

Alyssa Ballard
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Interviewee: Nancy Armstrong Frost
Interviewer: Alyssa Ballard

AB: When and where were you born?

NF: I was born in Palo Alto, California, in Mountain View, February 1962.

AB: Did you grow up in Palo Alto, in that area?

NF: I grew up in Palo Alto, graduated from Gunn High School...but I also grew up on the Cooley Ranch, so every summer and every weekend while I was growing up I was up there. Then subsequent to that, you know in college, coming home weekends and stuff I was up here (Cooley Ranch) a lot. Every summer, after we got married and had kids, for a month to three months bringing my kids out here.

AB: You said you went Chico [State University]?

NF: I went to Chico, so did my brother Tom.

AB: Oh, the name of the ranch, what was the name of the ranch?

NF: Ok, well, the entire thing was the Cooley Ranch. You can Google Colley and you will find a lot about the ranch. Then in 2002, my mom and my uncle did a split of Cooley Ranch Company and my uncle had control and we had a minority ownership and so we received what we always called the **Metsen** which was this back half of the ranch. So we have about 1,700 acres. We actually used to own this, and my grandpa sold it to Tom Bickel, who is in the red shirt over there on the porch, which pisses me off to no end because I love this section.

AB: This is nice.

NF: Yeah it's really cute. So maybe someday I will buy it back, I don't know. So we used to enter, which where its flooded by Lake Sonoma. So now we enter the way you guys came in on Elk Horn [Road] and we have the right to go over the hill, you know visit and go to the lakes and stuff that are over there but our ranch now is here and I bring my kid here etcetera, etcetera.

AB: So the ranch, it's off this way (pointing south) towards Lake Sonoma to the south?

NF: Yeah, you go about a quarter mile from right here is the start of our ranch.

AB: Then how far does it go down that...how many acres is your ranch?

NF: We have about 1,700, and you go over the second ridge and you're onto the Cooley side. Then it takes me, from my house to the edge of the lake, it takes about, depending on how fast im going on the ATV, 25 to 35 minutes on an ATV to get to Lake Sonoma from here.

AB: Well that's not that bad.

NF: No, but isn't that crazy, I mean think about that, my cousin Bobby's house on Cooley Ranch overlooks the lake.

AB: What was the difference between time taking the Sonoma side to go all the way around (Elk Horn Rd.)?

NF: Hella, its hella, there's no getting around it. Well, but its different, ok, because when I was little, we would pick up my dad in the city, and on a Friday afternoon and come up. We entered in Cloverdale, you were talking about Cloverdale, ok, so at the south end of town over by Ray's , the Chevron station, the Starbucks and all that, right, you go a little bit further up and there's a Cal Fire. The road that used to go out there was Hot Springs Road and it went through several ranches to get to the Cooley, and im talking a lot of ranches, so we were opening a lot of gates and going through a lot of cattle guards. So now, with the flooded, with the lake, you can go out Dutcher Creek, you can go out Canyon Road, you can go out Dry Creek, take your pick. We have to go across the bridge, out Rock Pile Road, to the end of the paved road, 45 minutes right. So it almost takes the same amount of time, really honestly, to get around 128 (HWY). But I drive 128 like a bat out of hell. Ya'll get out of my way, I don't like tourists.

AB: When you said you grew up in Palo Alto, did you say you were coming up in the summers or on the weekends?

NF: Summers and weekends.

AB: When did you move? Now you live on the ranch full time?

NF: Full time. We finished the house in 2013. I came out here first, Kurt (her husband) was still working in [Washington] D.C.

AB: Why did you decide to move here?

NF: I followed him (Kurt) for 26 ½ years through all these different places. We lived in Colorado, we lived in North Dakota, we lived in Virginia, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama. He lived in the desert a couple different times; he lived in Bosnia, just nasty shit, so I always knew I wanted back here. The question was, was whether he was going to like it, for the time. So when we first designed the house, and built the house, we built it as a three season house. So we weren't going to be up here in the winter time, we were going to have a place in town, it was

going to be more of a vacation; he liked it. So instead of having a condo in Petaluma (California) we are up here all the time now.

AB: Well that's lucky for you!

NF: Yeah it's really lucky because I love it.

AB: What were your first impressions of the property when you were little? Did you fall in love right away?

NF: Yeah, well, it's really different. Sonoma County and Mendocino County, the two sides of the ranch, are really different.

AB: The ranch spans both?

NF: Yeah, at its peak, when it was still all together it was 22,000 acres; it goes over both counties. This side (Mendocino County side) you have firs and redwoods, there's a hella lot of firs. Sonoma County is more oak and the further you go down the ranch, towards the lake, there are more oaks and there's more open space, there's more vineyards.

AB: More of the rolling hills?

NF: Yes, exactly. So it's a different vibe to it completely. We do have...Tom Bickel's is really tight, there aren't as many open spaces. We do, if you kept going to our place you would see more open valley. So we do have open valley for vistas and stuff like that.

AB: So you say you built your house in 2013, what other building or structures do you have located on the property? Have you built anything else?

NF: So we ran 4,000 sheep over the whole place so you have different types of barns. You have lambing barns, and you have shearing barns, and you have hay barns. On our place we had a loft lambing barn so it did have a hay capacity in it and it was set up for lambing in the springtime. We also has a shearing barn but the shearing barn right now has been converted into...my brother is converting it into a house. The lambing barn that was up on top of the ridge, I converted it for cattle, so I had a rub rail on the inside of it. So we have those structures up there. There are hunter's cabins that are really old that were, you know, from the forties and fifties, that have been worked on and stuff. Some of those are left. I'm about to put in a pool and a pool house.

AB: That will be nice.

NF: Very nice. Our old house on the other side of the hill, the one I used when I was growing up; we had a pool from 1928-1930, hand dug, one foot to six feet, cement pool. Somebody had drawn beer bucks into the sides of it and it was really pretty. It used to have...the drainage into the pool was this cascading rock waterfall that took the overflow from the water tank down into

the pool. So it was the neatest thing and my kids grew up with that pool and they want a recreation of it. So we are having a modern twenty by fifty foot pool put in. But it counts different, because obviously out here you don't have fire protection so we put a pump to it and then we can use it for extra fire protection.

AB: What do you know about the earlier history of the ranch?

NF: Well there's different levels of history on this place and all of us have different eras. Tom Bickel and Bill Bickel, those two cousins, are the oldest around here so their stories are even better than mine but I have done a lot of looking, probably more than my brother Tom has over there talking. So there were homesteaders out here. I think my uncle said once, coming up Dry Creek Valley there were like eight school houses. I mean there were tons of little schools. There was one out here on the **Fabiano** place. There was a homestead and there is an orchard over on our place. So there are multi levels, you had Indians, you had homesteaders, you had loggers, you had the sheep ranchers, and now you have people that are, besides all the vineyards out here, people like us. I'm bringing back our apple orchard; I brought cattle because I can't do sheep anymore. There are only like three of us in Anderson Valley that are still doing sheep.

AB: Why can't you do sheep anymore?

NF: It's just not economically feasible. So for instance, a couple years ago, we had the MRC, Mendocino Resource Conservation, out wandering around and we found an arrowhead out wandering around. So Indian stuff is out here, you have evidence of the loggers living out here, you have evidence of the homesteaders out here. From my perspective, where I remember the most is from the sixties on. At that point it was an active sheep ranch. We had foremen living out here that were running the sheep. Chuck Johnson was on that side of the ranch running the sheep. His brother Sam Johnson was on this side running a hunting club, looking out for this side of the ranch. What more do you need to know, I mean it was a lot of subsistence living I guess is the easiest way to put it. A lot of hunting, a lot of fishing, gardens, making do, and people are still doing that around here, besides grows.

AB: You switched to cattle now?

NF: Yeah we do cattle.

AB: How has the landscape changed?

NF: It is much better. Its different, sheep take your grass down to nothing, absolutely nothing. Where as a cattle, everything between their hoof and the way they eat, it doesn't destroy the land as much. There is a little concern...there is concern for two reasons; one, there's a lot of thistle grow after cattle come through and they go into the creeks, you know to get their water, because I haven't got enough stock tank set up for the drink out so that we can fence off the creeks yet. My uncle has a lot of the creeks fenced off, a lot of Dry Creek Fenced off; the cattle stay out of it

and it doesn't go into the lake. The cattle's hooves turn up the ground so that's really helpful. The concern is that if they are in there too much they take off the top seeds of the grass and then you don't get the re-growth. That's a little bit of a problem. We try to get them out...they come back in in November...we try to get them out late October early November...we try to get them out by May or June. They're great! Because otherwise, without the controlled burns, we're hosed. They help to keep the grass down. They don't keep all the underbrush you see that's grown up because we can't have the fires we used to have. You have to be careful about your creeks, you really do, they'll cause erosion, they'll poop in them.

AB: What were you saying earlier about the controlled burns? Why can't you do them anymore? Because of the drought?

NF: There's layers of reasons. California doesn't want the air pollution. They are worried about burns going out of control and Cal Fire has f'ed up things before and then houses, you know, while developments are taken down. They're very unrealistic about it; you can get a controlled burn but you have to go through hoops to get them. It's a winter thing versus a summer thing. They don't let you do it in the summer anymore so what's hard about it, what they don't understand is it really helps...fire helps a forest thrive because it kills all the small stuff. Up in the Sierras, if you don't have it the pine cones don't open up. There's lots of valid reasons to have burns, unfortunately, California's hard to have them.

AB: How big were the burns when you used to be able to do them?

NF: Thousands of acres.

AB: Now is there not as much new growth because you are not having them?

NF: There's an overpopulation of manzanita, buckbrush, madrone, all the nasty scrub stuff that is fuel for a fire in the summertime and that chokes out what you want which is the oaks, the redwoods, and the furs. So it creates a different forest environment that's not necessarily good and it promotes things like pigs.

AB: Does the Rancheria Creek go through...

NF: It starts at our place which is why we're hoping to get some of this money that's going around.

AB: How has the creek changed since you have been coming up to the property? Earlier Claudia was kind of saying that it used to be much more dense and now it's kind of the sandy banks; have you noticed that?

NF: Yes. There's a lot more erosion. I suppose it's our own fault. All these roads are logging roads. We've taken some of them out but we haven't taken enough out. Specifically, going up Hop House, it goes in and out of the creek, the road, so that doesn't help it at all, although, we try

to keep everybody out during the wintertime. We don't want them on the roads in the wintertime. I think it has broken down and I think one of the things that Kurt was talking about was that the creek coming out of the Galbreath is gorgeous. It was running high and clear this winter and we had a lot of silt coming down through here.

AB: Kurt was saying that when [the creeks] met down [by the Galbreath gate] you could tell the difference.

NF: You can totally tell the difference. Its really bad. So the hope is that we get our roads out because there's a lot of erosion and with the change in the number of animals that are on the place...hopefully that will help too, you know, no sheep anymore and less cattle and that should help I hope.

AB: Do you think the sheep contribute to that as well? Because they take everything down?

NF: Yeah, they take everything down.

AB: And then less cattle going through the creek?

NF: Yeah, less cattle.

AB: Do you think that's kind of why there has been that change? Because of the animals?

NF: I think it's probably a difference in the agriculture. I think it's us, manmade, how we went through the creeks, and I think the different kind of growth doesn't promote...it promotes the silting. I think the loggers had a lot to do with it too, pulling the tree out, the necessary tree that keep the ground firm, that didn't help either. That was fifties, sixties, seventies.

AB: I had a question about the logging but now I've lost it. Oh I guess it was about the logging and the creek; do you think that had an effect on it?

NF: Totally...totally.

AB: Did the logging used to be more prominent?

NF: Oh yeah, yeah. I mean, well Claudia said the last time Galbreath was logged was fifteen years ago, so even up until then. Loggers are nasty. Now you have to have what's called a "timber management plan", TMP, and you have to say exactly how you're going to do it, and you have to have your roads in first, and they have to be just the right kind of roads, and there's a lot more rules to doing it the right way. You go out to our place and you are going to find old pieces of steel, and you're going to find old cables, and just junk, they just left all their stuff where it was and trashed the place, absolutely trashed it. So now I have to cart it in to the recycle center to help clean the place up. So I think logging was really a necessary evil and it's still the necessary evil; you want to live in a house, so.

AB: Are they still around the area at all? Are they doing anything recently?

NF: Not in our place, not in Tom's place. We don't log out here anymore but, and you may have not seen any logging trucks on 128 today...

AB: No, not today.

NF: Well, they were running yesterday. Fish Rock Road, further down Anderson Valley. So are you going to the beer festival at the end of the month?

AB: I am! I just got my ticket and printed it out.

NF: Well I'm taking my son. The text message from Casey, "Mooom can you drive me and some buds back and forth"...sure.

AB: That sounds like the message I was going to send my mom.

NF: Well Tom's daughter Lauren usually camps. Are you going to camp?

AB: I was going to but I don't think I am this year.

NF: Alright, well if your need a ride, call me. So, so, at any rate, between us and Boonville is Fish Rock Road, it comes in on the left, they're still logging heavily out there. I know some other people further out Philo, further out the coast, that... they're logging out there too. So it is still happening, definitely still happening in Mendocino County but it's not happening for us. This place is under Anderson Valley Land Trust.

AB: Ok, what's that?

NF: That is... uncle Crawford on the Cooley side is under Agricultural Open Space...Sonoma County Open Space, you know when you Google Cooley ranch you will see what his is. Tom's is under Anderson Valley Land Trust and it's basically...it's a generational thing. None of us...none of us want these places developed. We want open space forever and ever because we all love it and it's just protecting this land so that it won't be developed and we're not going to log it. I haven't done it yet...I'm majority owner, I've got two thirds of the ranch and my brother Tom has a third. I'm not going to let it be developed. My kids don't want it to be developed. We'll keep it open. It's hard because you have to be able to afford it to do it. It's a hell a lot of work but we don't want to develop it.

AB: Are your kids still out of state?

NF: No.

AB: Do they live on the ranch?

NF: So Casey, the oldest, lives in Daly City and works for Apple doing GIS work but he has applied for Sonoma County. He did some volunteer work for Claudia and I'm hoping, crossing my fingers, that he can get a GIS job for Sonoma County. Sammy is in the Bay Area and he lives with some buds from Oregon in Martinez and he works in Hayward but he wants to go to Davis for grad school. Kelly Marie lives in Lake County, in Lakeport, and she works for the assessor's office. She's here this weekend.

AB: Do any of them want to move here later on, or are they going to go off and do their own thing? Are they expressing interest in the ranch?

NF: Well they all love it here so they are here a lot. Casey was here last weekend with Gina, his girlfriend. Kelly is here every weekend and she hates Lake County and she's just biding her time before law school. So do you live in Lake County?

AB: No, I live in Ukiah.

NF: Oh you do? Ok!

AB: Yeah I grew up in Ukiah.

NF: Casey worked up there when he first got out of USC he worked for Radiant Solar Tech up on Kunzler Ranch Road north of town.

AB: Oh, ok I know where that is.

NF: He lived up on the north end of town. You guys are going to get an In n' Out Burger!

AB: I just saw that in the newspaper. That was my big news for everyone on the way!

NF: Well Lake County is getting one too!

AB: Oh they are? I didn't hear that!

NF: Yeah! Yeah! And you know what else? You guys are getting, and so is Lake County, Dunkin Donuts!

AB: I didn't know that! Well that Chipotle is getting built there.

NF: Yeah but who wants to eat there now...

AB: Yeah well after that...that was definitely the wrong time to be building that!

NF: Yeah I was in Ukiah yesterday. One family bought the franchise. Same thing as the In n' Out Burger. You know, they buy the franchise, they don't necessarily build right away but they pick up the franchise for the area.

AB: Well that will be interesting to see. Well gosh, Ukiah is getting bigger...I don't think I like that!

NF: Once they get a Costco...

AB: That's going to take awhile!

NF: Well that intersection (Airport Blvd. and Talmage Rd.) is getting terrible too, Talmage though is terrible.

AB: Yeah well I heard...well my mom write permits for the City of Ukiah so she's trying to give me updates on that and that doesn't sound like that's going anywhere anytime soon.

NF: Our builders, the guy that built our house and is hopefully going to build our pool house for me now that I've lost my other builder. **Howey Hox**, his wife **Marry Anne** was on the Ukiah City Council.

AB: Oh, you were talking about pigs; did you used to have more pigs on the property? Do you have pigs on the property?

NF: Yeah, we have a lot of pigs; honestly, I don't think we have as many.

AB: As Galbreath?

NF: That's really bad; really horrific. We have what's called a depredation permit. You get them from the state, the state biologist, I think the guy's office is up in Redding. You call him and you say you have an agricultural problem and it's the same thing that's destroying pasture land. For us its cattle...pasture...grassland...since we're organically free range, whatever nice little catch phrase you want to put on it. Our pastures are all over the place so if they tear up the hillside...so we have a depredation permit and that means that you can kill them and you don't have to have a tag. One of California's problems is that the pigs used to be free to shoot, now besides the hunting license you have to pay for a pig tag which is ridiculous because they are the scourge of the earth.

AB: How much are those?

NF: I can't even remember how much they cost because we don't even do them anymore because we have depredation permits.

AB: Ok, so they used to be free and now it's expensive?

NF: Yeah now it's expensive. It's stupid.

AB: The depredation permit, do you have to pay for that?

NF: No, I don't have to pay for that because it's a agricultural problem.

AB: Ok, so it's like a special permission to take care of the problem?

NF: Yeah, and there's three ways to do it; there's daytime hunting, there's nighttime hunting with spot, and then there's what Claudia was talking about with the trap. The problem with the pen traps is...and I know she's trying to say she can get away with it with game cameras but what I just volunteered for was, I told her, the reasons the wardens have a problem with it is because we are out here and there's a lot of other wildlife, some of it's bad. I told her if she gets a bear cub in there, I'm not going to come help her out. A game camera would let her know she has a problem but she's still in Santa Rosa and can't get up here fast enough to do the release out of the pen. That's what the fish and game people have a problem with is catching another thing. If it was a raccoon, yeah sure I'd come over here and let it out. If it is a bear cub, I'm not getting near that because there is a mama around somewhere. That's what it is, the pig population is pretty bad.

AB: Did there used to be more pigs on the property?

NF: Ok so this is a really good lesson. There is a situation, there's no pressure on the Galbreath because nobody's hunting over there. That's where the pigs are moving, over there, pretty much because we are hunting them. The same thing, I'm sure can be said, is during dear season, I bet there's far more dear and far more duck over there hiding out on the Galbreath than are here.

AB: Do you think since they are all going over there that they are going to multiply and come back over?

NF: Well they could. I mean we certainly have them here but our hunters take pretty good care of them. They have three litters a year, eight to ten babies. Can you imagine them sucking off you like that? About three months ago there was a set living down in the horse pastures by Bob Lawson's place. They were so cute but they get so big so fast and they are awful. Kelly Marie coming in one night from Lakeport ran into four mountain lions there too. Mom, two juveniles, and a baby.

AB: Down on Bob Lawson's?

NF: Yeah, on Bob Lawson's.

AB: Oh ok, so down on Elk Horn Road. I know where that is because I think I was originally supposed to interview him so I was trying to figure out where his property was.

NF: Yeah...yeah...and when she said Denny...oh my goooood...Denny has done way too many drugs.

AB: That would prove to be a interesting interview.

NF: He's still growing right there. So, the **Fabiano** bridge, the house that's across the creek from it is the old **Holbrook** place.

AB: The one that has the tree with the purple flowers?

NF: Yeah, that's it. Denny lives in that house and I haven't been in it but Tom says it's nasty on the inside. You see all the little greenhouses and stuff around there, he grows like crazy. But he used to do meth any everything else, he's just a mess. He's so...he can't...he's just not coherent at all. Yeah, so that's a good one and Bob Lawson is an asshole.

AB: Well maybe I lucked out a little. So, I guess I'll stick with animals; what kind of animals are on your property?

NF: We have everything. We have bear (black bear), yeah Tom's orchard down there, he had a lot of trouble with them. Tom had game cameras up, especially us because we have hunters for hunting rights; they've seen everything, mountain lions, black bear, we have a lot of the usuals, raccoons, skunks, and squirrels, and tons of turkeys, and just everything, we've got everything.

AB: Have you noticed any changes in the numbers?

NF: Yeah, this drought has killed the deer population. It's really hurt the deer population. And the difference with the pig is really pronounced too. To get down to the creeks, to get down to the water, the pigs were more visible because they were having to drop down to get to the water. This past year they were able to move up. Did you see how high some of those places were? Those were up on upper ridges, up on the Galbreath where the pigs were herding.

AB: Those were at the very top. And they are normally down by the rivers?

NF: Yeah that's the difference. This is a normal water year so they are up higher and the drought years they've been down low.

AB: Do you think that effects the erosion of the creeks?

NF: Oh totally!

AB: I saw how much that affected the ground just up there. I can imagine that...

NF: Pigs are terrible because they not only walk, you know and it's not too terribly different from a cow, but they root while they are walking. They're nasty and they create those wallows and they are everywhere, they are everywhere there's water. Down in the creek floors; they are nasty for the creeks, just awful. I can't believe they can't shoot those things out there. They could make so much money too. It's \$250 a pig for a guided hunt. We have hunters that pay a set fee. They lease rights for the entire year so it's a different situation.

AB: So they can come up whenever?

NF: Whenever, whenever they want to they can come up and hunt, depending on the season, the pigs are year round. On Cooley there's a guided hunt guy out there. On Bob Lawson's place there's a guys that hunts out there too, so they charge differently for the pigs.

AB: Are there any other changes in the landscape that you've noticed over time since you have been coming up here?

NF: I'm going to say the biggest one I have seen over time I've seen is the amount of fur; the trash fur coming in and choking out the oaks and choking other stuff out. When I had the USDA people come out and help me with range management and the creeks and all that, they say if you see a little doug fur, cut it out, get rid of it. It's kind of hard to do when you have so many acres. They choke out the other trees, especially the oaks, so that's been a huge change. On the flip side of that, we have done a lot of brush removal to try to clear stuff out on our own and a lot of burning.

AB: Do you have a problem with the douglass furs on the Sonoma side?

NF: No it's only really on the Mendocino side. That's just the difference in microclimate and the amount of rainfall. Mendocino gets far more rain than Sonoma County. 1959, they talked about a record flood.

AB: On the creek here?

NF: I want to say it was 1959, 1958, there was a flood that came through here that really affected the Rancheria (creek) and the Russian River. Then there was one, late 60s early 70s, there was another one. You know, so when you came in, Paul Fabiano's place, he had over seventy inches, we had almost seventy inches of rain here this year the big years were over one hundred and then the average years used to be one hundred. So that's climate change up here.

AB: Before this drought, were there any other big floods you can remember?

NF: Not that I can really remember. This year the water came up pretty high and that causes erosion, it really does. So it does cause erosion on the banks.

AB: So the major floods...obviously they were a little earlier for you to remember what the landscape was before that but did it...

NF: The only think I can tell you...I can tell you at least on the Dry Creek side, so Sonoma County side not so much Mendocino side, but there are spots, I know there's spots. I can tell you when it does come up like down by our big orchard we get rocks moved up out of the creek into the orchard. On the Sonoma County side, Dry Creek, well Crawford had planted all those trees, alders or whatever they are, to control the erosion but the amount of water just cuts. Was it Patty that was talking? I think it was before you guys got here talking about the soil in northern California. We have something up here that is really easily eroded and unless you have the right

kind of vegetation on either side and then the rock. I'm going to say that there's spot along here that have gotten a lot wider.

AB: What are some of your favorite memories on the ranch?

NF: I can tell you another thing; I don't think there are as many rattlesnakes here as there are on the other side of the ranch. On the Mendocino County side I don't think there are as many as there were on the Sonoma County side.

AB: Did there used to be?

NF: You know, I don't know because I'm trying to remember if Sam, the old man who my middle one is named after, his real name turned out to be James. It was the craziest thing; the obit him said James and in quotation marks Sam. Can you imagine? I named my kid after you! I wouldn't have named him James though, I like Sam. I thought that was funny. I am trying to remember; Sam did talk about some snakes but it seems to be, climate wise, there are more on the Sonoma side than the Mendocino County side. There's certainly less, and this is another change and I don't know if it's really climate, it's a function of us not running sheep there and not really having feed around so there's not as many rodents, there's not as many... That's another thing, there's not as many ground squirrels on this side as there are on the Sonoma County side. There's a lot of tree squirrels but not ground squirrels. It's way different. So we have noticed a lot of differences, a lot of different things between the two counties and I was going to say, overtime, if we get the pig [population under control that will help the creeks; that will be a change for the better. If we get the wet winters again for a little while the deer population will come back. The deer don't hurt the creeks, they don't do anything. They bug the gardeners but they don't hurt things the way the pigs do.

AB: Oh! You were talking about fish earlier...

NF: Oh I have great fish stories! Yeah, these places were teeming with fish and before that damn Lake Sonoma came in we had tons of trout through these creeks.

AB: Where is the start of Rancheria Creek?

NF: It's at our place right up here in what we call Hop House Canyon. In Hopland there were hops grown in Mendocino County so we have Hop House Canyon; fish all through that. Tom Bickel has three ponds that they put in. He's got bass in them now; he doesn't have any trout this week up in them. That's another climate change thing. With the heat these ponds got too hot and you can't have the trout anymore. With Lake Sonoma, on Dry Creek, it stopped them from coming up the same way they used to through the Russian River from the ocean and that whole deal. So the two lakes that Uncle Crawford had, or my grandpa put in, Buck Eye and the Christian both went from gorgeous trout to bass. But there's pictures of me with a fish this big

(using her hand so show a large sized fish) coming out of one of the creeks. Nice steelhead...yeah.

AB: Do you still get steelhead?

NF: That's what we are trying to get back. We have some...Casey's last girlfriend and Casey both worked for Fish and Game for a while doing fish research work and they found a steelhead right at Tom's first bridge. So, you know, a few get up here and we want to promote more but we need to get it clear, less silt and sediment, and more rock.

AB: I know you kind of already talked about this; how are you hoping to get that done?

NF: Getting the pigs out. We are moving our roads up and out of the creek. Changing this one huge...it's an old logging boiler that they cut both end off of and made it into a culvert...so not I'm trying to get grant money to change it into one of those big fancy bridges that we just rode over on the Galbreath put in for us and then the fish will be able to go through again.

AB: I know you said that you had more trout before Lake Sonoma but did you have more steelhead too before the lake?

NF: It's all in the same genus but yeah, yeah, always, this place used to be teeming with fish, both sides, Sonoma and Mendocino County sides, tons of fish, no more. Different reasons, Lake Sonoma on that side and just too many culverts, too much sediment, too many things hurting the creeks on this side but here used to be tons of fish.

AB: So do you have any other of your favorite memories about the property? Do you remember the first time you came up here or were you too little to remember?

NF: I was in utero so...well there's all kinds of stuff, there's fishing stories, there's going over all those hills in that jeep and the jeep before it.

AB: How long have you had that jeep?

NF: Before I was born. That was my grandpa's. In fact, all the grandpa's have them. Tom's right now, Tom Bickel's, is in the shop where mine just came out off getting worked on. You see an old red one when you're going back down Elk Horn and Bob's horse pasture right here, the barn's right here, you are going to see an old beat red one that doesn't work anymore. The reason it doesn't work anymore is because it rolled over on a ridge up over on my place and the guy is actually dead, Chuck Aldridge is dead. He was already in a wheelchair and he went up on a ridge and he wasn't supposed to go up on a ridge and the jeep rolled and he's dead. My uncle still has them and my cousin Bobby still have them and the four men on the other side still have them. They were all bought at basically the same time. It's because everybody before that, in World War II, had Willys, little jeeps, and they couldn't make these hills. They didn't have a low enough gear ratio to go up and down these steep hills and over all these logging trails. So when

they found out about the Land Cruisers, they all bought Land Cruisers instead and they will go over anything. They all had them all the grandpas.

AB: That's amazing that it's still going after all the wear and tear.

NF: Oh yeah it's incredible and the fact that it's been rolled several times. My grandfather was born in Cloverdale and he graduated from Cloverdale High School in 18...hey Kurt, when did grandpa graduate from Cloverdale? 1890?

Kurt: 1885 was elementary school and 1895-1897 was high school.

NF: Ok so that grandpas were old and they have been out here for freakin forever. In fact, you'll drive by the farmstead when you leave to go home.

AB: Where is that?

NF: So when you're on 128 and you're just about to get to Hamburger Ranch (restaurant), and really sketchy stuff on the right and Hamburger Ranch on the corner, before the sketchy stuff you've come past...you've gone over a rise and there's a really old rock building on the left that was an old distillery kind of place and you're starting to go into the vineyards and on the left that's considered Oat Valley and it's Cooley Lane and the Farmstead is out there and it's surrounded by the vineyard and that's where grandpa was born. His mom came from here, from Mendocino, and she was an Elliot, Nancy Elliot. The family though, William ok...Bear Flag Republic, right, ok? You're a history major, you know this shit. Ok so, William Bell Elliot came to California in 1840 something on the Grigsby-Ide Wagon Train. The Grigsby-Ide Adobe is outside of the Redding area up there and William Bell Elliot's marker is in Lake County, at the cemetery there. So yeah, the family has been here in one shape or form...the Cooleys came around that time too from Coolville, Ohio, and we've been out here for forever. It's particularly in northern Sonoma, western Lake (county), and Mendocino County; this is where we are from. When they were talking about the Hyatts doing the roads on the Galbreath, and Charlie Hyatt doing the roads; my great aunt Clara was a Hyatt. This place was gross; they are all interbred out here in these woods. When Kurt and I talk about going to Friday night happy hours in Yorkville...they all come out of the hills...so there you go. I was a wonderful place to grow up and looking at those kids pulling the salamanders out. I have pictures back at the house of all my kids sitting in the creek with buckets of salamanders.

AB: I used to do that!

NF: See! I always used to tell them, "Don't put it in your mouth!" I swear to god...you know how she (Claudia) was also talking about how kids need to get out and get away from technology and stuff? I swear to god, you wouldn't have too many freakin allergies if you let your kids get down in a creek!

AB: I've even noticed that growing up. I mean, my generation is the last kind of one before this blew up and I still had a childhood that was free of that but then probably when I graduated high school is when it started to get intense with the starphones.

NF: Tom Bickel talks about his grandkids coming up here and they don't really want to do anything but sit on their iPods and stuff.

AB: I'm actually kind of disgusted with myself because I find myself doing that now. I live in downtown Ukiah but instead of... I mean I don't really have that much time with school...but I mean that's what I do now. I'll catch myself, even at dinner, and I'll be on my phone. I always talk about how bad this is with not interacting with people...

NF: So I think she's right! I think the kids need to be out here messing around and playing in the creeks. I would be good for the kids to camp out there.

AB: That would be great especially with all the things she was talking about how you measure that amount of energy that you're using.

NF: Actually we do that because we're off grid completely. So here's another little bit of history for you and Tom Bickel talked about it, about the telephone line coming in. When grandpa bought the first part of the ranch, on the Sonoma County side, and it was the Hood Homestead and there's like one little bit of a gate left, there's nothing left of the house or anything anymore, and he got four thousand acres for \$10 an acre.

AB: Wow, what year was that?

NF: It was 1910. So grandpa graduated from Cloverdale, he went to Stanford when it was basically free of charge, when they were trying to get kiddos in there. He was a lawyer in San Francisco but he always hunted and fished up here and so that was that. So that was the first part of it...

AB: So he came up here and bought the property?

NF: Yeah so, his family was still here in Cloverdale so yeah. Ok so, Grandpa brought the power as far out as the hunt place which is the house that I grew up in which started as a little tiny one room cabin and then every family that came into it after that added on to it. It was the craziest place you have ever been in in your entire life. So anyways, so...

AB: And that's on the Sonoma County side?

NF: Yeah on the Sonoma County side and he never brought power over here. So these cabins including Tom's, Tom's now has a generator and he has a little bit of solar. All of these places out here are all propane, including some of these people like Sam who lived out year round on propane only and propane lights. There's some other stories that are awful; we no longer throw our trash in the creeks anymore. Which, I can remember my dad driving out and just dropping it

in out the window into Dry Creek. We are clearing up some old dumps on the upper part of here along the Rancheria where people just dumped crap. So anyways, we take better care of things now than we used to do but if when you are driving on Elk Horn and you get to Denny's place you'll still see the bootleg telephone wire up in the trees. Power stops at Bob Lawson's place; no of us how power. I'm off grid completely and to get back an turn a loop on the story...when Claudia was talking about the kids seeing the power and how it's used, we have a box inside our house which tells us how much solar and how much power we are using. Our telephone...we have a satellite dish so that's quote un-quote our landline which is satellite and we have a booster for cell so that we get cell. Denny's is the last house that has a telephone, a landline telephone, you see the AT&T guy come out for his drug deals.