

Greg Sarris Interview Transcript
Interviewed by Steve Estes and Claudia Luke
Transcribed by Marina Goldstein
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Greg Sarris (GS): Hi Steve and Claudia, thank you for waiting.

Steve Estes (SE): Sure.

Claudia Luke (CL): Hi Greg, thanks for meeting with us.

GS: Yeah, sorry I'm so difficult. I've been really kind of busy.

CL: Do you remember me? We met a couple of years ago when we were doing the Copeland Creek Project?

GS: Yes, yes.

CL: Yeah, and do you know Steve?

SE: No.

GS: I don't think I've met Steve. I may have. I don't remember. Steve, have I ever met you? I don't know.

SE: I don't think so Greg. But it's nice to meet you over the phone.

GS: yeah, I'm sorry I'm kind of crazy. You know, when I lived in Los Angeles people, well people in LA never ask you how you are, they ask you what you do. And, um, I would just say, "Well I am, um, a novelist, a screenwriter, a professor, and an Indian chief. What are you?" (Steve and Claudia laugh) They all thought it was a joke sadly, as you guys know it's true. So anyway, I have a lot of jobs. Um, what can we talk about?

CL: So let me just give you a little bit of a background. So um, Steve and I have been collaborating for now I think six years since I came to Sonoma State and I as the director of the Nature Preserves. And what we are sort of doing is as part of the oral history class where the students take this course, do interviews and go through the whole process and put them into transcripts and things like that. We have done several projects, one was, well they have both been with preserves and they've been with the founding families, the donating families...

GS: Yeah just to clarify, to me, they are the donating and not the founding. Okay?

CL: Exactly! Right. I pick the wrong words. I simply got nervous. So um...

GS: Yeah. I just have to make a joke. With all this stuff about Trump and immigrants today, for American Indian people, we're just laughing and watching some immigrants complain about more recent immigrants. It's just kind of funny. Anyways, go ahead.

CL: So um, the idea was lets broaden out and maybe we could get some students to interview people who have relationships with the mountain in some way or another. If they are ranchers or... and so immediately I've been thinking about how we connect to the federated Indians for awhile and um this was a great opportunity, so we reached out to you with the thought of "can we get a student to conduct this interview with somebody who'd be willing to answer questions and such about their own experiences and changes over time?" and that kind of thing. So, we're just really happy that you're speaking with us first sort of as a kind of like you don't have a lot of time for a student interview, but maybe you could talk to us a little bit about um, give us a little bit of background together and how you might go about an interview. We wanted to get your personal impression as well...

GS: Okay, well... go ahead

CL: A series of questions, but we are also happy to just, if there's anything that you would like to direct us towards we are happy to do as well.

GS: Yeah, I don't know if students um, or younger people in the tribe or elders that are left for that matter that know much about the place, but luckily I was around some of the older people as a kid so, and I was interested, um I wish there were other people I could direct you towards, but I think mostly what you would get is repetition is what whatever they might find in text or... I don't know, I don't know that many people know that, cause you know the tribe is very much involved in Tolay Lake and they didn't know much about that either.

CL: Oh, okay.

GS: Or how the charge stones are used and all that sort of thing, but there is Sonoma Mountain and you know, most of them weren't even aware that for instance Mount Tamalpais, which you know non-Indians around here all go and say "oh that's a sacred mountain for the Indians" and want to go up here. That was just Taboo Mountain. That's where the poisoners drink. And you went up there to learn how to kill people. Hexed...? So the old people used to laugh when all the white people would be getting married and we would always say, "Oh that marriage isn't going to last long." [Steve and Claudia laughing] But, um, so as you know just to begin, the "Landscape was our Bible" was our sacred text, it was how we knew stories, read stories, features of the landscape were stories, were Mnemonic pegs on which stories were held and how we knew ourselves and what happened of course when we were moved from the land and when the land itself was radically altered. It's comparable to having the sacred text burned and what's left are shards and between those shards of the text and those shards of the text come from somebody from, lets

say San Jose, and ended up in a mission here and one of the Indians that lives here on the Rancheria. You know, so it's a... what's left are in bits and pieces. What is true is that this mountain is a sacred mountain. Beginning with the fact that for many of us, many Indian people around here, Coyote created the world from the top of it. And there are different versions of the story centered around how he was married to Frog Woman up here and if you have ever been up here, I'm sure most of you have, because you have heard the frogs i.e. this time of year [Feb/Mar 2016] up here echoing in the valleys and lower areas of the mountain that um, he was married to Frog Woman. The story goes that of course they were married up here and living up here and there was a time unlike biblical times, there was a great chain of being and linear creation. There was a time before this when all the animals were people and what happened of course is that people, including coyote, did bad things and then people were created as a result of that. People are usually the lesser or the more stupid of all the animals which of course we know was true. So our job as human beings is to some how get reattached and go back to what we did as animals. Anyway, Coyote was married to Frog Woman up here and they had two sons and she was a good woman, working very hard and used to wash the clothes and make acorns mushes and waters and busy herself with sons and Coyote being the devious, horny type of guy he was, was jealous and wanted more time with her so he took her while she was at work and took one son and threw him up and he became the sun and threw the other son up and he became the moon. And of course when she came back packing the acorns to the village, she asked where her sons were and Coyote told her. She became very upset and began to cry, and cry, and cry, and he said, "Why are you crying?" and she said "Well you know, uh, you lost my sons..." and he said "you can always look up and see one in the day and one in the night." She kept crying and crying and she got fed up with that and all her tears became the streams and the Copeland Creek. Then what happened is that he got fed up and said, "I'm sick of you, go jump in the water." And, you know, she's been there ever since. And that's why she sits looking up and why frogs sit looking up because she's always looking up at one of her two sons. But that's how, and then it went from there and this creation cycle goes from there. But that's essentially the text of how from this point where everything else, there was nothingness; things began to happen as a result from up here on this mountain. Well Coyote being a tricky figure, and again collaborating the world view where we are not the center of the universe but a part of it, the mountain is particularly interesting because the mountain is, looks from a distance of the flat lands, not as dramatic, as say Tamalpais or Mount Diablo, it is in fact a much larger mountain, wider, and more complicated in its geography and shape, as you guys know. So that you can turn around and have a very dry hillside and all of a sudden drop down and find a marshland. Well you did in ancient times. And then you have that unusual creek, one of perhaps the only creeks I know of in our entire aboriginal area, the coast Miwok and southern Pomo, south of, let's say, the Santa Rosa plains, where you have a creek that runs all year but does not allow the salmon up it. So, again, that is some very unusual feature of the landscape, which obviously intrigued the aboriginal imagination. The mountain itself is forever shifting; where you will have ridges for awhile and the land will sink a bit and rise a bit, it is really a heart that is beating and moving and reminding people that of

movement, generally, of life and of the power that reminds us of all the things in nature, rocks, mountains, in this case a mountain, are alive and moving, You can take nothing for granted, or in a permanent sense. So as we look towards the mountain, it's not only a reminder of creation, but the nature of creation itself.

CL: Wow. So there were specifically, Copeland Creek, I just wanted to follow up on that more than any of the other creeks that come off of Sonoma Mountain, there was something about that site.

GS: The rocks, notice that they rocks, they are very unusual rocks. You have these big round, white-type rocks you find nowhere else. That has, again, something to do with the unique features of creation and this side of the mountain that has garnered a kind of respect and awe for the water seer. They came to the base; the salmon would come to the very base of the creek, the minute you basically got this far, not only quite as far as the bridge on Bridgestone Road (?) there, the salmon wouldn't go up, where as they did go up the creek high into the mountains in other areas, they didn't here. So there were virtually no fish in the water above Santa Rosa. Now, the other thing that is intriguing is that there are pockets of ancient Bay Trees. The Bay Trees, the big Bay Trees, they don't grow this much further north or east here, they get smaller in the drier areas, but these were very high-yielding trees. The Scrub Oaks got pretty big up here, but we didn't use those Scrub Oak acorns as much as the Valley Oak and certainly the Tan Oak on the coast, but the Valley Oak and the White Oak were more widely used than the Scrub Oak. There are White Oak up here that are indigenous. There were huge forests of bay nuts, Pepperwood Trees; the interesting feature of the Pepperwood Tree is that only one in about one hundred will yield fruit or nuts. Up here there are groves, including one on my property, where ten-of-ten yield nuts.

SE: Is that because of more water? I mean, is that part of the answer?

GS: I'm not sure. You have to ask the spirits. I don't know. I'm not exactly, my property up here is not on water, it's the end of Round Oak Road. Kind of budding out of the backside of the reserve, here. You go all the way up and before, oh I guess, three quarters of a mile before, it's basically the last turnoff on your left before you run into the reserve. You go to the end of it. The trees up on my property and there's a few other groves else where, yield huge amounts of Pepperwood nuts. And as you may or may not know, we use those. We would harvest them and dry them and then grind them and bake them. They kind of taste like a bittersweet dark chocolate, full of caffeine. We use them quite widely. We also use bay leaves, of course, as deodorant, but you can get those anywhere else. But, if you go out hunting, or you wanted to avoid bears or mountain lions, there are many mountain lions up here, not a lot of bears I was told. The bears were more in the redwood area and down lower, but there were a lot of mountain lions here and the rattlesnakes would come here, they had a few sacred caves. The big rattlesnake caves were over in the Sonoma Valley of the Moon, where -what's that park over there... it's got waterfalls? There's a big rattlesnake den up there- but they would come, they would travel in

the summer, they would come up over the mountain this way and go down to the bottom of the mountain that was a rattlesnake range. They would go back and forth. A few of them still do, which you know.

CL: Well, we are lucky to see them now and then.

GS: Oh, I see them all the time, but I'm friendly with them. I mean if you're friendly with them- I have a big one up here, Matilda, she lives in, I mean I have a rock walls that I call them my snake motels. I rent out rooms and I give them moles and rats, mice, and things. [All laugh]

GS: You know Mabil McKay, she, we, had a snake song, a rattlesnake song, from her great-grandfather to help her with the doctoring. If you get that song; they'll follow you around. But anyways, there are lots, they are here, and of course the bobcats are up here and a lot of bobcats. Whether you believe it or not, we have many of the old-time people belonging to secret cults that would come up into this area to shape shift. Again, cause this was the area of creation. So there was a lot of shape shifting up here. There are a few Indian people, a few Mexican Indians, in the area that would come here in their shape shifts. There's one guy I know from the gym who shape shifts into a bobcat. He creeps up here. So it's, this place is still very alive around here. It's a sacred place. It was also kind of on the border. It was originally in--we were, there was never anything as Coast Miwok or Pomo or Wappo. Those are linguist names for groups of people that spoke a specific language. They classified us by language family. Pomo is a Hokan language that is spoken a couple places just north of Sonoma and Mendocino Counties. It stretches in pockets all the way down to Oaxaca. Coast Miwok is a Penutian language that generally goes east and way north. So, they are two different language families. Now the old people, if you were on the border of a Pomo speaking group or a Coast Miwok speaking group, they would often speak five to ten different languages. The Penutian language is as different from the Hokan language as Chinese is from, as Mandarin is from English, let's say. Within the Coast Miwok area, where the mountain is here, there is a variation of Coast Miwok. Not much: about the difference between English and Old English. But you get into the Pomo area just north of us here and the Pomo languages, the variation is quite diverse. So, then the people that south-westerners Kashia people on the coast could not understand at all than of the eastern people on the shores of Clear Lake. But we were here and the village, the nation, that was hidden was Lekatuit territory this was, was the Cross-ways Willow people. Their main village was Petaluma or Slope Ridge: Petaluma being Slope Ridge in Coast Miwok. But they were, that was the village of the Lekatuit nation. There were several other villages, Petaluma being the largest. The central stories of the mountain came out of the Lekatuit people [describes the different spellings of the word and that they all translate into Cross-ways Willow]. Most people identify their village place with features of the landscape. So you would say, you know, that you're from Petaluma or that you're a Slope Ridge or Slopping Ridge or something like that. Then you get over and you're occidental, free stone, you know chalky ground, chalk ground. Things like that. But, anyways, the mountain had different names.

Sometimes it was just called "Rock" and sometimes I've seen it spelled- although I've never heard it, maybe I've just never been told- and called Oo-na pa'is. Actually that language is and can also be a Wappo or Winto language. The Wappo eventually on many maps were right over the hills. The mountain was kind of a borderland around which there were different groups of people. Directly over the mountain, down by Glenn Ellen on that side, my belief is that there were originally Coast Miwok in there from the Sonoma area bordering southern Pomo. It's lately been identified as Wappo territory, but the Wappo were originally from near the Vallejo area, down in that area. They got pushed up here by the Spanish and then the Mexicans. Their entry into this area, even up to their reservation that they once had in Alexander Valley, is recent. So, they're not aboriginal here. They're a consequence of the forces of colonization. Not unlike what happened in the Great Lakes region where you get Ojibwe which was originally from much of the East Coast who got pushed west.

CL: One thing you mention was, well actually, Steve, is there anything we're not hitting or really important out of our questions?

SE: Well I guess I want to ask Greg about your own personal experience on the mountain and when you first went to the mountain? If you can tell us, you don't have to give us exact dates, but what were your first impressions of the mountain?

GS: Well, a couple things, that are personal, well you know I grew up in Santa Rosa, you know, hearing the stories and really though the first time I, I knew there were cattle up here and things like that, so I was, I heard stories as a kid from the old timers about the mountain but I didn't pay much attention to it. I mean I grew up a poor kid in South Park. In those days, even when I went to UCLA, you didn't impress people by telling them that you're grandmother sucked diseases out of patients' bodies: you drove a good car and beat the guy up down the street. I moved back here after I went to college and taught for years at UCLA and Loyola Marymount. When I moved back, I landed up here; it's kind of a long, spiritual, bizarre story. Which, I don't know how interesting that is. My impression of the place was that it was, I was overwhelmed because, for us- for me -there are two views of nature. (Well, there are many views of nature). The whole Thoreau camp and Muir camp and much of the older environmental camp is that nature and wilderness you're supposed to leave it. It's quiet. It's a place of solitude. Well, that's only because you don't know all the stories and all the land talking to you. If you knew the stories of Sonoma Mountain (where I'm sitting right now), it would be noisier to sit down because it's just full of stories and birds and animals and all these other creatures and there's so much going on. So having a small sense of that growing up around the old Indian people and coming up here and knowing what little I do about the mountain, and seeing all these wild animals up here, seeing the quails, the bobcats, the mountain lions that I've seen several times, the plethora of birds and woodpeckers that are scared to us, Flickers that are sacred to us; all those things that somehow I don't see much in the valley (in Santa Rosa, anyway) all over the place was overwhelming. And the snakes! I just hadn't seen so many snakes. King snakes, gopher snakes, rattlesnakes, lizards; I mean the lizards all over the place

here! I mean I have thousands of them in the rock wall. It was so much information, Steve, that as a native person with a small, very small, fragmented sense of the living, speaking world, I was overwhelmed. It was just like too much. Too noisy. It was just too much. It took me awhile to settle in. Within, I don't know, I think it was hardly four months or three months or maybe six months of me being here, not a year anyway, I slipped and hurt my, well I ripped my quadriceps and had to have surgery. I had to build a ramp here on the front steps of my house to get the wheelchair in and out; it was a horrible kind of thing. But it stopped me; it stopped me. I was forced to just sit here and listen and watch everything. The most interesting thing happened: there was a bobcat that came. It kept bringing me rabbit livers and leaving them, as a cat might, a domestic cat might, at my doorstep. It kept sitting around and watching, and all thing kind of thing. That's why, you know, and many of the stories of the place started coming back. The land started speaking to me again; all the stories rose up. Anyway, after about three or four months I could hobble with crutches into the gym. Finally I was able to drive and walk with a semi-cast. I remember leaving the gym one night late (I had to go late because I work all day long) and this Mexican guy who I had seen in the gym a few times- a big kind of guy, an Indian Mexican guy - was following me out and my first thought was of course a stereotypical, "Oh God, what's he going to do? I don't know this guy. He's going to beat me up. Or am I going to have to fight? What's going on?" I just kept walking to my car, and I got to my car, I opened my door thinking I was going to hop in and tare away. I turned him and I was speaking Spanish to him. I said, "Hey, how's it going" or whatever. He said, "I just want to let you know that I've been watching you and taking care of you so that you'll be back," and he said "but you're better now, so I'm going to go." I didn't know what he was talking about, but I never did see the bobcat again.

SE: Hmm, interesting.

CL: Wow.

GS: Or him for that matter. So, you know, as Mabil McKay, the old medicine woman, used would say, "Whether you believe it or not, it's true." It's a great disclaimer. So, the place is alive and that is a story from here. I did see just the other day a bobcat here. When the animals--what also happens once you get the animals comfortable with you, including snakes and lizards, they know you not by sight of course, but by vibration; how you walk. That vibration, if it leaves them alone and is friendly, and it comes up to them and doesn't do anything, they don't bother you. They get to know you. They know you by that walk, how you walk. Guests hate to come up here because they walk by my front gate and hear rattles; I go in and out and hear nothing. This is a place where the everlasting persist. I mean, if you let it.

SE: I have a question if you don't mind me interrupting. Obviously this is amazing that you have this personal connection to the mountain. Does that extend to other people in the tribe or the Federation? Do tribe members or Federation members go up to the mountain for any purpose today?

GS: No, they haven't. I've had them up here. They're mostly focused on Tolay Lake; we have a deal with the county, which I think you probably read about in the *Bohemian* recently. We had a cover story; I think it was last week, in the *Bohemian*. A cover story--with us on the cover--about what were doing with Tolay Lake. We gave 500,000 dollars to and we are partners with, one of our goals- perk your ears up those of you interested in the environment -this is a part of a deal I made with the governor, a compact, to, you know, when you have a casino you have to make a deal with the governor in lieu of taxes, a part of the compact with the governor is in lieu of taxes. You usually have to pay him fifteen percent of your earnings. When I made a deal with Jerry, an old time friend of mine. (He actually likes snakes and things too)... I made a deal with him where by the majority of that money will come back to the county. So in addition to the twelve million a year litigation for Rohnert Park and the nine million litigation to Sonoma county, once our debt is paid off- which, at the rate we are going will be in about four years - Sonoma county will get twenty-five million dollars a year for environmental restoration and organic farming. Listen carefully. This is in the compact. I'm not just blowing smoke. It's law. It's a compact. The county cannot use that for anything but that. In addition to the twenty-five million a year, if there's money they will get an extra five million for a specific environmental project per year. So that's thirty million dollars a year, a little more than ten percent, than the number for the entire state. We have a deal where by, for instance our goal, and I say with a modicum of hyperbole, is to take back Sonoma County. Use the casino to take back, buy back, Sonoma County. We are doing it; we are in partnership. We don't just give money to environmental organizations, we get on the boards so that we can affect the shape of the restorations of the project and protect our natural resources and sacred places. That's what we're doing with Tolay Lake. As you know, we did give away 1000 acres on Highway 37 to the Bay Institute of Sonoma Land Trust. We just flooded the wetlands at a big ceremony there about a month ago, opening the dikes. Anyway, one other thing Sonoma County has to do is for all the people--this is a two-pronged project: either environmental restoration and preservation (which is pruning the oak trees, taking care, doing control burning, that kind of thing. Restoring the aboriginal landscape for wildlife and so forth), the other prong is organic sustainable farming, but everybody who works has to give the workers, the county has to pay the workers, the same high wages and benefits that our 2,000 employees at the casino have. Which is the Kaiser Gold Cadillac plan, where they pay nothing out of their paycheck for full coverage: a ten-dollar deductible, even for brain surgery. They \$2,500 a year non-deductible for dental insurance, which includes orthodontic and is why you'll see more people with braces over there than in Pacific Heights or San Francisco. And then eyes. So they have to pay them that. Currently, behind the casino, we have two hundred acres and where we are doing our hothouse blueprint that we, again, affect with the county, once we have the money to start giving it. So, we are restoring the southern end of the lagoon there and we are also just now budding our little, mini three acres of organic farming and we are going to use low-risk prisoners and undocumented folks with the hopes of once that spreads to the county, I will then undo the horrible exploitation that is going on at the grape vineyards the same way the casino has

undone exploitation that has gone on in the hospitality industry with the undocumented and documented Latinos. They've had to pay them more than people in Sonoma. We are very happy about us having a casino. All the hotels were because their occupancy rates went up, but they were very upset with me for going union and paying high wages. They called me up and ganged up on me and said, "You know, we are all for the casino. But why these high wages and benefits?" I knew where they were going. I said, "What's the problem?" and they said, "Well, we are going to lose all of our best help," and I replied—excuse the French—"Well, then fucking pay them better."

CL: Good point.

GS: Anyways, probably to get back to you, Sonoma Mountain and the projects that you're doing, the tribe will have, hopefully if business keeps going the way it's going (which is very well, we are the largest employer in Northern California and I should say without betraying any secrets, our income is more than triple that of any other business north of the Golden Gate Bridge.) We should be in a position to buy back and take care of Sonoma County and be in a position to be keepers of the land once again, with everybody else, and be enforcers of social justice.

CL: Wow, that is an amazing vision. I mean, what hope there is....

GS: But sadly, I mean I wish we didn't have to do a casino. One thing I have learned is that money is power and as I started to say, we were lucky to have the donating families donate land. But remember the donating families and the others who give money out of organizations, mostly have that money and land as a consequence of having destroyed it and destroyed people in the process working on it. So, how do you change the paradigm? You need a new paradigm. With business, if you have business: that's what my vision here is, with the opportunity that we have. You know, this whole thing about land litigation is kind of a joke because when you have a majority of white men who own the land of the majority of the land developers who own the land, they can keep litigating 'til the cows come home because all they have to do is give a portion of their land away so they can build more somewhere else. How do you stop that? That's a joke. Environmentalists sometimes, unfortunately, tend to be the most disconnected, naïve, people. Politically, anyway. I mean they needed to grow up on the streets and make the connections with these shrewd, awful developers. The only way you really in Sonoma County that you can stop that is a financial monster that can out buy them. Get the land back. Just buy it out from under them. That's the reality. I mean I wish there were some other way. Coming home and sitting on Sonoma mountain and loving and hearing the land once again, as you both will once you get to know Sonoma Mountain and fall in love with the place, to think that somebody with more money than you and a fraction of the vision- and an ugly vision at that -could come in and change things... um, here we go again! It's same thing once more, is it not? You're Indian being taken from what you love: what's connecting you. So, how do you stop that? I don't know, I'm not sure any ends justify a means or if fighting fire with fire works, but I don't know any other

way. If there's opportunity, I'm going to take it. I'm going to risk it. I'm going to gamble.

SE: Nice metaphor.

CL: Do you- I was just thinking about this – do you have any goals for, perhaps, reconnecting the people with the mountain?

GS: Well, I have been, I have been writing. For instance, I have my children's stories. Which, I will probably publish shortly. They have been performed at over ninety schools..."How a Mountain Was Made". I know I shared some of those with you Claudia, I don't know if Steve has seen them, but I can certainly send them to you. What those basically are- we tell stories in cycles, we never... the anthropologists came and the linguists came and collect stories from us and they were usually in pieces and who knows what. They would come in cycles. What I kind of did was I recreated a cycle based loosely on one creation cycle, story cycle, of Sonoma Mountain that I kind of formatted or used somewhat of a structure of the Grimm's or Western fairy tales, somewhat. I give them songs because our stories always filled with animals and things singing and talking. And I recreated that. I hoped that even in the recreation, the ancient ethic and aesthetic of place – and in this case, Sonoma Mountain – would be there; I believe it is. I was successful. We can never go back. Remember we're never, all of us, we are all here now. Some of the Indian side of my family put down white people and say the whites should go back to Europe. Well what are you going to do? Cut me in half? My mother was white she was a German Jew. Um, hello? What are you going to do with me? We can't go there anymore. We can't play those games. We are all here. How do we all, what opportunity do we have and what stories you know, create a home for us once again and get to use the landscape for something? You know, global warming is not going to discriminate. I mean unless you're an evangelical and be sparred and get sucked up somewhere. You know that ain't going to happen. We are all here and the land is here for all of us to listen to and Sonoma Mountain is here to remind us of the wonderful things I was talking about at the top of this conversation. So I'm doing that. I'm also in the starting the second draft of a novel where a mixed-blood, Mexican, Coast Miwok kid knows not much what he's about or where he's from. He's heard a few stories from his mother who's passed away from cancer. He's running away from the law after a kind of incident in Rohnert Park and hides up on Sonoma Mountain for three months one summer, living off garbage, getting to know the animals, and reconnecting with a place, in a way, that he brings back down the hill with him when he turns himself in finally. I'm hoping that will be a story, I'm hoping- I don't like to talk much about it cause it brings bad luck – it's taken me about almost two years to do the first draft. You know, I had to publish other essays and stories around. But, I'm in the rewrite now. I hope to maybe get that done, hopefully, in eight months to a year, depending on how things go. It's called simply "Mountain," and it's about how this young, largely, high school, just about a high school dropout, a good boy; but he's lost his mother. Basically, he takes up with bad kids. He gets in trouble, not necessarily of his own thinking, but of his own stupidity, and runs from the law and

hides up here. Eventually takes up with a girl, a rich girl, living up here with horses and is somewhat catatonic because her mother has been killed in a car accident and he starts taking her around the mountain. It's not a love relationship, but it's a way that both of them get in touch with themselves. Meanwhile, he can't really reveal who he is to her or his father, and he's telling lies and starts to get more and more psychotic. And his dreams of the animals mixed with dreams of his mother and the whole thing kind of comes back to how things, how we get together with the place. I will read you the first page and you will get the whole drift, this is how the novel begins. "If a heart was something you could see, it would be a mountain. But then a heart has to belong to something: and that would be the world. Or put it this way, since you want to know about her, our mother, she would be a mountain. That one up there. Sonoma Mountain. And then all that you can see. I could give you a picture so you could see what she looked like or I could tell you little things; the music that she liked and for sure that she never forgot you, either of you. But it's best I tell you the story. If I could tell it, what happened to me up there, if I could tell it as close as what happened, you'll run right dang into her, find her the same as your eyes could see me. You're disappointed; you've come all the way from Mexico and you find a name on a grave, but there ain't no death, not really. Only the on going beating of the heart, which I know sure as your finding me, us finding each other, was no accident. What would she want you to know, you ask? That she loved you, like I said, then that you followed her finger, pointing at everything you can see: the rocks, the field, the birds, the glorious flight, then the path between the trees leading up to the mountain, and past the trees, the first side of her, arms stretched out wide on the hillside. Safety in just seeing her, without you thinking a thing: safety. But I'm already telling the story ahead of myself and I got to go to the beginning."

CL: Wow! How soon is that going to be out??

GS: So, um, there. You know we don't need any genius. This kid, he's obviously talking to a brother. The mother had had two kids that she left in Mexico and one has come back, and this kid is obviously telling his story from jail to his brother from Mexico, whom he has just met, he didn't know. The brother came back over.

CL: So, it sound like you're really, you know, looking for ways to connect people back to the mountain.

GS: Absolutely!

CL: Have you ever thought about having a program that does that? Listening to you, I just feel like, God this place, well what we do is all about place; connecting people to place. And this is a story that is so powerful and combining so many aspects of humanity to place and to history... anyways, I'm really excited about it. I was thinking, do you have an interest in, we could bring children up here to reconnect them to the...

GS: Well anything that you come with, I'm really busy, you know, anything I could do to help. It is my goal, in writing my politics and everything else I do here, coming home, to do just that. You hit on something important Claudia: that is that too often in environmentalism—it's all necessary—it's all about science. What science tells us we should know, but science is story that doesn't necessarily move the heart and emotions. Until the land, the mountain, is your mother; is a friend; is a relative that you can't dispense with; until it's at that emotional, that deep, nothing is going to be fixed, nothing is going to heal. As I like to like to say too, I kind of say it about global warming, you know, the day may come where once again we will all be Indians begging for nature to be nice to us.

SE: Greg, I have to go teach just in about a couple of minutes, but I wanted to ask before I get off the phone... If you or if you either could tell us or tell Angela one or two elders that might be able to talk about the mountain the way that you are talking about it or you know give us a little bit more background?

GS: I don't know. You know, I wish I could—I sound awful, like an egotist – if I could think of somebody, I will tell you. I would tell you right now. You know, I can't think of anybody.

SE: Okay.

GS: I'm old. I just turned sixty-four years old. My father's generation was the lost generation; alcoholism, bars, profligacy, you know it was a hard, disconnected life. Being an adopted kid and not knowing where I belonged, I paid particular attention to stories and people, not just Indian stories. I could do genealogy on people in Santa Rosa *ad nauseam*. It would just drive you crazy. I could tell you somebody's grandmothers, uncles, aunts, son-in-laws, or cousin. I don't know anybody who knows, it's just like I didn't know anybody who, likewise, had the knowledge I had about the doctoring and the healing, but remember I as a kid just happened to be around- and who knows why – I just happened to be around Mabel McKay, the old Indian doctor, the last of the "sucking doctors," Pomo sucking doctors and dreamers. I happened to be around the old, old what we call healer killers and they could either heal you or kill you, the Indian doctor himself, harm. I used to listen to the stories and see things, and I used to listen to the old people talk. So, I heard the stories and I don't- you know, my dad, my aunt, my sisters, she doesn't know as much as this, all she remembers is my grandmother telling my great-grandmother not to speak Indian in the kitchen, not around the kids. My grandmother, my father's mother, I mean she remembers the horrible history here; of Indian slavery and the abuse here. I don't blame my grandmother, but you know one day she was Mexican then the next day she was Spanish, the next day she was Portuguese. She was always changing the story, and she probably had a lot of those in her, but you know just to give you some perspective, Steve, about how ugly this is, there were approximately twenty thousand of us in this area in Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo at the time of contact. Today, in a tribe of less than fourteen hundred, all of us trace our ancestry to one of fourteen survivors.

SE: Wow.

CL: Wow.

SE: That is devastating.

GS: So, what I like to say is, and I gave a lecture and they haven't invited be back, I used to go to the Holocaust one there, but what about the Holocaust beneath our feet? Remember the American Indians is the prick in the American conscious. We can say that slavery was bad, but we got rid of it. Never mind the legacy of slavery. We can say the immigrants came of their own free choice. But how do you deal or rectify the fact with what happened here? There's no way out.

SE: Yeah.

GS: So, the Indian has always been, you know, a stereotype. Either "oh the poor fallen nature God. It's so sad that we took them away from nature, and we let them weave baskets" or the flip side of that coin which is a wagon burner. Whenever it's a question of power or territory, its: "Oh, we're wagon burners." I have been both in my lifetime; when I write books and make movies, I'm Sonoma County's native son; when I do a casino, I'm a wagon burner.

CL: Yeah.

GS: So to answer your question, I really wish I could think of someone or people to talk about it, I don't know there's some vague, a couple references, but they are very loose in the interviews of Tom Smith and Maria Copa by Isabelle Tilley. She did a dissertation on the Coast Miwok seventy years ago and she interviewed Tom Smith my great, great grandfather. Tom Smith was from the Bodega Bay and Petaluma area. well his mother was from Petaluma, she escaped General Vallejo and went up into Kashia Pomo territory and Marie Copa was from the Nicacio and Marshall. So, a lot of the old people had this stuff, there isn't a lot, so maybe from some other folks or Indian tribes surrounding would be able to get some of this stuff. I don't know. I'll search my brain, if I can come up with somebody I will certainly let you know. But, I ran into some of the same trouble with Tolay Lake. You know, there were more charm stones at the base of that than anywhere in North America, in one single place. That was by the Stanford Medical Center where there where rocks and charm stones that came from as far away as Mexico and Washington state. The Indian doctors would come there to doctor people, as a sort of Stanford Medical Center, but again, stories and stuff I've heard.

SE: I hate to interrupt you, and I know you're a lot more busy than me, but I have to go teach right now. So I'm going get off the call and let Claudia and you finish up. But I just wanted to say Greg, thank you so much for sharing your perspective with us.

GS: Well anything I can do, I'm busy, but you are doing the kind of work that warms my heart, so: Yay!"

SE: All right, well hopefully I meet you in person.

GS: I hope you find it helpful with the things I've said.

SE: It was very helpful. I really appreciate it. I wish I didn't have to stop because you're going great.