

An Interview with Bob Johnson

by Karl Byrn

Pacific Grove, CA - April 16th, 2011

The following interview with Bob Johnson, age 81, of Pacific Grove, CA, was conducted in the dining room of his home on April 16th, 2011. Mr. Johnson was interviewed as a subject for the Galbreath Wildlands Preserve Oral History Project, a multi-department research effort of Sonoma State University. Mr. Johnson is the husband of the late Sue Johnson, the oldest daughter of Fred Galbreath, who donated the Galbreath Preserve to SSU in 2004. Johnson will be receiving an honorary degree from Sonoma State at graduation ceremonies on May 27th, 2011. Karl Byrn, a graduate student in the SSU History Department, conducted the following interview. Our conversation covers topics such as Johnson's background as a farmer in the Salinas Valley, his early impressions of Fred Galbreath and the Ranch, his understandings of Galbreath's land management philosophy, his interactions with Galbreath in both a professional and a family context, and finally, his own role in helping bring to SSU the vision Galbreath had for the Preserve.

Karl Byrn: Let's start with your background. When and where were you born?

Bob Johnson: In Salinas, California, 1930, December 15th.

KB: What did your parents do for a living?

BJ: When I was born, they had a cattle and grain operation, about 10 miles south of the town of Salinas in the Salinas Valley.

KB: What are the names of your parents?

BJ: Harry Johnson and Jane Johnson. I had an older brother, 2 ½ years older, Harry Johnson Jr., and a younger brother, 2 ½ years younger, named Richard.

KB: You come from a background of ranching.

BJ: Yes, we had about 7,000 or 8,000 acres. I grew up around cattle and sheep. In 1941, when Pearl Harbor happened, all able-bodied men left. A bunch of teenagers went to work – I was the youngest of them, only 11 years old at the time. There were about 3,000 acres to be harvested every summer, so my teenaged brothers and cousins and I were given the responsibility of bringing in the crop. Here we were, operating all this heavy equipment. I remember my uncle got me on this big tractor; I had to get a big box to climb up on it. He took me three times around the shop to see if I could steer it, and said, "Okay, you're my tractor driver," and that was it! All through the war, we spent our summers getting in the grain crop. We also had some land down in the valley floor that we were developing for irrigated agriculture, and my father became very interested in the vegetable business. In 1940, my father had bought the ranch that I eventually ended up owning. He bought it from a partnership of brothers, and then he gave up any interest he had in the cattle operation. We started developing more and more irrigation, and it took

us about 20 years, but eventually we got the ranch fully under irrigation and capable of growing almost any type of vegetable that can be grown in the Salinas Valley.

KB: What different crops did you grow?

BJ: Many different crops. Salinas is famous for the “salad crops” and is known as “The Salad Bowl of the World.” The call letters for their local NBC station is KSBW, which stands for “salad bowl of the world”. After working all those summers, I wasn’t sure I wanted to get into farming. By the time I got into high school, and then went to college, vacuum cooling had come in, which dramatically revolutionized the lettuce industry. There were other innovations, and I started thinking it might be a pretty exciting time to be involved in this industry. I was already halfway through college when I decided I wanted to come back to the farm. That was 1950. I was at Stanford, class of ’52, majoring in economics, and then I took correspondence courses from UC Davis, to get my feet on the ground as to the scientific end of agriculture, and then went back to work on the farm. My father retired in 1964, and I bought all his equipment and had my own operation growing various kinds of vegetables. We owned over 1,000 acres but we sold 400 to a vineyard company, who planted grapes. We didn’t think it would succeed. There’s so much fog there, and the vineyard is in a straight line about 15 miles from the Monterey Bay. They’re still there so I guess they’re doing well. I leased various properties around there, and farmed up to 1500 acres, growing various types of lettuce. One crop I didn’t grow was spinach. Our land was decomposed granite, and in those days we had no practical way of harvesting spinach without getting little bits of gravel in the spinach. That doesn’t go well with the consumer, so the spinach companies didn’t want any off our land. Now, the people that own the land are growing spinach and are quite successful.

KB: Let’s move forward in time a bit, bringing us to the Galbreath property. When was your first visit to the Galbreath Ranch?

BJ: 1954. I met my wife, Sue Galbreath, in 1953, after I graduated from college. I knew of the Ranch then, but I didn’t go there until 1954. At that time, she was going to college at the University of Oregon, and wasn’t around that much. She transferred to UC Berkeley the next year, so we managed to get together more, and get up to visit the Ranch.

KB: Did you meet in college?

BJ: No, we met through a mutual friend. She had been counseling at a girls’ camp, and a girl I went to high school with, who later married a good friend of mine, was also counseling at the same camp, and she invited Sue down for Rodeo Week in July in Salinas. That’s when I met Sue.

KB: What were your first impressions of the Ranch?

BJ: On my first visit up there, it was pouring so much rain, that my first impression was, it sure rains a lot here! It seemed like it never let up, it was raining 24/7 every day I was there. So I really didn’t get out to see much of it. My next visit was beyond the rainy season. At that time, the Ranch was closer to 15,000 acres. Fred owned 10,000 acres on the slope north of Highway 128, which he subsequently sold in 1957.

KB: Was your visit in 1954 also the first time you met Fred?

BJ: No, I had met him in Kentfield, where he lived, before that visit.

KB: What were your first impressions of Fred?

BJ: Wow. Well, he scared the hell out of me, for starters! My impressions were that this is a very capable man who knows exactly what he's doing and where he's going and how he's going to get there. A man who doesn't suffer fools gladly. You don't waste his time. I never really changed that impression much. I got to know him more and understand his thinking process more. You don't really know a man from a first impression. For example, what do I think of you right now? After I've spent time with you I may have a different impression. But I never lost the first feeling, that Fred was a man to be dealt with.

KB: Your first impression of Fred stuck with you, and perhaps got stronger?

BJ: Yes, my impression got stronger, and was even reinforced in some areas.

KB: What did the property look like in 1954? Can you describe the buildings and types of land usage that you first experienced at the Ranch?

BJ: It was strictly sheep farming at the time. Some of the buildings have been improved. One house was added since I first went there, which Mrs. Levensaler had up on Hibbard Road, to the right of the main entrance to the Ranch. The main Ranch house basically looks the same as it did, other than some improvements that were made. There's really been no major change. It's still pretty wild! Once you get on the part that is now the preserve, there's one barn, there's a shop, some sheep feeders, though there's no sheep, and some lambing barns, just a place with a low roof so the ewes could get out of the rain. They have their lambs at the worst time of the year, usually January/February. Other than that, they were doing logging at the time. The 10,000 acres on the north side, that Fred sold a few years later, I think it had been logged in the past, but was more open grazing land then. As far as I know there was no logging on that side, but there was on the part that is now the Preserve. That's one thing about Fred – he was one of the first people to practice selective logging.

KB: Describe the process of selective logging.

BJ: No clear-cutting. In the video of Fred that was made up at Humboldt State, he refers to the time when he first bought the ranch, and all the neighbors said "Cut down the trees and make more grazing land." He doesn't come out and say it in the video, but he didn't do that. There are still extensive hillsides that have never been touched. Selective logging is going out and marking a tree to be harvested. Sometimes you're harvesting the tree because it's sick or falling down, but there's good timber there. Or, you've got redwood trees that have been logged before, and new growth comes up and you'll end up with two trunks coming out, and you'll harvest one and let the other one grow. He was treating it more like a crop than something you're just mining and removing from the terrain. Fred was doing this back in the '50s and '60s, and was still doing it right up until the end of his life.

KB: What else can you tell us about Fred's philosophy of land management?

BJ: He hated erosion. He did everything he could to control it. Sometimes, if it rains too much, you can't stop it, but he was very big on providing culverts to divert the water into the streams. He was into planting grasses that would bind the ground, not just grasses, but plants like clover, which also provided feed for sheep, but would keep the ground from eroding. He was very conscious of the land and the kind of resource that it is.

KB: How was the runoff managed?

BJ: Rainwater all just runs downhill, and some gullies are so big that you can't change them. But when they start eroding and forming a new gully, if you can provide a way for that water to get to a current stream, that's what a culvert will do. Also, you need them under your roads, because the water will wash your road out. It rains a lot up there! Our average rainfall in the Salinas Valley, where I was farming, is about 15 inches per year, and on the Preserve they get anywhere from 60 to 80 inches. I can't even comprehend that amount of water.

KB: Was anything done to treat natural waterways, like the Rancheria Creek?

BJ: Wherever there was a sharp bend, if it was eating into the adjoining land, Fred would take old trees or logs, maybe materials left over from logging, and throw that down in the bend and put something heavy on it to buttress that area of erosion. Generally speaking it worked. I can't remember what year it was, but rainwater took out everything on one end of his pasture. He had a pasture of about ten acres of fairly flat ground along the edge of Rancheria Creek, which parallels that pasture and then makes an abrupt right turn. The creek took out about half an acre of that pasture. That's a lot of volume – this was definitely a flood. But Fred rebuilt that land. He received some assistance through the Conservation Service, but that spot still shows, and you can still tell where it was washed out. You can never make it the same as it was originally. On Yale Creek, the main tributary to the Rancheria, there's a place with a real sharp bend, and they've thrown a lot of material down there, anything to moderate the water's effect on the bank.

KB: Can you tell us about types of vegetation that were used to reduce erosion?

BJ: I don't really know that much about those – but I can tell you about vegetables!

KB: We know that Fred had a philosophy of treating the land with respect.

BJ: Yes. You just had to look at some of the neighbor's properties and wonder what they were thinking sometimes.

KB: The neighbors did things differently than Fred? How did he interact with his neighbors?

BJ: Not his immediate neighbors, necessarily. But you can see some other places that weren't well cared for. When he got that Ranch, he was a friend of the Maillard family, who has properties that adjoin the Preserve. Ward Maillard told Fred there was a Ranch for sale there. They were friends in the Bay Area, and he knew Fred was interested in buying some ranch property. It was through Ward that Fred bought his first land up there.

KB: Did any of the adjoining property managers adopt Fred's philosophies? How did his practices affect new practices of the neighbors?

BJ: Fred was a weekend rancher, and he wasn't up there all the time. That property is so well hidden from the highway that no one would even see what was going on there. I know there was a property owner just east of the Ranch who he deplored, the way that land was managed. I heard him speak several times about what a mess it was.

KB: What would Fred have wished to see different on that property – were they clear-cutting?

BJ: I don't really know how much he knew about what they were doing, or how much clear-cutting was an issue at the time. I don't have much a feel for the other neighbors, other than the Maillards – Fred had a good relationship with them.

KB: What sorts of challenges did Fred face in his land management?

BJ: The biggest one was erosion. Another challenge was predators for his lambs. Coyotes, wild boars – boars can root up a pasture in one night. I'm not sure anyone has found a solution to that yet. Even the coyote situation is come and go. You can trap a few of them and you're safe for a while, but then by the next lambing season there's a new bunch of them. That was an ongoing challenge.

KB: Are those wildlife issues still a concern today?

BJ: Because there's no sheep there anymore, it's not an issue. The wildlife is still there, but there's hardly any sheep compared to 50 years ago.

KB: What are some of the creative solutions Fred used to address the wildlife challenge?

BJ: Well, they would shoot them any time they ran across one! The coyotes, they tried to trap them or poison them, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. They had an occasional mountain lion, but that was never a major problem.

KB: Any trouble with bears?

BJ: No. We knew there are bears there – Sonoma State has proven that now with night cameras – but I never saw one. It's not like Lake Tahoe where bears think their free lunch is in your refrigerator. That kind of problem doesn't exist up in Mendocino.

KB: Besides sheep and timber, what other activities took place on the Ranch?

BJ: I think my wife Sue was the only person who really fished there. She was an avid fisherman. They hunted deer there. That's another thing – Fred was crack shot. One time his foreman and I were with him, and a deer was so far away, we were saying, "No, Fred, no, you'll never hit that deer, you're just going to wing it and have a wounded animal there." He brought it down in one shot! They harvested deer for consumption, and if they got a really nice rack they'd have it mounted. I've seen steelhead trout come up the creek, but no one ever caught any.

The ten-acre strip of land I was talking about, where the bottom washed out, Fred put in irrigation so his sheep would have feed in the summertime, by pumping water out of the creek. In the late 1970s, my wife went up there to spend some time with him. This was the middle of summer, and I was busy and didn't go. Sue came home and said, "Bob,

you've got to do something, those guys are in 100 degree heat moving sprinkler pipe around, they're going to have a heart attack or something." At that time, I was converting my sprinkler system and was going to have a lot of surplus pipe, and my wife suggested we give it to Fred, so they would have a permanent system and not have to move anything. We took about 400 joints of four-inch pipe – it takes about 36 per acre. Fred had this pump where they had built a damn on the Navarro River, and put a spillway so the water they didn't pump out would pass around. He had the pump on a type of pier with the intake pipe in the water, and every once in a while something like a turtle or a big frog would get sucked up in there, and stop the water, and the pump would burn out. With my farming, all this was automated. I said "Fred, I can fix that problem for you in just a few minutes." I brought this pressure switch up and hooked it into the line, and connected it so anytime the pressure dropped below a certain psi the pump shut off. He just couldn't believe how easy that was to do.

KB: So you helped him with that irrigation tip.

BJ: He was a brilliant man in so many ways. But that just wasn't his field.

KB: What are some ways the land changed with Fred's management? How did Fred's practices change?

BJ: He sold the 10,000 acres in 1957, when the sheep business was going downhill, but he loved his sheep. He loved sitting on his front porch and watching the sheep graze outside his house. It was like therapy to him. He continued to run, on the part that is now the preserve, about 650 sheep, but he wasn't making any money on them. He was subsidizing the sheep, and he had two reasons for doing it. One, to keep down the fire hazard by grazing, and two, he just liked having the sheep around. His main operation had been north of Highway 128, but he kept a small shearing barn next to his house, for those 650 sheep, but it wasn't profitable.

KB: Was the timber business more important at that point?

BJ: Since he was doing selective logging, the timberwork was almost invisible. Charlie Hyatt would drive me around and show me where they were logging. You could go for two or three miles and never see a sign of any logging, unless you were on a road where they had dragged the logs. As far as where actual trees had been cut, you wouldn't have a clue. You just don't get a sense that this place has been heavily logged. I think the logging he was doing wasn't for the money; he was trying to keep the healthy trees and log the ones that weren't healthy. Hyatt, his logger, taught me about the logging business. Charlie said, "Bob, you're a farmer, you should understand – this is a crop. We harvest it, we let it grow, and then we can harvest it again." That's when it hit me, what Fred was doing with the timber. In his will, with the gifting of the property, Fred specified "No logging – except for fallen, damaged, or sick trees." No commercial logging, period. That's written right in his letter of intent, that the recipient of the property had to comply with. As far as logging, he's restricting the recipient to the same thing he was doing.

When he sold the 10,000 acres across the highway, some of it got chopped up into ranchettes, if you will. So people with a lot of money could come up and have a 10-acre place in Mendocino. He saw that and said, "That is never going to happen on this Ranch." That's when I first started hearing that he didn't want the Ranch to be developed.

He knew two things: that the family might not be able to keep it if taxes and maintenance were more than income, and that eventually, it was going to move out of the family and be developed. I think he started with the Save the Redwoods League and almost had an agreement with them. But they would not give him a guarantee that they would never sell it. He was looking for a recipient who would keep it forever. I think he even went to the University of California system, and they also couldn't give him a guarantee. He was looking for an institution that would hold it. He had chosen Humboldt State only because of a connection, which would never have worked because of the lack of proximity. He wanted it to be a living laboratory, to be studied, to learn better management of resources. The only development he wanted there were facilities, if needed, for a learning institution, dormitories, but it all has to be related to the purpose of the gift. He was very adamant about that.

KB: There were some changes in land use, but his real interest was preserving the land itself.

BJ: He sold some acreage, on the north and south side of the highway, but he was interested in preserving the land. He kept sheep, but they were just icing on the cake. He just loved looking at the sheep. And he liked eating them too!

(Rest Break)

KB: What are some other examples of how your experience as a farmer here in Salinas helped Fred at the Ranch?

BJ: Without irrigation there, we couldn't grow anything other than grain. His sprinkler pipe had ¼ inch nozzles, and the water was just coming out, the nozzles were worn. He had leaky gaskets where the pipes fit together, and I brought up this pipe that had 1/8-inch nozzles. Those put out about three gallons per minute, and I think Fred's were pouring out about five or six per minute, which limits the amount your pump can provide. Fred took one look and said, "That is not going to work, the nozzles aren't big enough." I asked him, "How many hours do you run the pump?" He said ten hours. I said, "Okay, in ten hours you're going to put about three inches of water on that land, and it won't take anymore, it'll just go deeper and deeper past the root zone. You're wasting water, Fred." When we first brought the pipe, we had enough to set out at the beginning of irrigation season. We broke it up into two or three segments, because his pump could only handle about a third of it at a time. All we had to do was hook up the pipe from the main area and start the pump. Fred said, "If we don't move the pipe, the grass won't grow under the pipe." I said, "Yes, that's right, but when you move the pipe, you bring the Jeep out and drive all over the wet grass and compact the ground, and you pick up the pipe and carry it around and stomp with your feet – do you think that does the grass any good? You'll get more grass leaving that pipe where it is, and the grass will grow up and around it!" He resisted this new irrigation at the beginning. But the more use he got from the pipe, after about a year or two, Fred said, "That pipe is the greatest thing that ever happened to that pasture!"

KB: What else did you contribute with your experience?

BJ: That's the only thing, really, the irrigation. I wasn't about to challenge him on managing rangeland. In my whole life, I was a flat land farmer.

KB: What are some of your memories of family vacations at the Ranch?

BJ: When our kids were young, we didn't get up there very much. But then we started going up every summer, about 40 years ago. There's a camp along Yale Creek that we think may be on the Maillards property, because the creek is supposed to be the boundary line! We think they know that and don't particularly care. There's a bridge that goes across the creek and we would take all our camping gear, and there's a hunter's cabin there, with screens all around so you can get away from the mosquitoes and flies. Our family started camping there, at least once every summer, almost until Fred died. Usually we'd camp when most of the rest of the family was there. We renovated it as a place to stay: there wasn't enough room for everybody, and the house wasn't that big, but they all used to love to come up there in the evenings. The cabin is in a Redwood grove, just an unbelievable site. We would go up there and have sundown barbecue dinners, everybody would bring a certain dish and we'd have a family cocktail party and dinner get together, and that was probably the most that the whole family was together at any one time.

KB: What other major events occurred at the Ranch? What else related to vacations – or the business – stands out as being most important?

BJ: When I first got up there, I knew from having been involved in the livestock business in Salinas as a kid that livestock gets mixed up. There can be holes in fences and such. When we rounded up the sheep for shearing, there would be a number of sheep we found with someone else's brand. Fred knew all the brands of the neighbors, and whose sheep they were, and we would separate them out and put them in a corral, and either just throw them in the back of a truck or call whoever it was, to say "we've got one of your sheep here." That's what people did there in those days. If sheep were still there, ranchers would probably still be doing that. What amazed me when we rounded them up was the number of sheep that didn't belong to Fred.

KB: Fred really got along with his neighbors, if everyone communicated about which sheep belonged to each other.

BJ: The neighbors all cooperated. Everyone knew who was who. You had asked earlier, one thing about the other neighbor Fred didn't like. There was a flock of wild turkeys on Fred's property; they were almost tame, because no one was shooting them. Fred said you couldn't shoot the turkeys. If you got a deer license and tags, you could shoot deer; you could shoot all the pigs you wanted. But this neighbor's picture showed up in one of the nearby newspapers, with all these so-called wild turkeys that he shot, from the same flock of turkeys, and Fred was furious! This guy looked like the big game hunter, with his shotgun and his turkeys, and that didn't make Fred think any higher of that neighbor, that's for sure.

KB: We've talked about land management, and this sounds like Fred was also interested in wildlife management.

BJ: I think so. One of the rules he had, for example, if it was deer hunting season, you were not to shoot a deer within three miles of his house – those were his deer! He liked seeing those deer, because they would come and graze on his front lawn. He would sit on his front porch, and he even had names for them! He had a very strong feel for nature. He absolutely loved redwood trees. That's one reason he went to Save the Redwoods League when he first started thinking about donating the land. I can remember being out there with him working on the Ranch and a hawk would come over, and he would call to it, and the doggone thing would answer! He could imitate some of these different animals. Even though he had been a San Francisco executive, he had strong roots to the land. In his early years, he actually grew up in Truckee. His father was a dentist in Truckee. He spent a lot of time hiking, and in those days, it was pretty wild. I remember him telling a story about running into a bear one day when he was on a hike. He was just a kid, and it scared the daylights out of him! But he said the bear wasn't really paying any attention to him.

KB: What did you think of the idea to convert the property into a preserve? Is that something you discussed with Fred?

BJ: I think he didn't know what the possibilities were, but he knew what he didn't want to happen. That's where he was coming from. He didn't want it developed in any way. He died thinking it would go to Humboldt State, but subsequently they had to refuse the gift. Then Sonoma State got into the picture. When he was still alive, Humboldt State brought in this bus that was like a laboratory. He was letting them come in and do some research up by the barn. They were giving him whatever they came up with, and he had stacks by his reading chair, and he was reading through to see what they were doing as far as investigation and research. I imagine he thought the land was going to be an institution, whether or not you call it a preserve, that would be managed and used as an educational facility. But I think the name "Preserve" actually came out of SSU. I never heard that word until we got involved with Sonoma State.

KB: You say he knew what he didn't want to happen.

BJ: He was more coming from that direction than knowing specifically what he wanted. But anything that didn't bulldoze a tree was a plus. Only something like SSU needing to build a headquarters or a field station. Only take out the trees you need, and leave the rest there, that sort of thing, so that it would fit into the landscape. He did not want someone coming in and building a golf course, or even putting in a vineyard. He wanted the land in its natural state. I think he would be very pleased with what Sonoma State is doing, because I think it fits the concept that he had for the way that land was to be used.

KB: In what ways does the idea of a preserve continue Fred's management philosophy?

BJ: It preserves it in its current state – the name almost says it all!

(Rest break)

KB: When you were working and interacting with Fred, is this the direction you imagined for the Ranch?

BJ: Yes, with some of the kinds of things SSU is doing, with facilities for students and faculty. With Humboldt State, I wondered how it would work from a proximity standpoint. It seemed so far away. But I thought the direction would be exactly what Sonoma State is doing. A lot of things Sonoma is doing, I hadn't even thought of. When we got word that HSU would not accept the gift, I didn't even know where SSU was. So I got on your web site. I didn't really know anyone there, and I wasn't sure you could use the Ranch. I didn't know anyone there, and I tried to think how to say, "Here, I want to give you an \$8 million gift, please take it!" We were still trying to figure out how to approach Sonoma State, and I was talking to Tom Gillespie, who is an alumnus of SSU, and he had been Fred's financial advisor. This was around 2003 or 2004. Tom was managing the trust, sorting it all out. I had never met Tom, but we had quite a few conversations on the phone. One day he called me, when my wife and I were up at Lake Tahoe, and he started talking about the estate, and he asked if we had ever thought of Sonoma State. I told him I didn't know how to approach the school, and he said "Hang up the phone, I'll call you back in a few minutes." Five minutes later I got a call from a man named Saeid Rahimi and a man named Stuart Jones. They were very interested in talking. I got so excited, I said, "How about meeting tomorrow morning?" They said, "Meet us at the Doubletree Inn at 8 tomorrow morning." My wife Sue said, "We don't have any decent clothes." I called Stuart Jones back and said, "The Double Tree is a nice place, but all we have is faded blue jeans." He started laughing, and mentioned that he himself grew up on a sheep ranch!

KB: You were instrumental in getting the project to Sonoma State.

BJ: Yes, I feel very strongly that if my wife and I hadn't acted, it never would have happened. After Fred died, my wife and I were the only ones in a position to do something about it who cared enough to do something about it.

KB: In your own way, you've helped to continue Fred's legacy.

BJ: That was our goal.

KB: What else do you wish to see happen with the preserve?

BJ: I got so excited when Saeid said they wanted to build an observatory up there, and then came up with plans for the field station. I had given a substantial sum of money for the observatory, and we've asked them to name it after Jean Galbreath, Fred's wife. When Claudia Luke came on board, everything was just kind of coming out of every direction. Everybody had something they wanted to do, and Claudia laid down the law and said we've got to get a field station. I see that has to be built, so I can see the observatory is still out there a ways.

KB: Was the observatory an idea you discussed with Fred?

BJ: No. When Sue and I had breakfast with Saeid, he was Dean of the Department of Science and Technology, and he started listing all the departments that could use that property. I was following Fred's lead, thinking forestry and fishing, and I Saeid starting naming the biology department, botany department, geology department, and engineering - the list was endless. All these ideas were just pouring out. But the thought of an observatory never crossed our minds. I think SSU put some instruments up there and

determined that some of those peaks on the Ranch are the darkest points in Northern California. Fred would be pleased, and especially Jean – she could name every star. Fred would not have any objections. The observatory is an activity that's part of a learning institution.

KB: What are some other things you learned from Fred?

BJ: Certain things that I didn't necessarily learn from him, but were reinforced by him – like integrity. You're word is your bond, and if you say you're going to do something, you better do it. Don't make promises you can't keep. He was a pillar of strength when it came to things like that. And he was very, very protective of his land, as far as trespassers. He kept it pretty secure. Every once in a while you'd catch someone poaching in there, but he was determined that no one was going to use his land except him.

KB: What did you learn from Fred that you were able to bring back to your own farming business?

BJ: Not anything concerning the actual farming, but the biggest thing I learned from him was how to deal with actual people. He was an expert at that. You have employees, you have other people you deal with, contractors and such, and I think I learned from him how to better deal with those situations.

KB: What topics regarding Fred would you like to cover further?

BJ: He was a very successful business executive in marine insurance underwriting, and he was offered the top job in his company, but would have had to move to New York. But his ranch would have been too far, and he turned it down. I've heard about that for 50 years. He could have been CEO of the whole company, and he turned it down, just because of his tie to that Ranch. That says so much. His ego wasn't so big that he had to go to New York to prove to everybody that he was a big shot. He was happy here. Another thing about Fred is that he was the one of the lead underwriters for the Golden Gate Bridge when they built it. Apparently, at one point, there was a safety issue involved, and he almost shut them down on the construction. If he believed strongly enough in something, he wouldn't back down.

Fred used to love to get family members in the back of his Jeep and take us to show off his prized trees. He had a Jeep with a clutch, and we'd be going up a hill, and he'd decide to shift gears. Suddenly, we're in neutral going backwards and everyone starts bailing out! I think everyone in the family talks about those wild Jeep rides! He finally got a Jeep with an automatic transmission. Also, I found out that I didn't want to be a sheep farmer. When Fred had 10,000 acres, he had a bout 10,000 sheep. One time he asked me to supervise the shearing. Pete, his foreman, would bring the sheep in to the corrals. The sheep shearers are in stalls, and there's a burlap curtain with a holding pen behind the stall. As soon as they finish shearing one sheep, they push it out the front, then reach in to grab a leg of another sheep and bring it in to shear it. Those guys were getting paid by piecework, so if they reached in and there was no sheep to grab, they'd get all over you. We had eight or ten sheep shearers, and I had to keep all those cubicles supplied with lambs. I found out that sheep are not the brightest things in the world. I took the job seriously. At the end, we had a tally sheet, and at the end of the day, we had

sheared 1006 sheep. When Fed showed up the next day, he looked at the tally sheet and though it was a mistake. He said, “You couldn’t have sheared that many sheep, that’s never been done before.” But Pete confirmed, we sheared that many.

KB: What would you like for SSU students to learn from the Preserve?

BJ: The majority of your students have never been on a property like this before – maybe they’ve been to a national or state park, but that’s not the same. I think they’ll learn some of the things that Fred and I knew about connection to the land and the creatures that live on it, or under it, or fly over it. Whatever discipline they are studying, I would expect students to learn how to integrate that discipline with the real thing and not just get it out of a book. They can learn by real life experience – the engineering department by constructing something, the geography department by identifying rocks, the botany department - it’s almost unlimited. Understanding the relationship all these things have to one another.

KB: What would you like to add regarding future uses of the preserve?

BJ: I think with Claudia Luke in charge, you have a real great person. Right now the challenge is money. As the money comes in, I’d like to see it fleshed out along the lines of the Hastings Preserve in the Carmel Valley, which is approximately the same elevation and acreage as the Galbreath Preserve, and is owned by UC Berkeley. It has a lot of the same flora and fauna, and UC Berkeley has had it since 1937, so they have some idea of what to do with a property like that. When Claudia came on board, she had connections with Mark Stromberg, the director at Hastings, so she had a whole delegation come down from Sonoma to take a tour of what Berkeley is doing with that property. If SSU can do the same things at Galbreath that UC Berkeley is doing with Hastings, I’d be very comfortable with that. I think Fred would be too.

But they don’t have an observatory like we will!