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SBOH-7, Marty Steidlmayer  
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Interview with Marty Steidlmayer 2-2-2006

Marty: We're fifth generation in this house. Casey, my son, and Riley, and then my older brother has two children and my younger brother has two children – they are fifth generation here in Colusa County. And then my grandfather, not my great-grandfather, but my grandfather was the one that purchased this ground from profits off of the bean fields in the valley.

Robyn: And what year was that?

Marty: Mid 1940's. So we haven't been here that long, as some of the families have been.

Robyn: And did you buy from the Hokes?

Marty: Yes, that's just one of the families. <looking at labeled map> I don't know if there's any other names, no, no other names, but this is two of the front parcels. The ones circled in red are in the Williamson Act. So that hillside over there, and then all the way to the north and to the east is all – that's about 3800 acres – in the Williamson Act.

So, did you want to start at the beginning? Or how did you want to do it?

You can just ask me questions if you want. The great-grandfather was Antonio Steidlmayer. My grandfather was George Steidlmayer. The Steidlmayer family is the one that purchased the land.

Robyn: But the great-grandfather's not the one who bought it?

Marty: No, he had so many family members, 5 or 6 children. George was one of them.

Robyn: So, George was your grandfather and his sons were Robert, Peter...

Marty: No, just Robert and his step-sister Sally. They were raised together by George and Gerry Steidlmayer. We're second and third cousins to all the Steidlmayers.

Robyn: So, when George bought, then somebody else bought too.

Marty: Yeah, at the same time, the same family. So his brothers were buying; my grandfather George's brothers were buying in here too. Those are the parents of Peter, the one that owns it now. The ones that own it now are under Anthony Steidlmayer, Anthony Jr. Paul, Mark, John and Peter. We lease it from Peter. Paul's a priest. Peter's the one that owns this property here. And the other side of the family, my mom's side of the family are Andriotas, our second cousins. They're farmers in the Colusa area. So that's my mom's side.

Robyn: So, did you grow up in this house?

Marty: This is where I grew up. I've lived here all my life except for six years, two at college, and four in town. San Luis Obispo, two year technical program in ag science. I took just the botany and soil science classes and ag math and classes like that to just come back here and farm. So I knew I wanted to do that from the time I was growing up out here. But we were cowboys for the first parts of our lives. I mean, the beef prices were good up until the early '80's or so, and we were lucky enough to be taught by this guy right here (pointing to picture), Frank Morgan, as to how to be a cowboy. And my dad and Larry Smith who runs the cattle here now. So he (pointing to picture of Morgan) was the one that lived in this little bunkhouse here and cooked the best sourdough biscuits, you know, because he had to do it on the range when he was an old cowboy. And this is his wife Frieda who used to drive us to school, and this was our wintertime cowboy. He lived here in the winter and summered in Oregon.

So I went to Meridian Grammar School here, sometimes in a helicopter. Back then it was affordable to use a helicopter to put out salt blocks up in the Buttes. You know, you just throw them out in mineral blocks for the cattle. Throw them out in the really hard to get spots, cause jeeps and horses really couldn't get there very easily when it was really wet. So the helicopter pilot would stay here some nights, and the reason we didn't drive there was because the bypass was flooded and we'd have to go the long way to get there. So he decided he's going to take us in the helicopter every once in awhile. And we lifted off right here, my little brother and I, and – I know I have pictures of it but I couldn't find them – and landed in the soccer field at Meridian. So, it was kind of a high-tech farmer at that time.

Robyn: So, you had a flood.

Marty: Yeah, this floods almost every year, the bypass right here. You know on MASH, the Bell helicopters with the big skids that the injured would lay on? Well, instead, they'd put salt blocks on there and haul them to the back. And he'd stay here once a week for maybe five or six years straight, he was living here every once in awhile. And we got lucky and he took us to school. We were the talk of the town and Meridian is a big town, too. I think there's like 300 in it now. (laughing)

But this guy, this Frank Morgan, he taught us – and my dad and Larry Smith, of course, taught us all we know. We went to Sutter High School, and then it hasn't been that long, Robyn, really, it hasn't been. My daughter has the same teacher I had, Mrs. Whitman.

We learned to water ski in the Buttes on some of the reservoirs behind the jeep with a 300 foot rope. But our main business was running cattle, and I'd say at the most busiest time, we had maybe 3-4,000 head of steers and heifers is what we ran on the ranch then. Now, it's mostly cows and calves, which Larry Smith leases most of the ground out here.

Robyn: I don't know anything about cattle...

Marty: A heifer is a cow that hasn't had any babies. She hasn't been bred yet. A heifer can go either way – they can use them for beef, processed beef, or they can use them for cows in the

future too, to have calves. A cow is a female that's had calves before. That's when you put them into the cow category. And a bull is a male and a steer is a castrated male.

Robyn: So steer is going to be used for beef?

Marty: Beef only, because it's castrated. And that's what we used to do out here. I'll show you the ground on which we did all this stuff. We do it every once in awhile now, but not nearly the volume that we did then.

Robyn: Why do you have to castrate them?

Marty: They gain weight faster, and they have more fat content in the meat, as opposed to a really stringy meat when it's a bull that's going to reproduce.

Robyn: Once a heifer becomes a cow can it be used for beef after that?

Marty: It could be, but that's not the main – when a cow gets past its ability to put out calves, it's usually too old to take for beef. But we have before. We've had a young cow that's only had a couple years on it or something like that, we'd put it in the freezer. And that's what this guy taught us to do was to process a cow, and even use the leather – tan the hide, stretch it out, and use the leather for lariats or bridles or any other rigging in the saddles and stuff like that. We went from low tech range to high tech when we went from horses to motorcycles at about this age right here – this is when we learned to use the motorcycles more than horses. That's gotta be like 1976 or so, we started getting a little bit more high tech. Horses were always used, but to travel from here to the very back took three or four hours on a horse, when it only took 15 minutes on a motorcycle. But you can't get up in the brush with a motorcycle where the horses would go.

Robyn: You were actually trying to herd them with a motorcycle?

Marty: Well, yeah. Once you get them off the hillsides into the canyon, they'll start balling and they'll hear each other and then they'll all come down. So it's not as hard as it seems to get them out of the brush. But sometimes the horses would wipe you right off the saddle going under a tree or something like that. And you know what that live oak brush is like. It just grabs you.

(interrupted by trespasser on motorcycle)

You know, back in that day – it was late 60s, early 70s – I remember riding through the valleys, riding through people that we didn't even know, and just waving to them, and they were having a picnic and the gates weren't locked or anything like that. Then, from the early 70s on, we started having gates left open and garbage and poaching and fire dangers and big fires that ripped through here from somebody lighting... lots of vandalism. 75 and 76, I think were two big fires we had up here in the brush. I remember riding to get the cattle out of the way from some fires were ripping through. This is my experience out here. We got one tractor stuck, got in there to pull the other one out, and got it stuck. We got the truck in there and pulled it up. Everything got stuck right there behind the barn in the winter time. You just don't ride out there.

Robyn: Does that happen often – stuff like that motorcycle? (driving through the yard during the interview)

Marty: All the time. Ever since I put up the sign down there—

Robyn: It's a very clear sign.

Marty: But sometimes people just, I don't know, scouting or what. We're ready with our security system, my shotgun. We've faced off with quite a few people in our day up here. Ever since we were kids. People poaching and we want to make sure we prosecute so the word spreads and it prevents poaching ... there's a lot of people up here hunting. Like on our hike the other day, I can guarantee you we had three or four people watching us because they're there. There's no doubt about it. Every once in awhile I'll get lucky and see them. Every once in awhile I'll get lucky and surprise them, and that's when I can get them and get the sheriff's department out here and prosecute and keep from doing all the damage that they're doing.

Robyn: Who do you share a fence line with? You've got the Dean Place, Peace Valley...

Marty: Everybody. Right here it's the Wilbur Ranch, so now I've got new neighbors here. Then the Tarkes. This is Estrada and the new 12 homes that's going in the mine right there? That's it. That's part of it right there. So I don't know where the houses are going. So that's that parcel. And then north of us is Tarke and the Count place. And we touch the Bains a little bit, the prune orchards. So there's three. And then Schmidl and Steve Tarke; there's five. State parks, six. And then out towards North Butte, I think we're bordering the Powell and somebody else, seven, eight. And then Margit Sands, nine. Joe Davis, Coates, ten, eleven. So, if I kept coming around there'd probably end up about 20 people that we border as we come around to Chris's house. My older brother who lives right over the hill here on the border of Pass and West Butte. Right across from the school house.

Robyn: But all of those people, for the most part, are people you know.

Marty: Yeah, but they all have family members and they're not just relatives. I see a name and that means five or six family members that own it, and then their friends coming in, and they don't know the boundaries. So there's a big hassle with trespassing.

(break in tape where Marty's parents, Robert and Julie Steidlmayer, arrived)

We spent a lot of time down at the Sacramento River skiing and hiding from the heat in the summer, and the sand bar just happens to be right on our Colusa Ranch, and right at my younger brother's house.

The house in the buttes is totally different now. It started out to be about 1800 square feet and now it's like 3500 square feet, but it's all chopped up. It was called the Wilbur Sheep Ranch cause the back barn housed a silo and the wool conveyor that they fed the sheep. They convey

the wool to the front barn. And that old silo used to feed the sheep, used to hold the grain and feed the sheep.

Robyn: You bought from Hokes. When did the Wilburs have it?

Marty: The Wilburs I think were the original settlers right here. But the Hoke is a totally separate piece from the Wilbur. So Grandpa bought from five or six different landowners to put a big parcel, or big ranch together, 5500 acres total. Everything we can see here is the Wilbur, and actually the Wilbur does sneak through and go clear to where we park the cars and then that fence line is the Keenan on the other side of that. And then inside is Hoke and Sullinger and Lang in the very back.

This is Roblee Incorporated, and JR & Sons has a small piece now – Buck Mountain – cause we just sold and lot lined a piece out to the backside of Buck Mountain. So JR & Sons have a piece out there and they have a little piece over here at the Carol Place behind us that we call Dead Man's Cliff. So, they don't have very much anymore after we sold the Count place. And the reason we sold it is that we couldn't find any water to grow almonds on, and wheat, dry land wheat is not worth it. That's why we planted walnuts out here is cause the dry land crops just wouldn't make it.

I learned to drive a tractor out here, about five or six years old. Opening up the ground and getting ready to plant wheat. Casey's driving a tractor right now, my boy.

Robyn: So wheat is a dry land crop?

Marty: It can be. That's the only thing that we could ever try to make money on up here, although we've had vetch before, it's a small legume, and one year out of ten, we made it. We really got a good crop. The only truckload we got was \$60,000 of seed in this truckload. But it came off a 100 acre field. The only problem was that there's rocks, big rocks like these in the crop on top of the ground, and it was going into the harvester and breaking the guts out of the harvester. Oh, it terrible to harvest. That was at the Count Place, the place we just sold over at Tarkes.

Robyn: So why would they have bought it?

Marty: Well, they have a little bit more money behind him, and he has his own drilling rig, his own water well rig. And they found it at 575 feet, they found enough water. I don't want to know how much money it took to get that deep. They got their chop auger – a well drilling tool – stuck in the hole too, as they were digging. Way down, 575 feet, and couldn't figure out how they were going to get it out. They hired Davis Machine to come in and clip onto the cable to pull it out, and evidently it had sloughed and loosened since they let go and it just came right out. But they spent some money to have it yanked out, and they've got water now.

Robyn: How deep do you have to go in most fields?

Marty: The house well here is only about 150 feet, but this is very wet spot. That well out there goes to 200 feet, that orchard well. But like Tarkes and Jevich you turn those wells on, the water level in these wells will go down. So, it's like the water's passing through here. When they start pulling those down, then these will go down too. In a heavy drought year, you might make these wells go dry.

Robyn: It seems like there's a lot more water on this side though.

Marty: Compared to like Kellogg canyon? They have a hard time in Kellogg canyon. Brian says there's a big rock shelf that you have to punch through to get down to any hydraulics and any water. So, as you go to the north up there, you're getting into a thicker and thicker volcanic displacement, I think he said. So, yeah, the range here is very powerful. You can put a lot of cattle on a small acreage, they say. It'll hold 1-1/2 animal units per acre, as opposed to the Coastal Range or the Sierras where it only maintain maybe a half an animal unit per acre. An animal unit is three steers or three heifers. Each one of those is an animal unit. Or a cow and a calf is an animal unit. So they all feed about the same amount; that's how they categorize it.

Robyn: So a cow and a calf eat the same as three steers?

Marty: A cow does all the eating, mostly. She's supporting with milk and the calf is eating some too. When they graze, they figure the cow eats almost as much as three steers or three heifers, gaining weight really fast, the steers and heifers.

Robyn: When your grandfather bought this land, was he already a rancher?

Marty: Yeah. They had been farmers where his dad, my great-grandfather, had the ground out here in Colusa, right across the Sacramento River, on Moon Bend Road. Right where the Moon's Ferry was that used to bring the wagon trains to Bragg Canyon Road here. Moon's Ferry. It was right out here by Lovey's Landing, a restaurant near our ranch on the Sacramento River. Just on the other side of the river is our, I think it's about 800 acre ranch there, and that's where my younger brother lives. This is what they call Moon Bend (looking at map), and everything inside this peninsula here is our ranch. He grew beans and wheats, oats, barley. Had lots of mules to pull equipment with, and that's where they made the money to start purchasing this for about \$100 an acre, a bit at a time. The purchase of this was after he split from all his brothers, so that's why he has separate land from Peter.

Robyn: Was that just a financial thing or was there bad...

Marty: There was bad ju-ju between the brothers. Luckily, my brothers and I fight like cats and dogs, but we have still stuck together. This is all Moon Bend Ranch, and then my mom inherited a ranch down in Grimes, down below us. You know, it's still in Colusa County, but it's down here about 7 or 8 miles. And then my brothers and I are what you call sharecroppers. We now lease this from the corporations and this from the corporations (still pointing to map), and then three other ranches in Colusa from other people, Bertoesnis, Andreottis, Aylesburys, several others. And then we farm another 2,000 acres of rice over in Sutter County clear down to Oswald. So we have some out on Butte House and then right at Franklin Road and then Oswald.

As of right now, we don't own any of our own property, my brothers and I. We have a ranch we call Faxon Farms, which is a way down in Grimes which we first started leasing down in Grimes there. So we use that as our name. So we're what you call a sharecropper, which we grow a crop, and the landlord gets a share of the crop, then they have to sell that share for their profit and we sell our share.

Robyn: But this land...

Marty: This land... I don't know how we're going to work the orchard, we're not really that far along yet, but this is all leased by Larry Smith or my older brother, and this rangeland in the buttes is all Roblee Incorporated. So my brothers and I don't really have anything to do – Faxon Farms doesn't really have anything to do with this operation.

Roblee Incorporated is Robert and Julie, my mom and dad, combined, and then my brothers and I as officers. And then JR & Sons is Julie and Robert and sons. Just some ways to split the corporation. And then there's Moon Bend West Butte Ranches is one of the farming entities which is used to operate the fencing and keep it all up to snuff for Roblee Incorporated. It's very complicated. And there's Sally R, which my dad and my aunt had a different corporation that they were running and so that's kind of just holders of stocks. They don't actually do any farming.

We made it a lot more complicated than we should have, but it's to separate all the stocks. One corporation isn't as good as the four or five that we have. But as kids, we used to lease – well, my dad when we were kids – used to lease over by the missile silos, so Schmidts, and where Steve Tarke lives now. So there was another 2 or 3,000 acres over there, and then in the back, I think Dad has had Powells out here a couple times, not Margit's. And then Joe Davis and Peter Steidlmayer, we've leased some of that. And then out here in front from Mrs. Carol, he's leased that too. So at one time we had about 10,000 acres ranch land that we were running cattle on. And this was the main operation, was where all of the fencing is, unloading chutes. All of the trucks would come in here 3 and 4 in the morning, and I'd be trying to get some sleep to get ready to get up for school, and here comes the trucks and the cows are balling, you know, and yelling at each other.

Robyn: So, how many of the kids you were in school with were also ranchers?

Marty: None. But we did go to Meridian Grammar School, which is right here. There were six big chunks of landowners; there's not a lot of families that own parts of the Buttes around our area. We were kind of estranged – we lived in Live Oak. This is called Live Oak, even though Live Oak is clearly on the other side of the Buttes. We had a Meridian phone number; we went to school in Meridian; we worked in Colusa after we got rid of the cattle, and went to Sutter High School, and our mail came to the Live Oak Post Office, so we were kind of spread out. Even my brother Chris on Pass Road is Live Oak too. He's one of the last Live Oak addresses. I don't know if the old school house is Live Oak.

So, we started our business – when I got back from school we started to lease ground from everybody, while my mom and dad were still farming on some of the ground. And we'd work for



them, so we were actually paid by two or three different corporations with wages and stuff like that. And then we put Faxon Farms together and we slowly took over everything. And now, just the last two years, we run everything. This is kind of still our neutral zone here that we just do it for the fun of it is maintain the fences and stuff. We can't raise the profits, but Larry pays us for the cattle ranching.

Robyn: But this (the Buttes land) is all cattle? Most of what you do now is farming?

Marty: Right. We're trying to get some farming back in here by putting walnuts here, and next year it will be almonds on the corner of West Butte and Pass, where that little sign is at there? That's going to be almonds here in about two or three weeks they'll put them in. So we had to try something different; don't be locked into any one thing. Rice and beans are our mainstay. Dry beans. But we grow safflower and wheat, oats for General Mills and Budweiser, barley. And get different kinds of contracts. We've been growing coriander and garbanzo beans experimenting a little bit with little patches every once in awhile. You have to be diversified or you're just going to get stagnant. Like rice, if it dives again, which they say it's going to do next year, you'll be happy that you have other things to rely on.

And rotation is very important. We do; we go three years a different crop, three years in a row, and then we'll go two of rice or something like that. The weeds are controlled that way too; you have less herbicides.

Robyn: So, you were talking before about Frank Morgan teaching you how to be a cowboy. Tell me more about that.

Marty: If any story goes on with you and you take home, he's the only guy I could see rolling a cigarette, you know how they rolled the cigarettes, the cowboys – rolled a cigarette in the north wind with his hat down, going into the wind, and do it with one hand. He's got his bridle in his left hand and he does it all with one hand. He pulls it out, puts it in there, rolls it up tight, and the north wind's just screaming, and he'd get it lit. I've never seen anything like it.

But I thought he'll die of emphazema or whatever it is, but he actually – he had this terrible cough; once he started coughing, he'd cough – and Chris and Joe and I were taken to school by him a couple of times, and he'd get to coughing and go off the road. The poor guy. But he didn't die of emphazema. He died falling off a horse in a corral and broke his neck on a panel. After he left here we didn't really see him very much anymore; we got out of the cattle business. But I think he died the way he wanted to. He was what you'd call a buckaroo, in the day. Mom has a picture of him when he was really, really young, and he had all his homemade tackle, you know, his tack, hanging on his fingers, and had his nice cowboy boots and big, giant spurs on. A young looking kid, and they just now in the *Range* magazine, just five or six weeks ago – Mom and Dad were looking through it – and here's a picture of Frank Morgan as a buckaroo, in *Range* magazine. So it was kind of ironic.

Robyn: What is a buckaroo?

Marty: Somebody that a rancher would hire to run the cattle on the ranch or transport them for sale. So, at that time they were called buckaroos. They'd break in broncs, break in horses, and get wild horses for the ranches. He had a lot of good stories, a lot of good stories.

So he taught us how to ride, rope, cut, vaccinate, and brand, which Dad and Grandpa did, had a good part in that too. But he had a special knack for tying lariates, which are soft leather rope. Not one of those stiff ropes like they use now in roping. They're very soft like a Spanish lariate. You could toss them quicker. It was really strong; not as strong as some of the big ropes, but it was light to pack and it did what you'd want it to do with a calf. You know, you wouldn't use it for a big animal. I remember him – one of the cattle had died out here; he had the hide of it and tanned within a week, and he was making tack for his saddle and for us. So it was neat to watch him. It's old school stuff that really has gone by the wayside in this country.

These corrals hold a lot of memories. And he'd just laugh... we played slip and slide in the corrals when it was really slick, you know what I'm talking about? But you could go forever. But Mom would see us coming and she'd say, "Stop right there and get the hose going!" Oh, we'd have it in our ears. Even when we got motorcycles, we were skiing behind the motorcycle with a rope and sliding around in the corrals. And I can remember the smile on his face just sitting and watching. He was good learning for us, a really good learning experience.

He summered in Lee Thomas Meadows, Oregon. But I think he was originally from the Great Plains is where he ran cattle, but I can't tell you what state. He was a friend of the McCullahs, who hired him in Oregon, and then he'd just go with the cattle. When the cattle came here, he came here. When the cattle went back to Oregon, he'd go back to Oregon. That was in his later days. He originated in the Great Plains.

He had a big pot belly'd get stuck over the saddlehorn, and he'd always have a big blister from the saddlehorn rubbing his belly. I never seen him fall, and the poor horse must have been – well, it was a big horse.

I first remember him when I was probably 3 or 4 or 5 years old. And then sometime in early high school was when he, when we pretty much stopped bringing the cattle that they had up there. So, he went back to stay year round in Oregon, and that was where his accident was that broke his neck. What a way to go, I guess, doing what he loved.

Great childhood. We learned our mechanics out here in this barn, welding and cutting. We learned by doing was our motto. We didn't do a lot of books. We did a lot of physical stuff. We didn't really look forward to coming back to the Buttes and working after high school or after football practice or something like that. And we really hated this place, except on weekends when we'd get our friends up here. But when you have to work, of course, through your childhood, you really despise the place you did it at. Until I got back here from college, I really didn't realize what we have.

<part of tape is inaudible>

Even as young men, we didn't sneak out of the house; we had no where to go! What are you going to do? Go to the next-door neighbors who's four miles away?

Robyn: So you would come home from school and work?

Marty: Yeah, but it was really great. We had our own trap-line up here as kids. Larry Smith, the guy that runs the cattle here now; there's two boys, Larry Jr. and Kelly, and my older brother Chris and I grew up together up here pretty much. My younger brother was four years younger than I, so he was a little bit separated from the other four. So we ran wild up here. We had traplines and we trapped coyotes and raccoons and the pelts were fairly valuable at the time. And so we spent all our time up there. I'd say 300 rounds of .22 shells every year between the four of us, gone. And the squirrel population went down hill fast. And it's still down, although I seem them coming back a little bit.

Stayed in the cabins on the Kinch Place back up the other side. We actually, on the transect, pass right by the Kinch Place and there's three or four cabins in there with potbelly stoves. We used to stay there. And then we'd stay up at the third reservoir, too, camping.

There's still at least two cabins still standing and being used, actually. They're in decent shape. But that's the cabins that – I don't know if I told you the story – one of our guys was riding his mule over the hill one day near those cabins, and he looks down and there's military helicopters parked at one, and four guys in fatigues dragging this big antique stove out the door. They had been missing two other stoves down, the next two cabins down. Couldn't figure out how they got them out of there because there's four or five locked gates, like Margit's. So we finally figured out where they were going. Come to find out Beale has a huge MP training, but they don't have helicopters. The only other explanation would have been Mather Air Force Base.

So he rode down. They saw him coming and they took off. So we've still got the stove. Still have it. And it's a beautiful, huge – we used it for years cooking blackbirds and mushrooms, squirrel. It's got porcelain doors, porcelain knobs, huge upper and lower ovens, and I think five or six burners on it, and it's big! It took all those guys to move it, you know pull it around, anyway. But to get it in the helicopter and fly back with it's not so simple.

Robyn: You never caught them?

Marty: No. There's no tail number on a military helicopter. And then we caught Field & Stream in here too. They had a little helicopter like Magnum, P.I., you know? Same thing but said "Field & Stream" on the side. We saw them in there, and we rode up and said, "What are you guys doing here?" "We come here all the time to go bass fishing." We said, "Well, I guess this is the last time we see you up here, right?"

(inaudible – problem with tape)

So we never saw them again.

(inaudible – problem with tape)

As far as help protected the buttes, Middle Mountain Foundation might not be enough. As landowners we're kind of stuck between land value and property rights, and keeping the Buttes the way they are. You know, you don't want to lose value in your equity or in your property – we're thinking the same way. This is kind of a way to not be too aggressive on landowners and property values.

I was wondering if you could pass that on to Mike Darnell. I told him I'd send it with you when you went to the meeting tonight. (Paper containing Marty's ideas on the revised overlay of the buttes.)

Robyn: So this is what he's been working on with the supervisors and trying to –

Marty: -- get the moratorium in place. And now that it is we need to recommend to the supervisors what we would like, and this is what we're going to go with right there. And Chris Fedora asked me to be on a Blue Ribbon panel for Farm Bureau, which will be like a study group to dictate what we would like – what the landowners would like to do. So Farm Bureau's really good at gathering information, and they have a lot of people on their staff that can help us put together ideas and a program and a plan for the new zoning in the Buttes.

(interruption by arrival of daughter)

In a few minutes we'll walk out to corrals. I can't believe there's mosquitoes. I was thinking we could drive up into the Keenan Place, but that road's a little bit too muddy just beyond the creek. So I don't think we could make it to the Keenan barn. And this is the same year, same era. This house right here was actually built in 1889. And it burnt down halfway once, and then they rebuilt it and that's when Mom and Dad moved in. So it's an old house. It doesn't look that old – you know, this, of course, is '76, the most recent addition to the house. And the barns were all 1889, same time the house was. All the same wood and lumber and...

(interruption by arrival of son)

He's not going to do farming. He's got allergies worse than I did when I was a kid, and he just can't take the dust. He might stick out one portion of it. The walnuts aren't that bad and the almonds won't be that bad. But he just doesn't like the wheat harvester. He loves to run them, but getting on and off the wheat harvester he gets a little bit of that dust, and he'll start sneezing just like I did, and will not quit.

Robyn: What about your daughter? Is she interested in farming?

Marty: I don't think so. I don't think so. She was – she took one of those placement tests. She's going to be a social, theater, arts, and you know, communications or journalism or something like that.

(interruption by arrival and meeting of wife)

Sonja was Miss Colusa County 1985... she and I went to church together since we were little tinies, but I didn't know her. She knew of us, but I didn't know very many people from Colusa. And then I got back from school, and if you know the actor Robert Stack? He was in "Airplane". He has a duck club up here, and the caretaker was one of my good friends. And that good friend had a girlfriend who was friends with Sonja. So, they came out to the Stack Club, and we'd always visit up there, and that's where we met, up at the Robert Stack Gun Club in '85. And we met – we were into the motorcycles at the time – and we met and I asked her, "you want to get on the back of my 3-wheeler" – like an ATV? And they have long boat canals out through the duck clubs, and they're surrounded by star thistle in the summertime, and we were riding out there in the summertime. And you get in those, and you're driving down these canals really fast, and I wrecked and we went out into the star thistle, so the rest of the night we picked thorns of star thistle out of our legs. I remember two weeks after that we were all getting infected. And she married me anyway.

Robyn: You've been married for 16 years?

Marty: Yeah, and we were dating for four or five before that. We've been together since I got out of college... and it's a great lifestyle out here. The only problem is the transportation back and forth to town. Like sports and groceries and stuff like that, it's an hour round trip no matter where you go for groceries. You don't go to Meridian for groceries.

Robyn: Where's Meridian?

Marty: It's that little town right off, southwest of us. Right off that the Sacramento River. That's the closest little town. And Casey goes to school in Colusa at Our Lady of Lourdes, where I've been fundraising for, and Riley's at Sutter High School now, first year... <at Our Lady of Lourdes> we pay the tuition for each child. It's not covered with taxes, private school. Great, though. We fundraised all those years to build the auditorium and it's finally done. And Casey's playing basketball. He's in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. And he pretty much grew up the way we did, but less cowboy. He goes up here with his friends on ATVs and stuff like that. Great backyard for the kids, you know. Wonderful place.

The waterfall – I don't know if we stopped at the waterfall up there in the canyon – that was a great place to go carve your name in the fig trees way down below. And we did a little skinny dipping there. What a great – almost tropical in the spring.

Robyn: Do your kids spend time up there?

Marty: Yeah, yeah. They're kind of getting tired of my hikes, though. Tired of my BS. They used to call me Motormouth Marty in high school, I think I told you that. But they've been on them so many times, they're kind of getting tired of it. But camping up there, camping really appeals to them. And they can bring their friends and all that. And I stay away if they want to have their campfire over there, and I have my friends over here. And it works out real good.

Robyn: Do you let them go up by themselves?

Marty: Yeah. They haven't ever stayed the night by themselves, but I don't think my oldest, Riley, has an interest. And Casey, I guess I'm a little overprotective. I don't know if I'd trust him. It's eight miles of rugged canyon road to get from there to here if they had an emergency. But Mom and Dad, I don't know, I guess they just didn't worry. You know, I didn't shoot guns when I was five-years-old, but just to let your child go out there and spend a few nights, night after night in the dark in that rugged canyon...

Robyn: Things were different then.

Marty: Yeah, I think so.

Robyn: So tell me about the caves.

Marty: The caves we stayed in, I'd say, maybe 50 times my whole life. But you'd have to pack all your gear and everything up there, so we were kind of getting lazy. But that was a good place to play hide-and-go-seek, and it was like a Disneyland Park up there where, especially this time of year, where it's clipped down by the cattle and it's a nice rolling lawn and rocks, nice and soft rounded rocks up there. Playing in every crevice and crack up there. And then the caves – did you go to the caves with us? You didn't go to the caves? The one that we can walk into, that we don't have to rope to, is the one we'd stay in. You have to come around the face of the rock like this, and then there's what we call the living room, it's kind of a rounded rock for seating, and it goes only in there about 15 or 20 yards, and that was a great view from there. You can see clear out over the canyon. Then there's the kitchen. You go down in this really heavily washed area into the kitchen, and there's the fireplace in the back of the cave. And there's a big crack in the rock overhead buried deep, maybe four foot channel, in the rock, where the air would come in the bottom and take the smoke out the top. So you could sleep in there right alongside the fire and not get smoked out. It wouldn't be too smoky. And it would be out of the wind and the rain and everything like that. So it was a great place to camp out there.

Robyn: Did Heather say there are no bats in those caves?

Marty: There's no bats that live in the cave. It's too exposed in the cave. The caves are only from here to the back of your pickup deep. They're actually just big, softer sediments that were eroded out quicker than the andesite. They're not like a lava tube or anything like that. So there's no protection from moisture in the air or not enough protection from wind. But to you and I, it's a great place to retreat. But they'd rather live in the crotch of a tree, like those blue oak trees have tight crotches in the tree, and if the branch is facing east and west, that way the north and south winds don't get to it. That's where those bats will lay, or in the crack of a rock. Something very tight quarters is where they're found. Most of them. They're 12 different species that she knows of.

And, you know, the mastiff bats are up here. I've never seen one. She says they only come out at the darkest of nights, but you can hear them. You do see the little tiny bats and those ones in between, but I've never seen a mastiff. Never seen one dead on the ground or anything like that...

Robyn: So which reservoir was it that you learned how to ski on?

Marty: That was the second reservoir. The one that's shallow and the road comes down to it and then just goes right out into it.

Robyn: Is that where the waterfall is?

Marty: The waterfall's between the two. The second reservoir also has a spillway which looks like a waterfall there, and if it was running when you and I went then it could be mistaken for our big waterfall. But we'd swim out with a 300 foot rope, back the jeep in there till it would just about die – we'd get the sparkplug wet. And we'd hit it up the side of the hill. And we had double skis, Mom and Dad's old double skis, and a whole bunch of rope, you know, as much rope as you could get so you could stay up for awhile. And in the spring the water was warm enough. But since then it looks to my like the spot in the reservoir bank where the water's draining out, that we really don't want it to drain out – it's kind of a soft spot in the hillside there – has gotten worse and worse, and now water – it's completely dry by June. It doesn't hold any water any longer than that. So when I was a kid I think it held water longer than now. And it's just a little spot that we need to repair. It's just that the funds aren't there to start these projects.

Robyn: Are those reservoirs natural?

Marty: No. They were made the year I was born, 1965. So they're 41 years old. And they were each made for three or four thousand dollars, so the total bill was \$12,000 to build it all, and I think the repair on the one is going to go over 200,000. Just the blueprints are going to be 30 grand. So that's one reason we're so adamant about trying to find either a conservation easement for some funds or a grant, you know, from engineers. I've got all kinds of new contacts though, just in the last month – California Waterfowl and a new engineer here in Yuba City who wants to go up and look at it and see if he can keep DWR at bay for a little while by getting a plan together, is what our idea is – get a plan together, send it down there and keep them happy for the next couple years. But right now, if I keep the reservoir four feet off the spillway, don't let the spillway run, they'll be okay with it. I can do that by using that siphon to drain it. But, yeah, the down slope is just too steep. They want it fixed up. Just getting the roads pushed in there to get equipment in there is a certain amount of money that the range doesn't support. The income from the cattle range just doesn't support it. So I've got Sonya taking photos for me. She's into photography now. She does family portraits and some weddings and other social events like that. So she's taking off in her business and she actually has her whole camera set up and studio and the backdrops of all different colors for group photographs and stuff. And as other hobbies I split and cut firewood. You could see it coming in here. And then the tours, of course, during the wintertime when we're not so busy.

A local contractor put the reservoirs in. Gopal, out of Arbuckle, put them in. One of my best friends – I didn't know at the time – I was actually just being born, he was 10-years-old, riding on the equipment that was putting in the dirt for the bank, and it was ironic that I used him to cook my tri-tip dinners for my first fundraisers that I had. So, he's sitting there flipping steaks looking at the dam that he actually helped put in when he was 10-years-old, and I didn't even

know him at the time. And Grandma has pictures of the construction of the dams way back in the day over there at the house.

We tried to keep our boats in the reservoir inflated up there. A lot of vandalism going on up there. You could see them all broken up coming out the spillway, the boats that we have? Did you see any remnants of the boats as we walked up the trail? People are shooting holes in them, then they'll sink, and then they'll float out the spillway and dismantle themselves on the spillway rocks. If you want we can walk out and we'll have a good view of the corrals.

Robyn: You obviously have a lot of trouble with trespassers.

Marty: More than people know. Especially when you're a landowner near the middle of the Buttes, not just us, but other landowners. Because you've got so many bordering you, their families, their friends, that don't know where the borders are, and some don't even have fences. So you can't really blame the people that are up there if they aren't intending to go on the other property. So I treat it as this: if I find somebody that's trespassing and it's a group of people, they don't have any guns, I just tell them where they're at, and send them on their way. If they have a gun, it's mine, and they're mine, and I get the sheriff's department out here and everything else. Cause the word of mouth in that kind of a group, just <explosive sound>. That's how Dad controlled it for years. And they kind of thought my dad was off his rocker. He got a reputation for, you know, getting on people and going crazy. And Larry Smith, the guy that run the cattle, would back that up by spending some time in town, and he'd hear them talking down the way, and saying, "Yeah, that Steidlmayer, he's a crazy son-of-a-gun." And Larry's go down there, "Yeah, you should hear the things that he does." And so it slowed down quite a bit for years. But I remember a lot of it as a kid.

Robyn: So what do you think about the state park then?

Marty: Well, as long as they handle it right, I think it's going to be working out okay. I'm just afraid that if they don't pasture it, it's going to be a huge fire danger. They could be just as a neighbors as anybody else. I would rather have groups like Middle Mountain Foundation or a family farmer like Steve Tarke we sold to – cause we were not going to sell to just anybody up there. And we made sure that he wasn't going to put in houses. He's going to put in almond trees. Of course, he can't put a house in now because he doesn't touch a county-maintained road. But he is probably our best neighbor. We grew up with him, Steve Tarke. We checked out a portion of that Count place to buffer a little bit more just in case he has guys out of control up there hunting and stuff like that. One of the biggest issues have been, my whole life, are the fences between everybody, and that's what our issues is with the state parks. They've come up and they've stepped up to the plate, and they're buying all the materials to help fence between us to keep Larry's cattle from going out there. But we did do just a recent repair. One of my contacts at state parks and I went up there and found a spot that was down, and that's how his cattle were getting in and out, so we repaired that as we talked about a program to start working on the Buttes. And the state park is now realizing what it takes to maintain property with no income. So he says – well, during deer season, I told him you have people in there hunting because we could hear them, and it's right across the fence. We hear them talking, the radio's playing, then all the sudden they'll start shooting. They actually chased some deer right by us.



And he says, “No, there couldn’t be. We’re not open on the weekend.” He told me. I was so surprised at what he said. “We’re not open on the weekend. There’s nobody up here, so I don’t think there’d be anybody trespassing.” And the fence is pathetic. I mean, walk anywhere you want to go.

Robyn: But the fences that state parks is putting in, are they pig proof fences?

Marty: No, no. It would never work. Because pigs can get – they’ll find their way in. A pig proof fence would probably cost \$10,000 a half of a mile instead of \$3,000 a half a mile.

Robyn: Isn’t one of the problems the pigs taking down the fences and the cattle getting through?

Marty: I don’t think the pigs are affecting that much.

(tape stopped – Side 2)

Marty: It just pushes the netting open like this, and it’ll just stay open. But whether it actually decays the fence so fast that the cattle – this was cattle damage that we repaired. The cattle’ll lean on it or graze next to it, or if the trail’s too close to the fence they’ll push it over or something like that. Yeah, the pigs are definitely hard on everything up there. There’s no doubt about it.

Robyn: So, does anybody have sheep up here besides Manuel (on Peter Steidlmayer’s property) or the McPherrins?

Marty: Maybe a few others. I don’t know of many others than those two. I went to school with McPherrins, Anna and Leland. Anna was my age and Leland was her younger brother. Went to Sutter High School together. And then mostly cattle. We tried Brahma cattle. They’re supposed to gain weight faster. But they were high-headed ornery son-of-a-guns, and they tore our fences apart. Our corrals are all damaged and broken apart, so we went right back to Herford after a couple years of messing around with those.

Let’s take a walk. This was the bunkhouse right here, and his – Frank Morgan’s sourdough biscuits were the best. Ah, they were so good with a little bit of the star thistle honey that we have coming out of the Buttes here. Some of the Averys give us free honey. Oh, it’s so tasty. It’s the best. It’s better than any honey in the world.

Robyn: Does anybody make it, like sell it?

Marty: Yeah. Well, usually, right over there in the saddle you can see white bee boxes there, but they’ve just taken them out to put them in the orchards. And that guy gives me a case of honey every year. Oh delicious. All this was built in the late 1800s and that barn there too. We put the corral on the left up when we were kids. But everything is all older than the hills.

Many, many cattle brought in through this loading shoot, but you can see it’s pretty decayed now. We don’t bring any cows in right now. Most of the cattle that Larry brings in and out are

right there at the Keenan corrals, and he's got a modern loading shoot up. These are the corrals we grew up in, right here. As we grew up we each had a station at the squeeze shoot. When I started out I was vaccinating, which meant you take a hide on the cow or the steer or the heifer and inject under the skin, but not in the muscle. That was my job at the front left here. And then when I got bigger, I was able to be the squeeze shot man, the guy that would throw an arm down and lock it, but we'd have a group of guys bringing in cattle – you've probably seen operations work before. This cage opens up and this head gate opens up and the cow would – and this'll open up with the lever on the other side, and the cow will run in there, and, as it's head gets through that opening everything will squeeze – you squeeze it all down with those levers. Squeeze it down, close the gate. And the guy in the back left, of course, is branding. He comes in with a branding iron, burns here. At the same time I'm trying to inject the cow, and it's moving and panicking. So you're holding the hide here and it's bouncing up and down and you're trying to inject underneath the hide there. And an ear crop here on this side too. So when you're done with your vaccinating, you have to cut a portion of the ear off, or ear tag, which means you put a little piercing in their ear.

Robyn: What would you cut a portion off?

Marty: If you mark it – you can mark it two different ways. You can piece the cows ear together and cut it straight off. That way when it opens back up there's just a flat ear, a straight line on the end of the ear. Or you can cut a V in it. You can push it together and kind of cut a pie shape out of it. Cut it this way, and then when you let go it'll be a V.

Robyn: And if you're branding them, why would you do that?

Marty: Just for quick identification as to which field that cow might supposed to be in. A different ear tag number will dictate which pasture that cow should have been in, and if you have to move it back to that pasture, you can do that.

So this is the head shoot. And once I got old enough to handle the cage, I was on the head shoot and my brother was on the squeeze. This one squeeze the head; this one squeezes the whole cage, and then this lever right here is the gate.

Robyn: And how many cattle did you do at a time?

Marty: I think our record was like 300 steers and heifers in one day. We'd have this whole corral through and rotating through, you know. You'd bring about half this corral in and then bring in 20 at a time, and ten would come in the shoot, you know, one at a time in the squeeze shoot. It was active. When we started using, or doing a lot of cows and calves, this is the corral that we cut and branded and vaccinated the calves. Where they were trying to rope, a lot of my relatives and my dad and Larry had horses they were roping off of, but the quickest way was just to go up and grab the calf's far legs and hit him with your chest and knock him over. Get him down with their front leg back, and then one guy'd come in and brand it, and the other guy would cut and vaccinate and then just let him up. You would have to bring the calves in the squeeze shoot. So that was much easier.

And right over here we'd have a fire with a disk blade on top of it, and you'd take the Rocky Mountain oysters, throw them on there and eat them for lunch. They were best fresh. They taste like a natural-made sausage. I mean they were good. If you knew what you were eating, not a lot of people would come out here – they'd be watching us, but they wouldn't eat them. But if they didn't know what they were eating, they'd eat them like candy.

And Bob's Mountain is what we call it because my dad got lost there when he was younger, but that's Peter Steidlmayer's on the right, and then that – you can see the opening in the canyon and Peter Steidlmayer's up on the right shoulder of West Butte. And then at the top of West Butte is our fence line. It actually goes over the right shoulder of West Butte. And then everything to the left is ours, past what we call Buck Mountain, the one in the mist there. West Butte's the one on the left and then Bob's Mountain's the one on the right. Old Craggy or whatever it's called.

So our property kind of comes from Pass Road, and between this rolling hill and that far mountain our fence line comes over and then turns right, goes over West Butte and goes clear to the back, clear to Kellogg Road. And then the north boundary goes out across this fence line like that clear to the Count Place, turns and goes to the Keenan Corrals, and then goes over to Steve Tarke's house. So it goes over a little further, and then along Schmidl's and clear to the back. So it's probably ½ a mile wide property through the middle there.

That <looking out in the field> is a natural gas well compressor. That's one of the only pumping stations they have on the west side. So these other gas wells are feeding gas to it. It recompresses, burning natural gas for its motor – it's actually using the natural gas coming out of the ground to make a flywheel turn – and that presses air back in the ground and forces all the natural gas on down the line. This is one of the only ones in this area. I've always wanted them to put up a sound barrier, but when the wind's blowing like this you can't hear it at the house. When it's a north wind, a heavy north wind, you can hear it here a little bit more.

So, these are the corrals. You'd bring them in off the hill and into the horse pasture, and you'd divide them right here, these two pins and the farther. You'd separate the steers from the heifers or the cows and the calves and get ready to bring them in for processing. And you can see how decrepit these gates and panels are. Most of this damage over here is from those brahmans. They'd jump and leap and try and get their breast plate on the gates, and it would just keep them in. The gates would just collapse and they'd get over the top. You can see some damage there in the loading shoot. Completely demolished.

We had to bolt the squeeze shoot down because the brahmans would come in there with such a force, the squeeze shoot would go with them. We'd be closing on their shoulders and that squeeze shoot would move about two feet. This cement pad and the bolt down is pretty modern right there.

And these barns we'd always keep full of hay, our own hay. But now we're kind of out of the hay business. This is the first year in many that we haven't planted wheat out here. It's just not lucrative at all. It just doesn't make it. On a good year you might make some money, but there's only one every six years that you might get enough moisture late enough to make it fill out. Or

you might have a drought, or you might have too many weeds, and herbicides up here on dry land is very expensive and you don't get your return.

In a few days we'll let the cattle in here and feed this grass down so we don't have fire danger around the house.

Robyn: The rock walls are really crumbling in here. Has that just happened over time?

Marty: Yeah, well, you see the natural gas pipeline goes over the hill there. They opened it up for that. And I don't know where they used the rocks from this wall that went up the hill to the right. But we still use that big one right there. That big thick one? That's still part of our horse pasture. Although gravity and people walking along and pushing it has made it fall apart a little bit.

These are all community leased gas wells. They take an average of all the wells and that's what the landowners get, a small portion of each one. You don't just get the wells that are on your property. Those in Colusa, most of those are private contracted gas well incomes. So I've got a 3/4-inch line coming from that gas well, coming right out of the ground from that gas well to my house. So my stove is run off the natural gas, my heater and everything like that. Although I pay the same as any other customer, it's coming from right here. So it's kind of handy. I never have any problems with gas or anything, it's always constant. When I was digging my brush pile pit here I dug and hit the line.

Robyn: This is so beautiful.

Marty: Yeah, this time of year it's kind of nice. My pile of metal heap out there and stuff. And the fences are nothing to look at, that's for sure. Believe it or not those green posts are pretty new. That's pretty new fencing. I put netting on both sides, but my gates are in bad shape.

Robyn: But see, to the untrained eye it just looks like it all belongs. You know, this is what it's supposed to look like.

Marty: There's a story behind this cable right here. The Mawson Bridge that goes to Colusa out this way, the big cement bridge along side that they used to use in the '40s – '30s and '40s?

Robyn: It's blocked off now?

Marty: Yeah, they don't use it, it's abandoned. All this iron and cable and some of the railroad ties that we used to have, and this channel iron and stuff, came from the abutments to that bridge. So they dismantled the abutments so nobody would drive up in it and all that, and they needed somewhere to go with the material, and I said, "Yeah, I'll build fence out of it." So, all this I-beam iron and the 3/4-inch cable that's in the net all came from right down here in the bypass.

But I'm surprised you didn't know the Moon's Ferry story. That's Butte Creek, those tree lines right down there. Just beyond it is the Sacramento River. Before the levees were there, when the river was running wide or narrow, it didn't matter, they'd have a ferry on the river to take wagon trains and grain carts from one side of the water to the other. It wasn't just the Sacramento River.

In the wintertime there was water halfway up my lane and clear over to Colusa, so the ferry would go all that distance in the water carrying them. Then they'd unload here – or actually in Bragg Canyon, they'd unload up there – then go through the Buttes, then the rocky Feather River, I think they did have a ferry over there, but usually they could wade that one to go up to the Sierras and then turn around and come back with lumber, back through the valley.

Robyn: So, there was water all the way up here and then where that tree line is that you said the river's on the other side, was that there?

Marty: No, none of the levees were out there.

Robyn: That tree line is the levee.

Marty: That tree line – those trees were just like that all the way up here to the edge of the Buttes. But ag has knocked a lot of the groves back. Like Moon Bend, that loop I showed you around the river, our ranch there? That was all covered with valley oaks, and they cleared it all to put farm ground there. But the only time the water now – the water actually comes up higher now than it ever has since they put the levees in, because the levees are forcing water up again the Buttes to go south through the refuge (?). So some years, like this year almost, it'll come halfway up my lane, and we have to go out over this gravel road to Pass Road to get in and out. Although it'll never reach my house. If it did, Colusa'd be 30 feet under. It drops really fast right here to West Butte Road. It doesn't really look like it, but the water'll come up and we'll have to go around. And that's kind of the drawback to having that development up there, is they're going to be landlocked. If floods occur, sometimes for 20 or 30 days, they can't get in and out, and the lost right-of-way was an old road that crosses just past the gas well up into the canyon up there, that's the old wagon train road that runs north and south through this canyon. I'm afraid they might try and reallocate that right-of-way or something. Because you can get through the Count Place to that development out that way.

Robyn: So when are those houses supposed to go in?

Marty: I don't know anything except that they're parcel adjustments have gone through and it's a done deal.

Robyn: Whose land was that?

Marty: It was Jeanie Wilbur's. She's a descendant of the Wilbur family, so all this was one piece at one time. I think Grandpa bought a portion of it from that family.

Robyn: And she sold it to developers and...

Marty: Well, they're not developers necessarily. They're a local restaurant family. They sold a restaurant in Hamilton City, and in Chico, and we think that's where they got the funds to buy this, along with a couple others. I don't know exactly what the other owner is. A lot of people were saying it's these people from the Bay area and Sacramento coming up here and developing and chunking it up. Well, all of these battles we've been fighting are local families trying to do a

real estate deal when the bubble of real estate was so good. Like the Tarke thing here. She bought that to make a real estate deal, turn around and sell it, and make some money. So it's not just out-of-town people.

They bought that piece, a hundred and some acres, they chunked it off in 20 acre pieces, and evidently it's already passed through, so it's going to go ahead and go even though there is a moratorium on the Meridian basin now.

But if you think about it, that's not in the Sutter Buttes overlay. West Butte, South Butte, North Butte and Pennington, and then Snake Creek and East Butte Road are the boundary on the east side. So anything inside that is what we're hoping this re-zoning will affect. And our intentions are to keep the houses – this is 15 feet above West Butte Road. I'd say that's plenty far enough for houses to be in the Buttes. So a 15 foot elevation above the county-maintained road, and then not up on the hillsides, so 15 feet above the road will keep them from being up on the hillsides.

Robyn: You wouldn't mind them even that far?

Marty: Into the Buttes? Well, maybe not that far. Maybe we could shorten it up to 10 feet above the county-maintained road.

Robyn: I mean, are you just trying to be, just trying to get along here? Or you really wouldn't mind having houses there?

Marty: What we're talking about on that little form there is one house per 80 acres minimum. The minimum acres you could have is 80 acres. Right now there's parcels here that could be a house per ten acres. So that's a lot for us to give up as landowners. But, yet, the other rules – the other topics I put on that paper is to try and keep the housing out towards the road by imposing an elevation limit, and then also keeping the houses a certain distance apart. Like the closest house would be at those eucalyptus trees on the end and then the other hillside over there, so 3,000, 4,000 feet apart. So that's another big hit on the land value because – what that will do is keep the parcels that are sold out towards the front and not put you way up into the Buttes. Because the houses have to be so far apart, they're going to have to take the lottage estimate and scoot it up against the road so it's a wider lot than it is deeper.

Robyn: Of course, it still affects the landscape. It's like those trophy houses down there now – when you're looking at the Buttes, you're looking at the house. So even if they're not in the Buttes –

Marty: That's true. But I don't think we're going to get away – I know Middle Mountain Foundation would like to stop it all in the Buttes. But what if I want to put, what if Casey does want to farm, or if what if my kids want—and I understand that's what's helping break the Buttes up and other developments, but I think that I have enough ground here, if you were to take 80 acre parcels that I could hide the houses so well that it would look like they'd been here for years, in a common sense way to place the house. Because I don't think you're going to get a complete shutdown on development in the Buttes. But to allow just so many is a good way to sit it, because pretty soon those houses will be 3,000 feet apart and you won't be able to build in

between and the next 100 years, there won't be any more than that, and it'll be set in stone to keep that from happening. I'm not going to be negative, but I don't think you're going to get complete stopping development in the Buttes. I think that's... and if it happens, you know, I don't think my family's going to be all that burned out about it, because I've got a couple residences here. I could even make the bunkhouse into a new one. We're not interested in developing like other families are.

...

realize we have 5500 acres and we take three deer a year. And then the good we do with the mineral blocks, and keep the feed high by not overgrazing and not putting the cattle in too soon and keep them not too late.

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One thing I would like to say is that in the last 15 years I have learned a lot from people like you or Middle Mountain Foundation, Walt Anderson, my hikers, Chico Historical Society. So just in the last 15 years have I realized what I have and what I need to do. And one of them is the conservation of the Buttes, and the keep the development from really overtaking this view. Our elevation level barrier is great for not viewing houses from a distance. Like in Arbuckle, we can see that pink house on top of that hill, clear out on I-5 where no other buildings until then were visible. So those are the things we're trying to remedy by the altitude and the parcel size.

And what I've learned just like in the conservation easement, like with The Nature Conservancy, those were our first projected easements that we were going to try and get in here. We had an appraisal, we got so far as to get actual appraisals on the ground. They just wanted too much. You know, they wanted to be able to control issues and operations like erosion control, habitat enhancement, endangered species reintroduction. Well that million dollars they gave you for the contract will run out in ten years, and then you're going to be pulling it out of your pocket. So what we would like, and Farm Bureau would help us acquire, maybe the Board of Supervisors could help us acquire, a simple easement which we put on property we know we wouldn't want to build on and lock it in forever. But only give up the development rights, parcel size break down, in other words if you sold it, it would have to stay that forever, 600 or 300 acres. And then the ability for the grantee, the policemen like Middle Mountain Foundation, whoever represents the holder, would come in and inspect the ground once a year. So those are the three things we're willing to give up. The contract is too thick.

Robyn: You mean the contract from The Nature Conservancy?

Marty: No, that's my contract, the simple one. But Nature Conservancy's – I have it in the house here – it's about that thick. No thank you. And just look at the property value then if you do that, not just that you can't develop it, but you can't sell it in smaller acreages, it has to stay in this big acres, which lessens the property value. So that's what I'm kind of afraid of.