have been right out where the mailboxes are on Nunns' Canyon Road, not as far up as Lottie Howard's. It's a little flatter.

When trout fishing we couldn't use a fly because it was so overgrown. The creek was so small. But there were great pools and overhanging rocks. My dad used to take a piece of twig, just a little tiny piece and toss it. And then we'd see the trout tear out and go, 'Oh poo, it's just a piece of stick.' [laughter].

126. A: So he knew they were there.

R: Oh yeah. Then he'd say, 'Let's go down and give it a try.' And we'd just use a salmon egg. It was a fly rod, but you'd have the line just long enough to where you could hold the hook and the rod in your hand. Then he would just release the line with the salmon egg on the hook and try to let it move with the water. But you couldn't do much moving around.

127. A: I've done a little bit of fishing with my son and the first time he ever went fishing was in Tuolumne Meadows up in Yosemite. And his very first cast, he caught a trout. Beginner's luck.

R: Alexa and I and the kids, when they were pretty young, six and eight maybe, we went to Nevada up into the Ruby Mountains. We took a pack trip. I remember the guy—he led us up and we had sleeping bags and a few cooking things and he left us there for about three or four days. Twin Lakes—it was way up in the Ruby Mountains. I can remember him having to tell Alex he was to ‘Stay behind’ him. He was just a little kid who thought it was all so exciting. But he caught more trout than Alexa or Lauren. He said, ‘That’s all you do, just throw it in and jerk it out.’

128. A: Do you remember other people coming up Calabazas to fish?

R: There were generations who’d been going up there. There wasn’t much you could do about it.

129. A: So it was a fairly popular creek, would you say?

R: Well, there were people who’d been going up there for so long they couldn’t imagine not doing it. I don’t think we ever had any problems.

[conversation resumes after A & R serve themselves tea and lemon cake]

My family thought I was insane. ‘You want to start what?!’ B&B you know, there weren’t any.

[pointing to one of the photo albums] That was Jack London’s ledger. Milo gave it to me. It makes a wonderful scrap book.

130. A: How about mountain lions or bobcats?

R: Some of my guests were taking a walk up Nelligan Road. They came back, and I’m washing the breakfast dishes, and they said, ‘We just saw a big cat!’ I said, ‘That’s my sister’s.’ [laughing] She had a big cat and she lived up there. They looked at me like [more laughter] geez this woman. They said, ‘We mean a *big* cat.’

There is an interesting group of pictures on the bulletin board right outside the kitchen door [main house]. A woman, I think she was from Davis, just asked if anybody minded if she set up a motion-sensitive camera. Then we forgot all about it. She came back sometime later and to our absolute pleasure and surprise, she got all these pictures of wildlife. We were flabbergasted. There were some good pictures. No bear, but you’ll have to look by the kitchen door, they’re still there.

131. A: Where was that? Up the canyon somewhere?

R: No it was close, but on the creek. There’s a little turnout where there’s about five or six mailboxes.

132. A: I know the spot.

R: Do you know Henry Garric?

133. A: I think I've met him once or twice. I know who he is.

R: If you want to talk to somebody who's still got all his wits about him and is nice as pie.

134. A: Does he live on Henno?

R: Yeah, he did. He and I were in mechanical drawing together at Sonoma High. But he's still a good friend. He was living in Oakmont; he lives near Nicasio now. Have you ever heard the name Tomasini?

135. A: I don't think so.

R: Tomasini Hardware was about one of the oldest things in Petaluma. Ever heard of Dal Poggetto?

136. A: Yeah. In fact I interviewed Dal a number of years ago.

R: Eloise?

137. A: No, Newt.

R: His sister Eloise is married to Henry Garric. Henry Garric's wife died a few years ago, she was from Glen Ellen, Betty. But he and Eloise married. He just very recently moved to her property, which is old Tomasini property out of Nicasio. But he is so Glen Ellen. I didn't know Glen Ellen until I was say twelve. Henry's been here forever. Another one who's a good friend of mine, she's sharp as can be, and she just moved to a retirement home to be near her sister—she's near Manteca. Virginia Solari and her husband built a house on her grandparents' property on the road directly across from the Post Office in Glen Ellen—Carmel. It's now owned by Doug Hanford.

138. A: Oh yeah, I know Doug.

R: He just bought it from them. The Solaris moved to Manteca to be near their daughter who lives down there. Virginia's husband, Lawrence or Larry, just died recently. But she's still there. She can just tell you the most wonderful stories of the trains going by in Glen Ellen. Her grandfather worked on the railroad there.

139. A: What a different time that must have been.

R: Yeah. She's great.

140. A: I'm curious--so you first saw this place in the 'thirties and then . . .

R: When my aunt and uncle bought it was in the mid-thirties.

141. A: And then you were gone for quite a while?

R: We came back and forth from Hillsborough and helped out. And then my dad sold our house because there was not much point in being a stockbroker. We came up here and we spent one year. In that year, we fixed up the upstairs, which they hadn't touched yet. They had no children, there were just the two of them and they had all those turkeys. There wasn't time to think a lot about the house. But they hadn't touched the upstairs.

I remember at night after dinner--we all ate together with my aunt and uncle--my dad and I would go upstairs. Everything is board and batten here, that house inside and out is board and batten. It's all made of full inch thick, full twelve [lumber dimension], which is really different, old redwood. You could take a piece and slice it with a hatchet and there's not a knot, I swear, in the whole house. It's just beautiful satiny grain, smooth as silk. Really beautiful. Dad and I would sand, putty and paint.

I didn't want to change the house in 1974, 'but it did need more plumbing and wiring.

142. A: I'm sure you had to bring it up to some kind of a modern standard.

R: I didn't know you were supposed to get permits. I didn't know anything really. My sister and brother thought I was stark raving crazy.

143. A: When you came back did you notice change in the landscape? Did it look different, had it changed noticeably? The trees . . .

R: No. I put in the olives.

144. A: How about Indian artifacts? Did you ever find any?

R: Yeah, I found an arrow[head] in the backyard one day. Alexa can tell you about some places on the back.

One thing about a ranch is there's not much time for anything frivolous.

145. A: There's a lot of work.

R: Alexa can tell you. And my mother said, she was ninety then, when I came out. She was the one who wanted me to come. I don't know what she thought I was going to do. Either have to cut bait or not. She said, 'Rosemary, the ranch will kill you. It'll kill you.' [laughter]

Once in a while I would get away for a night. Driving down the driveway, to actually get in the car and have it going down the driveway was sheer bliss. But she [Alexa] goes and the first thing that happens to her is her cell phone goes off and somebody says, 'The tank's running over' or 'The help quit.' She doesn't even have a regular phone. I don't get down here much anymore, I live in Mendocino. I live in Mendocino because I wanted to see the ocean so badly. Twenty-five, thirty years in the Midwest will make you, if you were born in San Francisco, fairly crazy to be cool and see the water. That's all I care about. I didn't have time to go thinking about retiring here or there. I just thought, 'Where is it cool and you can see the ocean? Mendocino.'

146. A: You're in the town of Mendocino?

R: Yeah.

147. A: Beautiful place.

R: Right downtown. [referring back to question list] Henry Garrick . . . Virginia Solari . . . Bill Morris is a real nice guy and he's smart as can be. These people are all in their nineties. Ninety-two or three, all three of them, wonderful Glen Ellen memories.

[R reads her notes] Sharpening stone for axes etc. It had a treadle and this big old stone and a little tin seat, it was an old tractor seat, hard little tin thing. A kid could sharpen a stick or anything, it didn't matter.

Collecting turkey eggs with Henry. He was an old Indian who had worked for my aunt and uncle in Glenn County for years and years. You collected them very carefully and the buckets were big. Everything was so much heavier then. The material that the buckets were made out of, or say a T-post [fence post]. Today you can buy a T-post that I swear I could bend over my knee. You can find some T-posts out here behind the barn that were my uncle's that I mean are . . .

148. A: Cast iron?

R: They are heavy. I couldn't have carried the bucket but I'd help Henry. He'd tell me, 'Now you be really quiet. You put your hand under the turkey.' He'd know she was in there to lay an egg. 'You put your hand in. Now you just wait a minute.' And plop!

149. A: [laughs] Sure enough.

R: You know they're about this big [demonstrates] and they're covered with speckles. If you rubbed it right away—this sounds kind of sick—the stuff would come off. Well how did they get on there? I mean it was like going through a car wash, isn't it?

150. A: [laughs]

R: As a kid I just thought that was so much fun. If you got it quick, you could rub off the speckles [laughter]. So anyway you wanted to know what favorite things we did.

151. A: So once the eggs were collected, you said . . .

R: There was an old house, kind of out there in that grass. I think older than the B&B. I think maybe it was there before the B&B.

152. A: That was just east of this house?

R: That field [points out window]. I remember the house and unfortunately my mother tore it down. My mother believed in cleaning up. There were two buildings that Alexa and I would give anything to still have. One of them is that little house. It was just little, might have had two rooms in it. From here it would have looked like one. It had a high ceiling and it was very old-fashioned. There was a little detail to it.

153. A: A little Victorian?

R: It was older than that. It didn't look shacky. It was old and it was probably half rotten, but it wasn't a shack to begin with. It had a little front porch. That was used, just because it existed and there wasn't much else, as a turkey egg packing place. Nobody's probably ever heard of this but me—the packing material for the turkey eggs was called water glass. It was like a gel of some kind. After dinner we packed eggs.

154. A: You dipped the eggs in it?

R: No. I can't imagine what it came in. The eggs were packed in crates either in this kind of stiff, jello-y stuff, or rice hulls. But you didn't have fancy boxes to put them in. They didn't exist, ones with the cardboard divisions and all that. So we had to pack them in something to protect them. We used rice hulls. They would have known how to get those because they came from Glenn County.

155. A: Where there's a lot of rice growers.

R: There were then. In fact I used to help drive turkeys to rice fields to clean up after the harvest (when the ranch was in Glenn County).

156. A: That seems like a smart use of your livestock.

R: It's pretty slow, walking turkeys. Can you imagine that?

157. A: So you would move them forward across the field, is that how it worked?

R: Actually, each of these big fields had a man with a dog. The dogs were incredible. They were absolutely incredible. They could almost not have the man. Except they were used to taking orders. What you did was you'd walk behind the turkeys and you snapped your finger once and pointed if you saw a turkey wandering off. That's all you had to do, just snap and point. And Snyder, or Jeff, or whatever, one of the dogs, would not run, that's the worst thing you can do. They would not scare them a bit. The dog would just walk over and come back. We moved them to some nearby ranch where they had just harvested the rice. That was the Depression for you, you didn't let that go to waste.

These are things I haven't thought about in so long I can't believe it.

158. A: That's exactly why I'm here. So the eggs were shipped off and they weren't shipped to be eaten, they were shipped to breeders?

R: Now why is that? Along with 'Why aren't there stone houses?' Why don't people eat turkey eggs? They're very good. I think duck eggs are considered a bit strong, but turkey eggs are delicious. You would have adjusted recipes a little bit because they're so big, and they're usually double yolk. They were shipped for hatching; they were shipped to Salt Lake City!

159. A: Did they go on the train as well? Like the cows?

R: I remember my mother driving my uncle's old pickup to Petaluma a lot to take turkey eggs. They went to Petaluma. I can't tell you what happened then, I have no idea.

160. A: Did they have a milk cow on the ranch, or a few milk cows?

R: [referring to paper] You ask here, 'What features would be different?' There was a little building like what those guys lived in [turkey guards] that my aunt used for a turkey hospital. That was vital—she ran a tight ship.

161. A: Ten thousand turkeys, you would have to [have something].

R: They didn't die. They didn't dare.

162. A: Ever have any landslides up there in the canyon that you remember?

R: No. I can't think of any.

163. A: How about floods? Big rainstorms?

R: No.

164. A: So you said you got your water from a spring that was piped down here.

R: There's a well now, and the spring isn't on our property anymore.

165. A: I know you probably haven't been up there much since Open Space got the upper part of the ranch—Alexa might know this better than you—but I heard there are less flowers up there in the open fields because without the grazing the grass has gotten higher?

R: The idea of not grazing is so insane, so totally insane. Some of their ideas, I don't know where they got them. It's too bad that they don't have people that know what they're doing. Like, somebody told Alexa what a wilderness it was up there. There was a community up Nunns' Canyon! A whole community. About all they could do for a living was live very simply, which they did. Plant things, raise a few animals, build a fence out of a rock. They lived really simply. They cut firewood and hauled it down the road to Glen Ellen. They didn't have anything to do [to make money]. They could sell some of those apples, have a cow.

You asked about a cow. Across from the barn, this is something my mother did. Not only did she push over—it was probably falling down—the house where we sat at night after dinner and packed turkey eggs. My mother was always trying to push the remains over. Also the cookhouse. The cookhouse is where these men ate. They washed at an outside shelf that had tin pans, a piece of broken mirror and a roller towel. There was a crude shower, I think it was kind of covered with burlap sacks or something, and an outhouse, and that was it. Their own little shacks had nothing. A man from Eldridge did the wiring here, the first wiring for my uncle.

166. A: A patient from Eldridge ? [laughs]

R: Yes. Charles. Charles was a funny little guy in bib overalls, a little squirrely guy and he loved doing wiring. Most of all he like big china insulator things?

167. A: Oh yeah, I know what you mean.

R: White. We had those everywhere and he ran wires from, I suppose it was one pole where the electricity was brought in from Nunns' Canyon Road or something, he brought a wire out to one of these sheds. So these little sheds had one cord that hung down from the middle with a bulb on the end. That was it for those guys that lived in there. That was all they had.

168. A: Did they have a switch, or did they just unscrew or screw in the bulb to make it go on? [chuckles]

R: I couldn't tell you that.

169. A: Do you remember anybody planting trout in the creek out here? A lot of that went on, so I would be surprised if it didn't happen.

R: I don't know whether you've heard the name George Nicholas.

170. A: Nicholas Turkey Farm?

R: Yes, that's George Nicholas. I think he learned turkeys from my uncle here. He worked for my uncle when he was young. Then he grew up to be in the turkey business. He planted some trout at some point. I couldn't say when—in the 'forties or 'fifties?

171. A: That would be about the right era.

R: That's about all I've ever heard of was that.

172. A: Somebody I interviewed, maybe you know him, he's no longer around—Bill Basileu? He had a barber shop down in El Verano.

R: Oh Basileu. I went to high school with a Basileu in Sonoma, but I don't remember [his first name].

173. A: Might have been him or a sibling. He said a train used to come in and they would have these cans of fish, fingerling trout, and if you wanted to go plant some in your own home creek, you'd just go down to the train station on the right day and get a hundred fingerlings and throw them in the creek.

R: Things have changed haven't they? My gosh.

174. A: Yeah, things have changed. How about seasonal wetland? Any areas on the ranch.

R: No.

175. A: Has the stream channel changed? Deeper or wider?

R: I don't think so. We went mushrooming a lot, which I really miss. Mendocino has different mushrooms and I never have learned them. Mainly we got something we called 'field mushrooms.' Right out here, I remember the last time I got them out here; I was running in front of the tractor that was disking the whole thing up for the vineyard! [laughter] I was right in front of him. Field mushrooms, it was so easy. My aunt would give us each a dishpan and send us out there when it was mushroom season in the fall, after the first rains. She'd just cook huge pans. We'd eat bowls full. Homemade bread, homemade butter, and fresh sautéed mushrooms—we'd eat 'til we popped.

Horseback riding, trout fishing and mushrooming were all I can think of for what I enjoyed the most. We had lots of picnics. I showed you that picture of my aunt—that could have been taken up in the back of the ranch. We had a picnic area, kind of below the olives, near the creek. We used to pick apples and my aunt would cook on the—I think there's still a shred of

an old metal woodstove. She would do real cooking, not just on a stick or something. My mother and Alexa is the same way—she can cook on a campfire just so naturally. Just squat there happy as can be.

176. A: I heard there was a mine somewhere? I've never seen it—a hole in the ground?

R: Yes there is and none of us can find it now, yet I remember it well. It was a mercury mine. I think there were a bunch of them around here, weren't there?

177. A: There was a kind of a mercury rush, I forget when it was exactly.

R: I couldn't explain where it is. The funny thing is we can't find it. I remember my father having a fit when we moved here. As I say we lived here for not much more than a year before we went on up above Kenwood, to our own little place on Lawndale Road.

178. A: I curious where you lived on Lawndale? I'm working on a property history up there.

R: If you turn at Kenwood and you go up where there's a bridge, up past the old Rossi Ranch, and you go through the Rossi's. A story about hacking over a few vines with our Model A. My brother was letting me drive. Why were boys allowed to drive? He had a license at thirteen! Only for day time. But I was older!

179. A: And you couldn't drive?

R: Oh no. Not if there was a boy to give it to. I was older, but he got the license. So I made him let me drive one day after school. We were driving to Glen Ellen to get the bus, then we had to switch and go to Santa Rosa after a while. He kept pretending he dropped a book. There's a fuel line in a Model A, just a little thing you could adjust with your finger. He'd go down like that [demonstrating] And pretty soon the Model A is going [lurching]. I said, 'Oh Jerry, stop that!' So I'm driving and I'm also under the dash trying to get the gas back on and I went into the vineyard and I took out two of Mr. Rossi's grapevines.

My brother was furious. I think we were kind of stuck in the soft ground. And he knew my dad was going to find out he had let me drive. He said, 'You walk home and tell dad.' I had to walk a mile home. I had to take some of my allowance for weeks to old Mr. Rossi to pay for those two vines. Gosh, long suffering girls.

180. A: Do you ever remember Calabazas Creek going dry? Lower down did it go dry?

R: I'm sure you could find a pool or two at Lottie Howard's, but then out where it got sunnier and the rocks were hot—probably a little trickle somewhere under the rocks. But it could get pretty dry.

181. A: Below her place.

R: Usually there was something there. But I imagine there were a few times when it was pretty hard to find out in this area. In the shade of the canyon . . .

182. A: I'd imagine it would always be up there.

R: There isn't as many quail as there used to be. I miss them.

183. A: How about hawks or golden eagles, did you ever see those?

R: My brother did. My brother was a great birder. My aunt, when she was in her nineties, she didn't get around quite like she had. Sitting at the kitchen table and watching the hummingbirds—she always had a great garden and two or three hummingbird feeders hanging on the edge of the porch; it was something she enjoyed very much. I got rid of them because of the orioles, they used to just suck them dry in about two minutes. And I thought, 'I've got so much to do. Look at this big garden and all those flowers, the hummingbirds don't need you.' So I took them down.

I can't believe that made the orioles go away. They were beautiful and what they did was not live here so much as come temporarily. The orioles raised their young on the first ripe raspberries and would then be gone for the rest of the year. We never see them now.

My aunt planted raspberries when I was first here and they're still there and you can go pick a handful of ripe raspberries, because of the hot weather we've been having. Just yesterday I had a whole handful of ripe raspberries. Usually it's June. They're almost famous, so many people have taken starts from there. If you ever want raspberry plants, early spring we've got them by the jillions.

184. A: OK

R: We pick so many raspberries I couldn't stand to buy a box of raspberries. We have raspberry syrup, raspberry jam, raspberry on everything. People love them. They can go pick all they want.

185. A: I'll remember that next spring. I've got some of the black raspberries on my property, but I don't have any of the red ones yet.

R: There's something about the slope. They like that much sun. It looks like a hot place for them but we couldn't get rid of them if we wanted to. My aunt would not believe it, but they're the ones she planted years and years and years ago. They have produced twenty *billion* raspberries.

I remember my aunt used to have pots of five-finger ferns that we got up Johnson Canyon. You know where I'm talking about?

186. A: Yeah. There's a little waterfall up there?

R: Yes, right. Right there around that waterfall, five-fingered ferns. Beautiful.

187. A: How about the wild turkeys, when do you remember those coming?

R: No such thing [in the past]. No.

188. A: They're fairly recent I think.

R: People's attitudes about land [reading from sheet]—making a living was more desperate in my time than now. I think a lot of things now that are considered really important—like I don't think anybody ever thought about a cow standing in the middle of a stream pooping and where does the water go? We just hadn't gotten to that.

189. A: Right. In some ways it's a luxury now that we can consider those things.

R: Yes . . . I started to write—I didn't get very far—this is my little book called 'Turkey Eggs and Miner's Lettuce.' We always enjoyed Miner's Lettuce. Do you ever eat it in the spring?

190. A: I do, yeah. It's good.

R: You know the Beltane sign on the barn is off the railroad station. My uncle bought the station building for the lumber.

191. A: After the railroad closed down, yeah.

R: We used to have boards with yellow paint on them here and there for repairing fences.

192. A: Is this more things you wrote down [looking at more sheets from R]

R: I wrote this a long time ago, I don't even know what it says. I've always wondered just where the Drummond House was, but you don't know?

193. A: I might be able to figure it out.

R: It was near the railroad and it wasn't far from the Beltane Station.

194. A: We might be able to figure it out with some older maps that might show it.

R: I once saw an air view of the old Kunde Winery, which is the old Drummond Winery on the Kunde property. Which is just barely off this property, it's very close by. It's been used for various events. It's quite picturesque. In this air view you can almost see a line out through —

the vineyard wasn't there then—out towards the railroad. I always wondered if that house wasn't out there.

195. A: The old driveway remains or something.

R: Yeah. A way to go from the house to the winery.

196. A: Alexa mentioned she heard there was a racetrack somewhere, but nobody seemed to know where that was.

R: Oh yeah, we always heard about that. It would have been that brightest green strip of vineyard, more or less. Roughly out there.

197. A: Close to the highway pretty much.

R: I heard after I moved back here that the reason the highway was moved from Dunbar Road this way, was so it would remain parallel, instead of crossing [the tracks] right out here by the taco truck [north end of Dunbar Road]. The way Hal Weiss told it, his grandfather was the road commissioner and he wanted the road closer to his house [laughter]. Which probably is exactly right. He said the road needed moving because there'd been an accident—probably one, to keep the road from crossing the tracks. Hal said it wasn't really to save an accident as to get the road closer to his house. The Weises lived at the old Atwood place [just south of Beltane].

198. A: Would you mind if I took a few digital photos of your photos in the album?

R: Oh no [granting permission].

[Following comments were made as A is taking photos]

R: You know the [main]house was not on a foundation when they bought it, it was on redwood blocks. Went through the '06 earthquake.

199. A: That's amazing.

R: There's my grandmother sitting in front of this house.

You know we're so used to having refrigeration that we forget people got along without it.

200. A: In the 'thirties did you have an ice house? Did you get ice from somewhere?

R: I'm trying to think what we would have done. There was an icehouse when Beltane was acquired (in the 1930s); a closet-sized building outside—had thick sawdust walls.

I remember the separator up in the cookhouse. The guy bringing milk in and pouring it into the separator. I remember coolers. Old houses in California had coolers. Do you remember those?

201. A: I think so. I lived in an older house down in Marin years ago that had some kind of a funny, vents and . . .

R: Yeah, it was just part of the kitchen. The north wall, it had to face north. It was just like a cupboard. You opened it and there were wire shelves and a vent, a screened area above and below, so it circulated, and that was that.

202. A: That sounds like what we had.

R: I see that I wrote in here we were still in Hillsborough. I was probably ten or so and my aunt would drive down from Glenn County with a big dressed turkey for us. You could get dry ice somehow, I wonder where she did that. The turkey would be cold and inside the turkey where you put the stuffing was a quart jar of Jersey cream.

203. A: Well this has been a real pleasure Rosemary. It was great. I sure appreciate your sharing all you memories.

[A describes the transcription and review process]

R: I realize now how many funny things I've said that we just took for granted that aren't that way anymore.

204. A: Things have changed a lot. I've probably interviewed close to twenty elders. People know so much and you probably wouldn't sit down and write all the stuff we talked about. But if we can get it recorded then we've got it for the future.

R: Henry Garrick and Virginia Solari are a couple of real Glen Ellen old-timers who are very sharp. They are past ninety.

205. A: High time to talk to them.

R: Yeah. Virginia comes up once in a while. Muriel Shainsky, the Jewish chicken family? She still lives in Sonoma. Virginia and I were best friends at Sonoma High in 'thirty-nine say. Probably before long she'll come up and spend the night.

206. A: OK. Let me know if she's coming and I'll see what I can do.

R: She might say, 'I don't know anything.' But she does too.

I'm glad Alexa talked to you about this because even my grandchildren would be surprised at a lot of the things I've told you. You don't always—[garbled] when you're a kid you don't want to do that anyway [listen to your elders]. But they will.

207. A: Some day. I was very lucky, I knew all four of my grandparents really well. My first grandmother didn't die until I was in my twenties and I lost my last grandfather when I was forty, so I knew them as an adult. My dad grew up on a farm.

R: Whereabouts?

208. A: Maryland. He was a dairy farmer. He worked for USDA, he was a researcher. But when he retired, he'd always wanted to be his own boss, so he bought 120-acre dairy farm. He kept it going for a long time.

R: It's hard work. Dairies are killers.

209. A: I used to get up with him before dawn and help him milk the cows. I don't think I was much help!

R: People don't realize what dairy farms are like. You almost have to be born into a dairy family. Not just say, when you're about thirty, 'I think I'll have a dairy.' I don't think you could do it, do you?

210. A: I don't think you could do it.

R: I don't think you could do it. Up in Kenwood we had one Jersey cow. My gosh, what we got from her—but you also have to respect the cow. The cow wants to be milked at a certain time every day, twice a day. My brother, he and I were both in the Santa Rosa High School before we finished high school, and he played in the school band. Sometimes they were at a game, at some other school. He was hitch-hiking. We didn't even have a phone up there. It was during the war and there weren't phones at the beginning of the war and that meant there weren't going to be any phones 'til after it. I'm one of the few women, even my age, who went through high school without a telephone.

That cow, if he didn't get home, he was bawling at the gate. My father and I both milk this way instead of this way [demonstrates and laughs]. Neither of us are any good. My mother was pretty busy feeding all of us. My little sister milked really well and if he didn't get home, she'd save the day. But the cow doesn't want anybody milking her.

211. A: When I was nineteen or twenty years old I was working at a summer camp which was also a small ranch. The owners wanted to go away for the evening, so the cow's gotta get milked. I'd milked a cow before, thinking I'd done it with my grandfather. But I discovered it wasn't easy, having to do it all by yourself.

R: My brother could milk—we had to catch the bus I think it was five after seven for high school. He'd eat a big breakfast and milk the cow, change his clothes. So he could milk her in minutes and she trusted him. There's something called letting down the milk. They can withhold it. I remember this big bucket which my mother scalded every morning for him, big shiny bucket. He milked so fast foam would just come up in the bucket. Great streams [of milk]. We used to try doing that.

212. A: My grandfather could do that, he could make it foam.

R: And you can't—the cow isn't going to let you and you don't know how anyway! But a Jersey cow produces such a great quantity of cream. We had nothing but homemade butter.

213. A: Did you make ice cream?

R: Yeah.

214. A: My grandmother made ice cream.

R: We always made ice cream, wonderful ice cream. Fresh peaches in it. Remember how hard it would get to crank when it was getting stiff? That was fun. Homemade ice cream was a tremendous treat.

215. A: Besides fruit trees up in the canyon, did you have fruit trees down here in the lower part of the ranch?

R: I don't think so. Like an orchard or something? I don't think so. It was turkeys, turkeys, turkeys.

[general discussion about various kinds of fruits and changing tastes]

Thanks you very much. I've enjoyed this. Nice to know it's going to be put down. Never thought I'd be here. All of a sudden you're the old wise one.

216. A: You live long enough and you get to be the old wise one.

R: Yeah, it's kind of a surprise.

Interview with Alexa Wood

at Beltane Ranch, Glen Ellen

(in the main ranch house)

August 15, 2013

AW = Alexa Wood

AD = Arthur Dawson

1. AD: When did you first come to the ranch?

AW: When I was a kid I lived in Springfield, Illinois, and we'd come out every summer on the train or bus or something and visit my great-aunt and uncle who lived here, Effia and Ralph. I have some memories from when I was probably five or six. We'd only be here a week, maybe two at the most. I guess it would have been 1970, maybe, the first time I actually lived here for any length of time.

2. AD: Was that when your mom came up to take care of her aunt?

AW: I'd have to have a calendar here. It was either when I was just married, or about to get married. We lived in Woodland for a year in about 1970. So we used to come over a lot on the weekends. Then we lived in Boyes Springs after that for a while. So that brought me back closer and then we lived on the ranch. In about 1972, we lived in what was then the laundry room. It was a little ten-by-ten room.

3. AD: Oh yeah, you showed me that [off the southeast corner of main ranch house]. Were your aunt and uncle still here at that time?

AW: My aunt. My uncle died when I was fourteen or fifteen, something like that, I think. And then Effia died when I was about twenty-one or 'two. When she died we'd gone back to college, so I was not here for her final days.

4. AD: But your mom was around.

AW: Mom was pretty much here. And my grandmother was still very active—Effia was her older sister. Between the two of them they were taking care of her. She had various people that lived with her in the house for a number of years and they each deserve a book of their own! They were some real characters.

5. AD: Then your grandmother was around for a while?

AW: Yeah, my grandmother—I don't remember dates well—I would say she probably died about 1988 or '90. My kids remember her well.

6. AD: That's good. Seems like you have a pretty long-lived family.

AW: Yes, we're a tough bunch!

7. AD: Did your grandmother take part in the running of the ranch?

AW: When Ralph and Effia were really elderly, that would be in the 'sixties, even at that point the turkeys had been taken over by Alan Gordenker.

8. AD: So there were still turkeys on the ranch?

AW: There were a lot of turkeys still on the ranch. And Effia and Ralph were still really sharp and active. They were probably in their eighties, about eight-five then. My grandma started taking an increasing role looking after Effia and seeing that things [got done]. She always this urge to clean up the ranch. You know how old ranches you have equipment . . .

9. AD: There's always stuff laying around, yeah.

AW: It desperately needed to be cleaned up, but she hauled away an awful lot of stuff. Being rather fond of old junk [myself], old vehicles and old tractors. There were a couple old buildings that she took down, it's really too bad. I think she got rid of what we called Etta's House and the Cookhouse.

10. AD: Etta's house, where was that?

AW: It was down toward the swimming pool, so to speak [livestock pond north of ranch house]. It was a little tiny house with a, what do you call it? An upstairs where the walls would be real short 'cause the roof comes down.

11. AD: Yeah, a garret I guess?

AW: Yeah. A little tiny place—one room downstairs and one room upstairs, a little fence around it. It was really cute. I think it was really, really old. Yeah, Etta worked for Effia and Ralph for years. She lived there. She was a resident of Eldridge.

12. AD: Oh yeah, your mom mentioned her.

AW: You could sort of 'check people out' I guess [chuckles]. You could come get somebody. Etta had been here for years and she was a big, burly, heavysset black woman who was really capable and maybe just a little bit on the child-like side, but just a sweetheart. Kids just loved her, she was a lot of fun. She looked after whatever they needed doing, helped with gardening and whatever. Sort of a handyman really.

13. AD: Did she live out her life on the ranch?

AW: No, she was gone before Effia died. She wasn't young either. I have this feeling that her health was failing and that she'd gone back to Eldridge and possibly died there. I was maybe late teens at that time. I didn't live here, I don't really remember.

14. AD: Sure.

AW: She had a son, who I think was a pretty successful businessman in Oakland. Why she ended up there [Eldridge]? She couldn't drive. I've got a picture of her on the office wall.

15. AD: Yeah, I think you showed me [on a previous visit]. When you were a kid were there any favorite places you had on the ranch?

AW: Yeah. An area between here and the house Lauren lives in [southeast of ranch house, further than the old laundry building mentioned earlier], there used to be all those little mobile turkey herder shacks?

16. AD: Right.

AW: In my childhood I thought it was a whole village. There must have been six or eight of them out there. They were all empty, except for maybe one little piece of furniture. They were all just sort of randomly scattered in the high grass. I just thought that was fascinating. You had your own little private village to play in.

17. AD: You could go in any of them you wanted to?

AW: You could go into any of them. Couple of friends would come out and everybody'd have their own, you know, just playing in them. That was really fun. Nobody ever knew where we were.

18. AD: I remember my sister imagining something like that when she was a kid. She had a place she called the town or the village. It was just like set up with rocks.

AW: Oh yeah.

19. AD: I can imagine if there were actually little structures.

AW: They were tiny little houses!

20. AD: That would be really cool!

AW: Little door and window; they'd have one chair in them or something. I thought that was great. We'd usually take—we had that old jeep since 1960 or something—we'd get Effia loaded into it, which wasn't easy, and my grandmother. My grandmother would often drive it. We'd go up the canyon and take an evening picnic. That was really fun. At least once when we

were out here we'd do that. Effia loved that, Everyone, the whole family had always been devoted to picnicking, anything outside.

21. AD: Was Miller your grandmother?

AW: Yes.

22. AD: I can bring that map back pretty soon [referring to 3-D map commissioned by Ralph Heins].

AW: I don't care. If it's of interest to you. I mean I want it back someday, but

23. AD: Yeah, yeah. I actually mapped all the points on it [shows Alexa a paper print out]

AW: Good for you.

24. AD: So I can send you a pdf of that.

AW: Sure, that would be fun.

25. AD: If you ever want to print it up [Alexa looks at map]. If you see anything you think should be double-checked, I can do that. You said your uncle did that? When do you think he made that map?

AW: Seventies. I feel like it was something he read about, or somebody came by with an offer to do it, or something. It was kind of a spur of the moment thing and I guess they had a topo map and . . .

26. AD: They cut it out and stuck it on. You can keep that [referring to paper map]

AW: Good.

27. AD: So the Gordenkers took over the turkeys and then?

AW: I don't know when they took them over. As far as I actually cared who was doing it, it was the Gordenkers. I'm sure it was Effia and Ralph when I was a kid. By the time I was a teenager it was Alan Gordenker.

28. AD: And then when did they leave [the turkeys]?

AW: After Effia died, mom was back here. Mom and my aunt raised sheep and I think they wanted some of the pasture. Kundes used to have bulls out here, the rest was turkeys. My uncle, I think he was always a little bit in favor of just selling the whole place, even back then.

29. AD: This is your great-uncle Ralph?

AW: No. Richard Bon. He was the senior male in the family, the closest male in the family—he was sort of running things. I think that’s why the Nunns’ Canyon Quarry was shut down and I imagine that’s why Al got the turkeys out—I think Richard wanted to simplify everything. That branch of the family didn’t have a lot of sentimental attachment to this place.

30. AD: Hadn’t spent much time here, or . . . ?

AW: Yeah, Richard’s a stockbroker, he’s a much more practical person. My mother’s the dreamer. She didn’t care what they said, she was going to save it no matter what.

31. AD: Good for her.

AW: Yeah.

32. AD: What do you know about the quarry?

AW: Hal Weise is there person to talk to about that because he used to work there sometimes as a kid. I don’t know, did it start in the ‘fifties? That’s just a guess. All through my childhood, and all my teen years and everything, I would say up until 1970 it was running over there, maybe even longer than that? ‘Seventy-two maybe. I know it paid a lot of bills around here. It was very beneficial as Ralph and Effia needed a lot of care and the turkeys didn’t pay much. I know that financially the quarry was a real boon in those days.

33. AD: Was there ever talk about opening it up again, like when your mom took over?

AW: No. The Bons’ property—you know where the quarry is—if you went up Nunns’ Canyon Road, the Bons property is this kind of long rectangle that heads back that way. Richard had told them he didn’t want them coming any closer to his house. Not that it’s very close. So I think that was just dropped.

34. AD: Yeah, can’t say I’d want a quarry too close to my backyard.

AW: It was a long ways away. I always thought that that was just an excuse. I think Richard thought it would be best if things were in a condition that you could sell it, not tied up with a lot of leases. But at the same time, he did put in the upper vineyard. He wanted the place to generate a stream of cash to pay taxes and things like that.

35. AD: So it felt like a cleaner way to have it.

AW: I think so. I think that was kind of his plan always. You know we kind of botched it up [both laugh]. That upper vineyard was certainly a blessing for many years. It had to get replanted. It was originally supposed to be Pinot on top, and it was Gamay. Nobody knew who was doing what in the vineyard business in the early days. It wasn’t well done—improperly put

in. Even after my husband and I took it over, it needed a lot of care and maintenance. The roads were a mess. It was poorly done.

36. AD: Who were you selling your grapes to at that time?

AW: Chateau St. Jean for a few years. They made a Beltane Ranch Chardonnay. Then very quickly, in a very few years, it went to Kenwood and stayed there for a long time. After they sold to Gary Hecht we cancelled the contract—well you have to cancel two years in advance because it's one of those renewing contracts. Then for a few years as we were selling the property, we bounced around between a lot of other wineries. Kunde, Landmark, BR Cohn . . . just dividing it up for a few years because we didn't know who was going to buy it or what they were going to want to do.

37. AD: So now it's sold off?

AW: Yeah, that upper vineyard and the middle vineyard, which I put in about the late 'eighties, when I was already single. So those are both separate parcels now, that was part of the deal with Open Space. They didn't want any working vineyards and the family was trying to maximize their return. Both of them are over a hundred acres, just to meet the hundred acre minimum [for zoning]

38. AD: But you don't own them anymore. I noticed—and it could just be an old [parcel map]—when I was looking at the information I've got, which is a few years old, it's gotta be three or four years old, it looked like [showing on map]. This is Open Space, but this was still listed under Beltane [72-acre parcel about ½ mile northwest of Nunn's Iron Spring], kind of right in the middle. Is that still your property?

AW: How weird.

39. AD: It could be, that for whatever reason, that piece took a little longer to go through.

AW: There were so many proposals between us and the Open Space. 'Well, we could do this.' 'No you can't.' 'Well we could do this.' It went back and forth and back and forth, but where are we going to draw the lines. I have absolutely no idea what that was for.

40. AD: I did run across a deed at the Recorder's Office the other day, I found some of [the deeds] from when Mary Ellen Pleasant bought the property from Nunn, I found that. I found, I think the purchase from Drummond. Or, it wasn't from Drummond, it was from the Bank of Santa Rosa, but it said on the deed 'Known as the Drummond Ranch.'

AW: Yeah, yeah.

41. AD: I'd have to really check it, but one of the deeds actually described it as something like this [boundaries similar to the parcel in question]. So it could be an old parcel that's just stayed that shape.

AW: I have absolutely no idea, even historically. That's up to you. I don't know why that's there.

42. AD: I'll figure it out.

AW: But the whole transfer thing was frustrating. It's like one branch of the county doesn't know what the other's doing. We do something and then we have to do it over and then they lose that or decided they need it different. It was a hair-puller to get that deal closed. Certain things happened in stages, maybe that justifies that. But that doesn't even look like any of the old historic parcels that I remember.

43. AD: What kind of animals do you remember seeing on this part of the ranch, or the upper part of the ranch?

AW: In addition to a bazillion turkeys . . .

44. AD: Wild turkeys you mean?

AW: Oh, you want wildlife?

45. AD: Yeah, wildlife.

AW: Mostly a lot of deer—there were a whole lot more deer. Those evening picnics we'd often go up to that big bowl. I have so many memories of fifteen or twenty; deer in sizable groups. A dozen each, here and there, just moving across these hills, everywhere. You really don't see that anymore at all.

46. AD: Why do you think that is?

AW: In those days there was a very active hunt club too. All the Kundes. Ralph [uncle] wasn't a hunter. Kundes and Win Smith and the Shones and everybody all hunted together. They were serious about it. I'm going to guess it has a lot to do with coyotes and mountain lions. I remember the first time I heard a coyote in this valley. It was probably in the late 'seventies and we'd lived here for several years. We'd come from Arizona at that point where we heard them all the time, and I'd never heard one here. So I think they were pretty much non-existent. Sure they were in the county, but this area here nobody heard them. And we certainly didn't have any mountain lions. So there's much less deer hunting, and maybe there's more poaching, I don't know. I think it probably has to do with . . .

47. AD: More mountain lions, more predators?

AW: Mountain lions and coyotes, yeah.

48. AD: I heard the same thing for all the bigger animals in other places, like on Sonoma Mountain. I was talking with some old-timers over there and they said, 'Yeah, back in the 'thirties you would never see a coyote or a mountain lion or a bobcat.'

AW: Yeah. We get bobcats and the mountain lions and coyotes. So I'm guessing. I don't think there's near enough poaching to reduce the population like that. They're hard to see up there now.

49. AD: How about mountain lions? How many times have you seen those?

AW: You know, I haven't seen one here. Bobcats, we have quite a few of those around.

50. AD: Where do you see those usually?

AW: The last one I saw was in my chicken pen [both chuckle]. I used to have a friend who lived at the top of Nelligan Road. So often I'd drive to and from her house and after dark they'd shoot across the road, down in that steep 'Brockman Canyon.' One time when I was hiking late in the afternoon with a friend, late in the afternoon a few years ago, I'm quite sure we heard a mountain lion. I've heard the bobcats and this was different. That was way up top .[Nunns' Canyon]

51. AD: Did you ever see any scat?

AW: Yeah. I'm not an expert, but I'm pretty sure. Just up and down the canyon and I've also seen some down here along this creek [small Calabazas tributary west of the house]. We did have some guests who really did know what they were talking about, who were hiking up Nelligan Road early in the morning and they looked up and they saw a mountain lion, kind of following along in the brush. They were outdoors people, they knew what they were seeing. Other times people will say they've seen a mountain lion when they're walking in the parking lot at night, but they also thought my dog was a wolf!

52. AD: Yeah, people who aren't used to it.

AW: No. If somebody really knows their stuff that's one thing, but a lot of people, their imaginations kind of run away.

53. AD: Especially in the dark, out in the country.

AW: Yeah, out in the country, spooky sounds.

54. AD: Did Effia or Ralph ever talk about them?

AW: No, I don't think they were here. I don't think in their time, I'm going to guess that from the 'thirties on they were probably wiped out along with the coyote population. Kept down to a rare thing.

55. AD: How about black bears?

AW: Well, you know there've been a few that have roamed through and caused a big public hoopla. I've never seen one.

56. AD: There was that one about fifteen years ago down at the Gaige House. Somebody was in their swimming pool there and looked up and there's a bear in the tree [laughs].

AW: Yeah. And I'd think it'd be pretty OK bear country up there [Calabazas Preserve and Mayacamas in general].

57. AD: It seems like it.

AW: The canyon seems reasonable, plenty of water and shade, but it's not too hopelessly brushy.

58. AD: I think I've found bear scat up there, though I'm not an expert either. It looked like stuff I've seen other places I was pretty sure was bear scat.

AW: I would think they roam through there some.

59. AD: I was doing some fieldwork up there in maybe 2005, and in one of those pools up near the redwoods, not too far from Nunn's House, saw this really interesting frog. It had leopard spots and it was just hanging out at the bottom of this pool. Have you ever seen anything like that?

AW: There's some fascinating stuff in that creek, but I'm not much of an expert on frogs. I used to go fishing with my grandfather as a kid. As far as frogs and snakes, I'm not a real expert. There used to be a big rock, my mom probably told you about it . . .

60. AD: In the Bowl.

AW: It's just blanketed on top with little tiny skeletons. Kites sat there and ate. There were always white-tailed kites. It was just guaranteed that there'd be several doing that little funny thing that they do. Then they'd sit on that rock to eat. Lot of eagles.

61. AD: Lot of eagles?

AW: Yeah. The last time I went over there, I rode over with some friends and we sat out and had lunch and there wasn't a skeleton on it. I see a kite every once a while down here. For a

while we must have been kite central. Ten or fifteen years ago. They'd be out here over these front fields often in the evening, and always up there.

62. AD: When you mention it, I think I remember seeing more kites a few years ago than I've seen recently. And you said eagles, you saw eagles up there?

AW: Yeah. I always feel like they come from up above Trinity. You know where Tish Ward lives up there?

63. AD: No exactly.

AW: You turn at the Fire Station [near Trinity and Cavedale Roads intersection] there. It always just seems like where they come from. They must nest up there and come out and sail around. I have a friend who could call them, make the same noise that they make and it was fascinating to go out. You could get several out there and they'd all be answering.

64. AD: Those are golden eagles?

AW: Golden eagles.

65. AD: You ever see any bald eagles?

AW: Not here. I don't think there's enough water.

66. AD: Yeah, they do like water don't they.

AW: I see them on the Russian River.

67. AD: I think I saw one way off in the distance from my house once.

AW: Oh really?!

68. AD: It looked about the size of a turkey vulture and it had a white head and there were all these little birds diving at it.

AW: Yeah, yeah.

69. AD: It seemed like a bald eagle sort of thing.

AW: I've never seen one here. Occasionally we get odd birds on the pond in the winter. I think it's somebody who's been blown off course—we'll see a cormorant down there and it'll be kind of a surprise. It's usually a stormy period. We used to get some really exotic ducks and I thought something had flown in from China until I realized that the Kudes were raising them and sometimes they'd get out [both laugh].

70. AD: How about any mink, or fishers? Martens?

AW: No. Friends of my sons were fishing in the pond a few years ago and said something 'brown and furry' was swimming around. They didn't know what it was. I didn't see it. A lot of foxes.

71. AD: All over the ranch?

AW: Yeah. In the culverts and the driveway and around here sometimes.

72. AD: I've noticed at our place, on Warm Springs Road, that seems to be the time of year when we hear the foxes. They have a weird little, funny, strange bark. Do you find that around here too, that there's a certain time of year when they're more vocal?

AW: I don't know about that. I don't know that I could really say that. We were riding in the canyon several months ago, and some old fox, I think he was scared, ran up a tree that was leaning over and barked at us [both laugh]. They're cute. No I can't think of any of the sort of marten that I've seen here. But you know, it wasn't like we spent a lot of time up there. That was where you'd go for a picnic or had time to take a ride or a hike. So I wasn't up there every day working. That was always a treat, sometimes, unfortunately, a rare thing—have enough time to get up there. That was one of the reasons I was so excited at first about putting cattle up there after the Open Space District bought it. I thought, 'Oh good! Now I get to go up there every day or every couple days' saying 'I have to go to work now.' Didn't work out so well.

73. AD: When you did have cattle up there, were they up there certain times of the year, how did that work?

AW: Gordenkers had them and then Barry Shone had his cows up there. Gordenkers, then Kunde, and then a guy named Mark Fratessa and then Barry Shone. There is some good grazing up there but it's hard to get to. It's so remote that getting the cattle in and out and getting up there to check on them and everything [is difficult]. If you need to doctor somebody, there's not a corral or a chute or anything like that. So it's not a real practical thing.

74. AD: Would the cattle be driven up there?

AW: Yeah. After the Open Space District took it over, I said, 'You guys are going to have to graze it up there or it's going to look like it looks now.' I bought twelve head of black baldy steers from Nevada and they had a very strict plan about how they wanted them—it's not fenced, so you don't really have any say.

75. AD: You can't check in with a camera. You've got to get out there.

AW: You'd ride them up Nunns' Canyon Road, through the gate and up the canyon, get 'em up as high as you want up and then cross your fingers. Then the next day they were back behind the barn.

76. AD: Really.

AW: 'Cause Open Space took a lot of fence out and then they put a gate across the canyon, but you could just ride a horse around it. It would keep a vehicle out, but cattle don't read signs. They tried to do a little drift fence up on the top

77. AD: Is a drift fence just a fence that doesn't connect with anything else?

AW: Yeah. It might go to a steep rocky spot and then come around here and get into the creek. It's helpful

78. AD: Yeah, it would discourage them from going around.

AW: Yeah, it would discourage them. They were up there too early—the grass was way better down here. The timing needed to later in the year.

79. AD: When other people were grazing up there, was there a certain time of year they would tend to do it?

AW: They'd have twenty, twenty-five cattle up there year round. Mostly year round, sometimes they would bring them out at the end. If they got real hungry, they'd come down behind [garbled]'s house, coming out looking for feed, so they'd take them out for a while and then send them back up. The Kundes had cattle up there a lot. If there was a problem with their cattle—they're purebred Hereford and they're kind of bred for the show pen, they're kind of short and wide. They didn't think much of those hills. They'd sort of stay in the level spots and wait for somebody to drive hay up. They needed to be a little bit more of a range cattle breed. Mark Fratessa had a lot of Brahma crosses and that was kind of different. They don't stick together like Hereford or Angus, that kind of a cross. They'd be [wandering] over on Wall Road. They went all over the place.

80. AD: Gee.

AW: I hope they figure out how to get some grazing up there.

81. AD: Ever any predation on those cows?

AW: Mine wouldn't stay up there [if that was the case]. Before that, when we had cattle up there, Barry or whoever had cattle . . .

82. AD: Lions weren't a problem.

AW: No, not that I recall. If they lost a calf or two, you never know if you're not right there, if the calf was weak or something was wrong, then it could be a cat, could be a coyote, who knows?

83. AD: So grazing stopped about the time Open Space . . .

AW: After they bought it, I tried, they did want to have it grazed. I said I'd do it, but without fences . . .

84. AD: It just didn't work.

AW: Yeah. Now they took out all the fence down at the entrance there, down around the canyon, the swing gate across the creek and then down the other side, it would hook around. So if they did come back, they would have ended up above the quarry, back on our property. But most of that they took out, there along the creek. It's too dangerous. At least if they've eaten well for a few days, they'll come back here, instead of heading for the highway. But nobody else is going to want to put them up there until it's really secure.

85. AD: Yeah. So the grazing stopped around two thousand . . . [year]?

AW: Two [2002].

86. AD: So it's been about ten years then. What have you noticed has changed up there since that time? Maybe you can't say it's from the grazing, but . . .

AW: Some of it certainly is. We had almost no star thistle when the Open Space took over. It started right there, where that painting is.

87. AD: That's just below 'the Bowl'?

AW: Yeah. My feeling was that it got started there, I could be completely wrong about this, but that one of the spots where the Kundos would drive hay up. Dump out a bunch of bales, supplement [their diet]. I have a feeling that's where it came in and that was pretty much the only place it was. Then after a couple years, that had spread 'til you could see it from the highway. It turns that kind of olive-grey weird color?

88. AD: Yeah.

AW: I screamed and yelled at the Open Space, did everything but threaten them. They did finally spray it, but you have to spray it several years. The seed will last, seven or eight years. So they did do it last year—it made a difference. Nancy Ryan and I rode up there a couple days ago. It's everywhere. That was the only place where it was one of those absolutely solid patches to the exclusion of everything else. And then over in the Hayfield area, that real red soil, there were several small patches that were obviously growing, that were solid. The big

meadow, up above the apples and all the way back? All the way across there now, there's so many areas that are just star thistle everywhere. That makes me sick. Overgrazing obviously would encourage it, but I really do think that cattle are one of the better controls if you do it right. It does come up after everything else is dry.

89. AD: I've heard it's dangerous for cattle. Is that only true after it's . . .

AW: Yeah, after it's done its thing. They'll avoid it unless they're starving. But when it's just coming up and it's still soft, it's green and everything else is kind of already dry.

90. AD: So they're actually attracted to it?

AW: They're kind of attracted to it, yeah. That was one of the things I hoped to do, but they wanted me to put the cattle up there in March or something. I think in order to work on the star thistle, you'd want to be up there at the end of May, June something like that. So it just makes me sick to see how that's spread. I don't know now what to do about it. The grass is so . . .

91. AD: Thatched?

AW: Thatched, that's the word I was thinking of. Yeah, matted down. It certainly keeps a lot of other things growing, but I can't imagine there's the wildflowers up there that there used to be. And the Johnson grass? That perennial?

92. AD: Harding grass?

AW: Harding grass, yeah. It's becoming more and more and more of that. That used to be kind of localized. Cattle like that and I don't know if they want to get rid of that. I think the cattle probably work on it.

93. AD: Do you think goats would at all be a possibility?

AW: Yeah. Except they'd get picked off. You'd have to have somebody up there to lock them up securely at night. Somebody up there with a big dog to keep an eye on it. Sure, they'll eat anything.

94. AD: I've seen, over in the East Bay, maybe you know about this—

AW: Yeah, Goats R Us. It's expensive, but you can probably control goats with a portable electric wire and have them graze within that. That's fantastic if you can afford to do it. But somebody would have to be up there with them or they'd just get picked off like crazy.

95. AD: It's like ringing the dinner bell for the mountain lions.

AW: Oh yeah, it's like little cupcakes out there! [both laugh] Almost as bad as sheep. So that's the problem there. In theory it would work great. I don't know what to say, I just hate to see it happen. It used to be mostly rye and oats and things up there, that I recall. But it would be these clean high stands when it was dry. There's a picture of my daughter riding her horse down in there, and his tail sort of dragging on top of the oats behind him.

96. AD: Do you think the oats, are they hay oats?

AW: Every once in a while we get them, because we buy oat hay, if we're in the barn or something, some real commercial oats, whatever you want to call them, will sprout up. So these are just wild oats. But I guess they're not native either.

97. AD: From what I understand they're all exotic.

AW: The ones that have sort of gone native, every once in a while around the barn I'll get some that are very lush looking compared to what we call wild oats. And I know they came out of a hay bale. But what was up there was just the standard wild oats that you see everywhere.

98. AD: I was just curious, from when Nunn had his hay field up there, if there's anything left of that.

AW: He probably introduced it all.

99. AD: He could have yeah.

AW: Is there anywhere it's not? That's everywhere now. But there were other various rye grasses. I'm not a grass expert.

100. AD: Me neither. They're complicated.

AW: They are. When Open Space was trying to figure out when they wanted me to put cattle up there, they sent Lisa Busch?

101. AD: I've met her a couple times.

AW: I really enjoyed that day. She knows grass.

102. AD: I did a little bit of work with her up at Pepperwood. Do you know where Pepperwood is?
AW: No.

103. AD: It's northeast of Santa Rosa. It's a preserve that used to be under Cal Academy I think. Now it's its own place. It's incredible, there's these ridges, these grassy ridges where you can see all the way to Mount St. Helena and Alexander Valley. Really an amazing spot.

AW: Remote.

104. AD: Yeah, pretty remote. Talking about the creek, did you ever see trout or go fishing for trout?

AW: Oh yeah. I don't remember catching a lot, but it would fun to go up there with my grandpa. I can remember a couple of fish in pans down here. We'd be getting back and everybody'd be just getting up. My grandmother would be frying venison steaks on the woodstove. It was really exciting for somebody from the Midwest. That was pretty cool. George Nicholas, when he was a younger man, used to fish up there a lot. There were always fish in that creek, I'd see them darting around in there.

105. AD: Did you ever hear of people planting fish up there?

AW: Nope. There was a guy here who used to be a guest here at the B&B frequently. He worked with the EPA. His name was Rob Leidy.

106. AD: Oh yeah.

AW: Is he still around?

107. AD: He's still around.

AW: He once said that that was one of the last native steelhead populations in this watershed.

108. AD: It's certainly considered one of the best subwatersheds in Sonoma Valley.

AW: Who knows before 1930? Nobody in my family.

109. AD: Did you ever know Bill Meglen?

AW: Oh yeah.

110. AD: I think he talked about fishing up there.

AW: I bet. Anyway, people used to just fish. I remember my great-aunt was sort of offended when she found out that George Nicholas had been going up there so long and he'd never brought her any fish [laughs].

111. AD: How about the creek itself? Has the amount of water changed, the runoff changed at all that you can think of?

AW: To me it doesn't seem like it has. I mean a big storm would alter certain stretches of it a little bit. There's certain places that seem to get altered every year. Creek would move it over here and then it'd move it back.

112. AD: Any of those places up in the Open Space property?

AW: Only where the road dips right down there [by the creek] and they did a pretty good job of stabilizing that. It would just flood all over there and then the water would recede. All we would ever do is just go up there by hand, roll the boulders back so you could drive. Where the roadbed is, is just this much [barely] above the creek. We just did hand work. One time we did pull, there was a logjam right in there and we cut a couple of downed trees out that were forming a dam. The Forest Service [CDF] used to maintain that road.

113. AD: Oh, for fire.

AW: Back before they were so dependent on airplanes. So every couple years they'd go up there and do some road work. They'd do the whole loop around. I would imagine they originally went on through Barry Stubbs property and down to Wall Road. But I don't know.

114. AD: Have there been any serious fires here since the '64?

AW: The fire department had a couple of controlled burns, but they were so nervous I think because of all those houses up the hill that they only burned an area about the size of this living room.

115. AD: Where was that?

AW: It was around the Nelligan Road side. Probably between those two hundred-acre parcels that we sold, right up in that high scrubby area. That was where they wanted to burn. There was a road they could get a fire truck in, so that's why they decided to do it there. So no, there hasn't been a serious fire. A little one started when a young guy rolled his jeep down those hills. He came over from Wall Road. Actually, we started seeing tracks. Kids would careen down that steep thing and then go back out. Well finally they rolled it and started a fire. He got caught. Of course he happens to be a fireman now and a really nice guy [both laugh]. My mother's punishment was to make them go up there and rake the ruts out and reseed it. Which they did. And it was not much of a fire. As far as I know there hasn't been anything else.

116. AD: Have you noticed changes in the forest?

AW: Oh yeah. There's so many more Doug firs than there used to be. They're really encroaching on the meadows and up through the oaks. I'm not an expert, but I guess that's from a lack of fire.

117. AD: That's my impression too. I don't know if grazing would help with that. Do you think cows would nip off a little shoot of the Doug fir?

AW: I don't know if they'd do that by choice, I don't know that that would have any effect. Except that it would keep some of the other things out, keep the brush trimmed down or whatever. But fire just needed to burn fast under those oaks and burn the firs and leave the oaks. The firs are really thick in some places. It starts sprouting up out in the meadows and things. It would really be a shame, I think, if it became all fir. I don't think that's the way it was historically.

118. AD: I've looked at old survey records for that area and it's surprising how open it was, particularly this ridge [south of Calabazas Creek]. This ridge is described as being very open.

AW: No kidding—wow!

119. AD: Even in the 'forties, I've seen aerial photographs from the 'forties that seem to show this being still pretty open. It would be interesting to look around up there.

AW: I can remember it being more open, and then there was a time when it was much brushier underneath. Now some of that underbrush is sort being shaded out. You can see in there better. The cattle used to spend a lot of time up there, according to my mother. She always had to chase them down. Other than looking for shade there's no reason they'd go up on that whole ridge any more.

120. AD: Was the underbrush manzanita or? What types of plants?

AW: Where I'm thinking of is maybe twenty years ago, riding up the canyon? On the high side, you just couldn't see in. Now it's starting to thin out and you're seeing trunks and the trees are taller. A lot of it was just lower firs.

121. AD: Sure. They've grown up high enough they don't have any branches lower down.

AW: Something I was thinking about this last week as I was riding along, before you get to the apple trees. There's some beautiful stands of redwood down in the creek. Now they're all surrounded by firs that are maybe twenty feet high. I didn't really notice them before. I mean the sun was on them and they were beautiful and green and everything. You know if they burn they'll take those redwoods with them.

122. AD: Yeah. I sort of think of fir as being a 'native invasive' species.

AW: They used to be controlled by fire and they're not anymore I guess. God they're thick. I don't know what the answer is up there.

123. AD: Coming back to star thistle for a minute. It doesn't sound like there was really much need to try to eradicate them? Or did you do any eradication? It was such a small area and it wasn't really a problem it sounds like.

AW: No it was just scattered around up there. At first I didn't even know what it was, 'cause we didn't have any.

124. AD: It was something new.

AW: I would say it was the late 'nineties before I saw any of it. Later 'nineties for sure. I had to drive some woman from the state parks around. She was flabbergasted at the lack of star thistle. She had an underling with her. This was some of cleanest property that she'd seen. It was 'cleaner than anything in our system.' Those were her words. 'This is cleaner than anything in our system and the perfect example of why we have to get these places out of private hands. That was her comments. I'd like to invite her to come back and say, 'Well it worked. You got it out of private hands and now it looks like the rest of it.' I don't what we would have done if it was still ours, but we would have done more than this. I've helped with other ranches or helped with cattle on these pastures for other people around here and I've seen some of those pastures where star thistle has taken over. It's just god awful!

125. AD: It's horrible stuff, yeah.

AW: Natural cures are great, but that's a time when I don't care what they have to spray, just get rid of it. Or keep it in check. I don't think you'll ever get rid of it.

126. AD: Right, keep it in check.

AW: Keep it in check before it becomes just useless.

127. AD: I just read an article in *The Sun*, I don't know if you know *The Sun* magazine? Comes out of North Carolina?

AW: No.

128. AD: There's one guy [interview] who'd done a lot of conservation work in his life. Someone came up to him at a conference and said, 'You really should find out what has happened to the native people who have been in some of these conservation areas.' And there were some terrible stories about people being pushed off their land. But the point I was coming around to, he said that lands that have come under protection usually become less biodiverse, because nobody is using them. There's things that happen when they come under public ownership.

AW: I know. It's starting to look like a vacant lot. Thatching, is that the word?

129. AD: Yeah.

AW: I was kind of shocked. The canyon looks pretty much the same to me, riding up the canyon. They did a nice job at the washout and the water level seems the same at the end of summer, just keeps right on up. Real real hot spell it'll dry up down here but not up there.

130. AD: That's typical for creeks all over this area.

AW: But the upper meadow is really depressing. With the grass, the firs and the star thistle, it looks abandoned.

131. AD: When you say 'Upper Meadow' you mean?

AW: The big one, with the eucalyptus and the olives and the apples, that whole big stretch.

132. AD: And then there's 'the Bowl.' Do you have a name for this open area here, leading up to 'the Bowl?'

AW: That's what mom refers to as 'the Hayfields.'

133. AD: That's kind of what I figured.

AW: We just called it 'Red Soil Meadows' because it's really, really bright red.

134. AD: It's the same stuff you see in Kenwood.

AW: Yeah, that stuff. It's really red. A beautiful series of meadows, especially if you get off the road and work your way through the back of them. I don't want to see them full of star thistle, I don't want to see them overtaken by firs. It would be a tragedy.

135. AD: You know, I'm a member of the stewardship group, but I'm so busy raising a family I hardly get a chance to go up there. But it does seem like there's a pretty good number of people who are on that.

AW: They're a good bunch.

136. AD: Yeah, they're a good bunch.

AW: Lauren Johannessen hikes up there and what's the guy's name—Rory?

137. AD: Rory Pool.

AW: If it wasn't for him there would be no access, because he's the one who cuts the trees as far as I know.

138. AD: I wonder if there was enough energy within that group to come up with some kind of a plan.

AW: I know that some of them pull up fir trees. Technically they're not supposed to touch anything. It's like not letting anybody take a hoe up there and do cross-ditching on that last road down to the [culvert]. They said you needed a permit. The Forest Service put that in after '64 and it's always been an erosion problem. We'd always try to get up there during the runoff from the first big storm and just take a hoe and dig a few little cross-ditches. Nothing big. You keep it from getting those big gullies down the middle.

139. AD: Which are sending sediment into the creek, which isn't good for the fish.

AW: You are. If you think you're going to have to get a permit from the Bay Area Water Quality Control Board to dig a ditch with your hoe, you're nuts.

140. AD: Yeah.

AW: So they need, you can't expect volunteers to do [that kind of work]. They shouldn't buy them if they can't take care of them. That's my feeling. I think there's a lot of good intentions and everything, but there's some ignorance of what's involved.

141. AD: I have a half acre and it's more than I can take care of [both laugh]. There's so much pruning I should be doing.

AW: Even with the people we've got around here, I've got a little patch of star thistle across the road and I missed my window. There's so much to do, it's a big job to take care of anything. You can't ever have it all be just right. You do your best to kind of keep up with it. I think the District really needs to devote funding to, stop acquiring, and start caring for what they've got. I can't tell them how to run it. But just as a citizen, I'll continue to voice my disapproval of their lack of management. It's not like a functioning wilderness area, like you have ten bazillion acres and big herds of animals and everything working like it did in pre-Columbian times. It's basically a vacant lot, closed in by sort of suburban development. And it's going to look like a vacant lot. If you tear a building out in the neighborhood you don't get a little wilderness area in its place.

142. AD: Right! I think one of the things that most surprises me about, the more history I learn up there, this was a little functioning community.

AW: Yeah it was.

143. AD: And now all those people are gone, all the buildings are gone, but it really was not a wilderness a hundred years ago.

AW: It wasn't. It's an isolated thing, you've got development all the way around it of one kind or another. It's not going to function right. All the people that lived up there used it, to various degrees, but they don't seem to have done a tremendous amount of damage. It would be really interesting to know what it was like in the 1870s and '80s when there were so many families up there. I wish there were pictures.

144. AD: I'm going to do some newspaper research in the work I'm doing for you. I'm hoping I'll find a few little snippets here and there.

AW: I hope so. I've spent a little time up there, but I don't really know how to do the research. But I would just love to know the early history. The Weingartner piece, you're not really going to get involved much with that, that belongs to Todd Moss now. That guy bought and sold and bought and sold so many little pieces there and then he lost them or something. That's one of the stories I wish I knew.

145. AD: He was an early settler too?

AW: Yeah. There were two guys up there. There was a lot of buying and selling and losing of land up there.

146. AD: Did you get a chance to look at Walt Ritzmann's interview?

AW: No I didn't, I'm sorry.

147. AD: That's OK. When you do—one of the things you've been wondering about—he doesn't remember the race track, but his brother—he was one of Christian Weise's grandson's I think.

AW: I forgot that, yeah. [see Ritzmann interview for story about Walt's brother] He used to live, there's a house as you leave Glen Ellen, like right before you get to Hill Road, on the high side? Somebody has built these stair steps?

148. AD: Yeah, I know exactly where that is.

AW: Ramps and bushes and walls. Walt had a real simple delicate little frame house in there. His neighbors didn't like him—he loved birds and he'd shoot everybody's cat. They'd go after his birds [both laugh]. 'If they're in my yard I shoot 'em.'

149. AD: That's funny. How long has he been gone, do you know?

AW: Twenty-something years. I didn't know him well. Probably more than that. Mom really enjoyed him. I'll have to read that.

150. AD: I think you'll enjoy it.

AW: I thought this was going to be a quiet week and it was not.

151. AD: Just a couple more questions. What's now the Open Space property, what has the community use been? If you could just describe that?

AW: Now or then?

152. AD: Just in your experience over the years you've known the ranch, how it's been used by the community?

AW: Initially, our family enjoyed it for the hikes and the rides, and then the local hunt club, deer hunters, had their own little camp up there.

153. AD: Was that the Deer Camp?

AW: Yeah. After Mom started the Bed and Breakfast, we used to send anyone that wanted a good hike to do the loop up there and lots of people did. It got kind of famous for that. We still have people that come and want to know if they can do the loop. Or run it. We had some people that ran it. We had some competitions between people who never met because they'd put their names and their time on the wall. We always gave permission to just about any group. Valley of the Moon Trail Riders, and the Oakmont Hikers, and there was a Sierra Club group that used to come and hike. Scout groups. Various artist groups. There was a Boy Scout camp. Ralph would [allow it]. I should have showed you that when we hiked up there. He gave ongoing permission for the Boy Scouts to use it. You're about halfway up the canyon. You can't really see it any more. The road kind of veers a little bit up and away from the creek. If you go straight ahead, there's kind of a long . . .

154. AD: I think I know where you mean. I've looked at that, if it's the same spot. I've thought, 'That would be a good little spot to camp.'

AW: It used to be all open under there, a couple trees. That was Boy Scout Camp. We used to let a lot of people use it. It seemed like you ought to share it, as long as everybody was responsible and also I think it was good. Those are eyes. We had problems with pot gardens, but smaller problems than we have now. I pulled any number of them out. If you were off trail doing something, you'd see a little drip line and there it'd be. It used to be somebody would have thirty plants or something.

155. AD: Not a thousand or five thousand or whatever they are now.

AW: Cut the lines and then they'd usually get scared and stay away. We did have one of the guys that had cattle up there had a couple of cattle shot one time after the SWAT team came in. They'd seen something from the air. It was '93, something like that. The sheriff's team had seen something from the air. They roared in here and demanded keys and thought it was ours. It was all kind of alarming to me. They didn't know how to get in there, so I gave them the key

and told them how to get in there. They went in and tore the plants out and left some kind of a note or a sheriff's card. They drove back through here and there was a lot. The next morning a pregnant heifer, very pregnant. It cost him two animals, were shot right there at that spring.

156. AD: Oh wow. They thought they were taking revenge. That's sick.

AW: It was a day or so later, there was a house fire on Trinity Road. A shady character's girlfriend died in the fire. Body was found in the house. A lot of people thought it was probably connected. I don't remember the name.

157. AD: When do you think pot growing started up there?

AW: A lot of high school kids have been doing it.

158. AD: 'Sixties probably.

AW: Probably since the 'sixties. But as far as slightly more commercial, though it was still just local guys. I imagine it just continued to pick up speed. When there's a presence up there, someone's up there checking cattle, and enough guys lose their gardens, it doesn't get out of hand. I don't really care if a kid's got a dozen plants.

159. AD: Right.

AW: After they shot the cow, I changed my tune about the whole thing. There's another spring up there that we used to use when we needed water for sulfur for the upper vineyards. Filling up the tank, we started way back in the hills and the guy that worked for us had to go back in there and start up a pump to pump up to the vineyard. There was a [garbled] 'Get out and don't come back.' There was a guy with a gun. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to get him in trouble, I didn't want them coming after [anyone]. He came and told me. So I waited like a month, 'til I figured it was closer to harvest maybe he wouldn't be directly suspected. The sheriff and I went in and there were about a thousand plants. That was the first big one. That was probably '92. That was the first time you got the feeling that there was violence associated with it. On that big of a scale. Now it's gone way way way beyond that.

160. AD: Who do you think is behind what's been going on the last few years?

AW: There's huge gardens, part way up the canyon on the left. I don't know if you've ever hiked up in there.

161. AD: I don't think I've been up there the last few years. That's like Johnson Canyon, up in that area?

AW: Yeah, one on each side. Like a mirror image almost. The amount of underbrush they cleared, the amount of labor that had been done, unbelievable. Just phenomenal. Kind of randomly terraced and what did they figure? Ten to twelve thousand plants in each one?

162. AD: Wow.

AW: And big camps with hammocks and big propane tanks. Tons of garbage, sleeping bags, tents, pesticide containers, rifle shells, hollow point shells and miles and miles and miles of drip line. I don't know how they get it all there. It's so steep, hand over hand, to even get up there to see them, I do not know how they get it all in there.

163. AD: Think it could be air dropped?

AW: I've thought about that. Seems like you would hear it.

164. AD: Seems like you would.

AW: I'm sure the guys that do the work never get much of anything out of it, but somebody had a big operation. They must have had a system where a certain list of items was provided to them every week or whatever, but they obviously weren't big on brushing their teeth because there were about fifteen tubes of toothpaste, and there were other things you could see they weren't particularly interested in. So I think they were supplied by somebody in charge.

165. AD: The guys probably just stay up here until harvest.

AW: Stay up there and we'll send somebody up with supplies for you once a week or whatever. There were tin cans, tortilla wrappers and all the usual.

166. AD: Have they ever caught anybody up there? Have they arrested anybody?

AW: No. A friend of mine found the line and then ran. The line was way down where it was coming out of the creek. The line was active. I think as soon as they know that somebody has found it like that, then they split. They may come back and try and harvest it, I don't know. It looked like a lot of it had not made it to maturity for lack of water.

167. AD: If it's cartels . . .

AW: Big operation with a lot of money behind it.

168. AD: . . . they probably figure 'We'll have a hundred gardens and if . . .

AW: . . . one of them comes through we're fine.' I was gone for ten days. Apparently there was a big raid recently. I still haven't heard the details on that.

169. AD: I saw an email about it. I haven't really read it.

AW: I haven't either. I don't know where they took it out from or anything. So they haven't given up.

170. AD: Other than having more people up there, is there anything you can think of that would keep that more in check?

AW: No. I mean you can fly over it and try to look, but they're hard to spot from the air. I mean these guys had cleaned it meticulously and it was all madrones, maybe fifteen, twenty-foot high madrones, and they had been cleaned up their trunks so it just left this perfect screen over the top. Beautifully done and they worked really hard.

171. AD: They knew what they were doing.

AW: I think the aerial stuff is pretty darn hard. I can't imagine having to send people up there.

172. AD: And if you're there at the wrong time.

AW: Don't go alone, certain times of the year.

173. AD: I heard the sheriff was hesitant about going up there `because they know how dangerous those people can be.

AW: They set traps and everything. I don't blame them.

174. AD: You don't want to lose your life over that.

AW: No, I don't. And I discourage my friends from hiking like that but I don't think it does any good. But the more it's used, the more sets of eyes are going to notice a foot trail or a drip line or tire tracks down to the gate, things like that.

175. AD: Maybe when it becomes part of the Regional Parks, that'll change.

AW: I don't know what they'll do. They just immediately close it and tell people to stay out when they have something like that, which is probably the opposite of what ought to be done. I don't know if it'll ever make it into the parks thing or not. It's pretty remote, it's a pretty big hike up there for most people.

176. AD: Any things that you want to say that you haven't had a chance to say?

AW: I'm sure I'll think of some things.

[Arthur describes follow up--transcription, review & 'Deed of Gift.']

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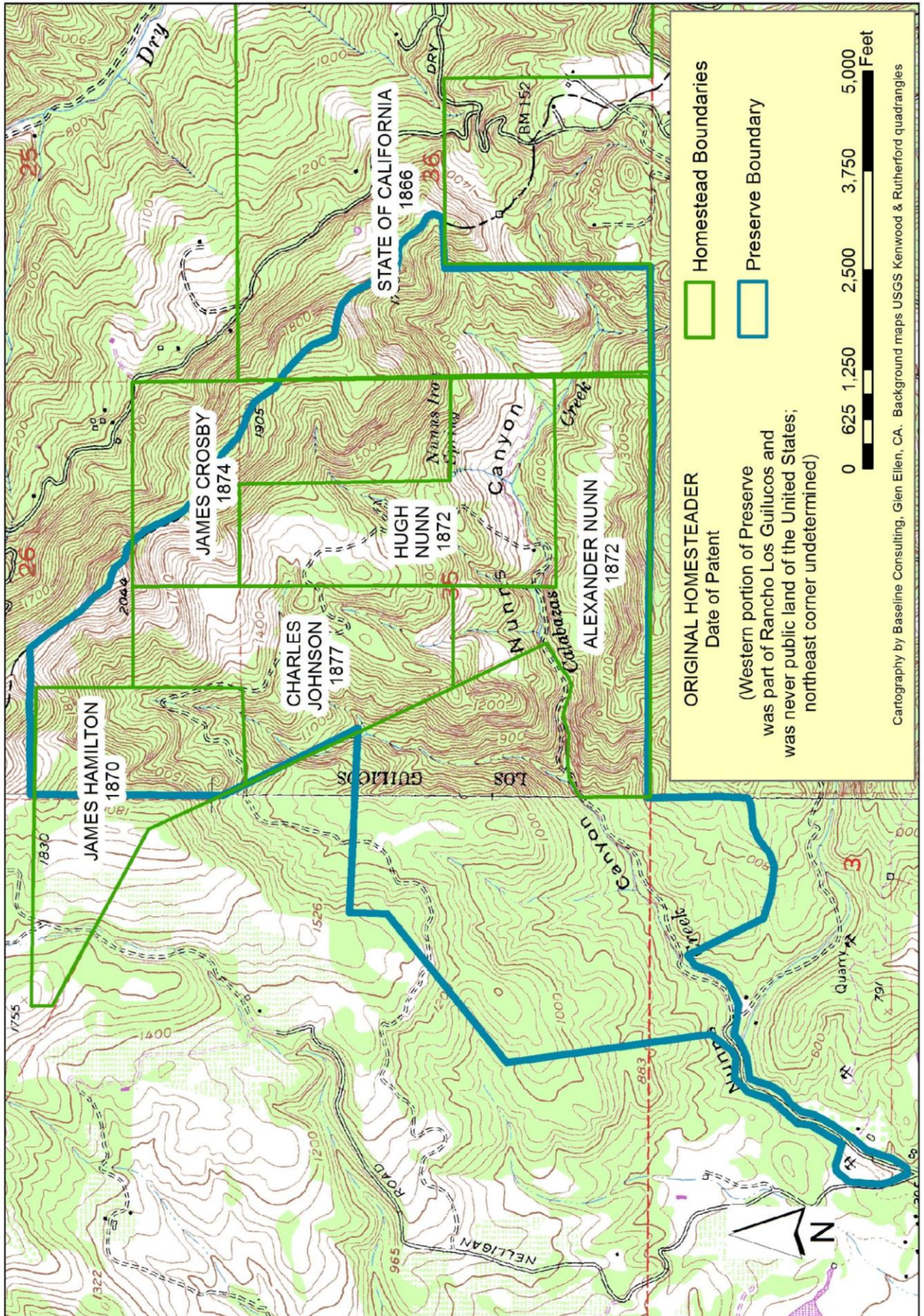
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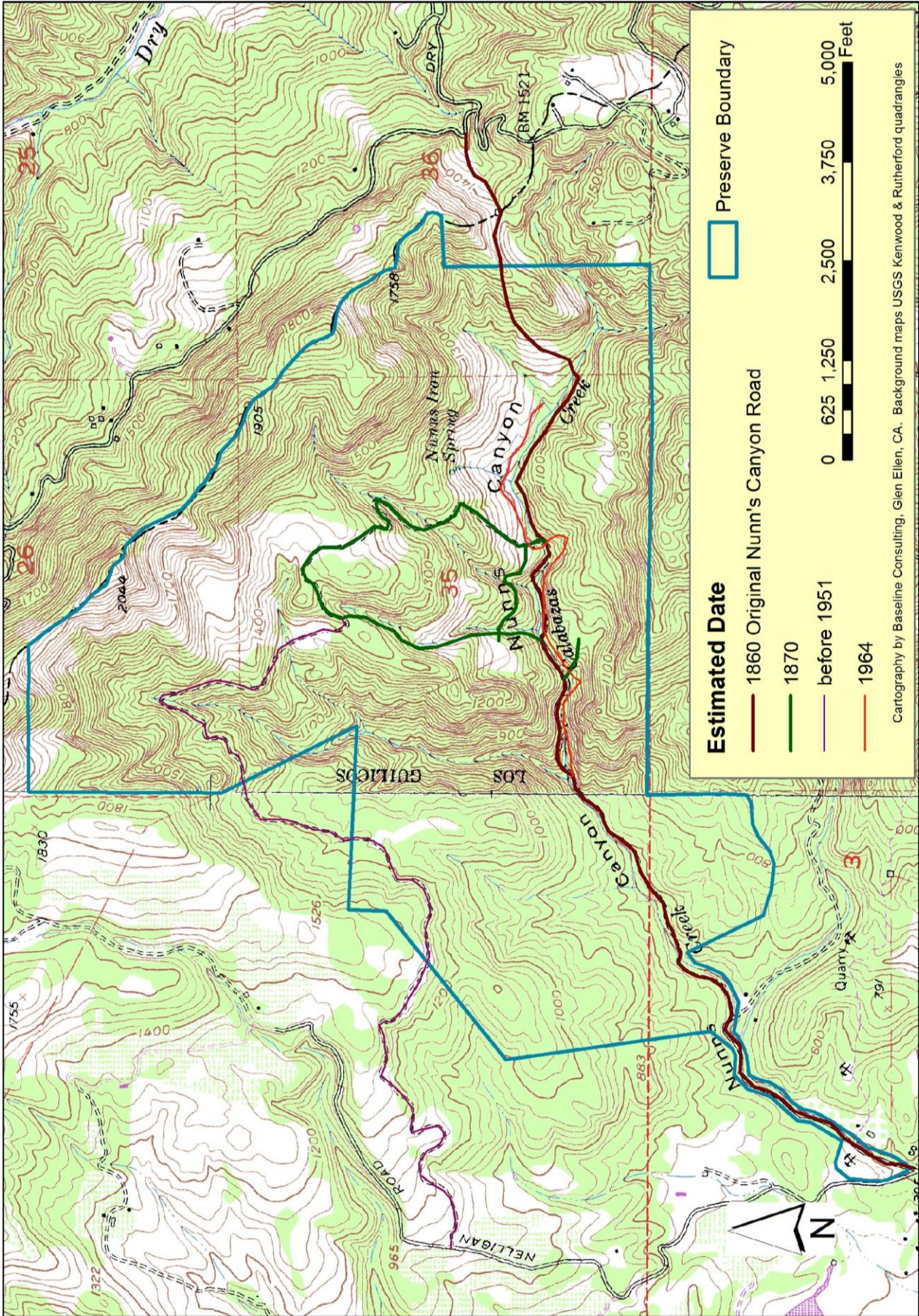
Calabazas Creek Preserve, Original Homesteads

From General Land Office Patent Records, Bureau of Land Management



Calabazas Creek Preserve Road Network

Developed from the Calabazas Creek Oral History Project, 1897 Atlas of Sonoma County, and the USGS 1902 Napa & 1916 Santa Rosa quadrangles



Land Use and fire history documented in the Calabazas Creek Preserve Oral History Project

