

restore restory

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE CACHE CREEK NATURE PRESERVE

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF



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AUDIO TOUR INTERVIEW WITH

Ben Adamo

STOP 6:

The Barn



Stop 6: The Barn

As a lifelong miner, being in this industry since you were 23, what lessons do you take away from the gravel wars controversy that you lived through your entire career?

Well, if there's a lesson that I take away from it it's that I always stress to the people that are coming up in the industry it's not only do we need to communicate internally with ourselves, but we need to communicate with our neighbors. And that is the most important thing that I think we can do as an industry is continue, even through the nature preserve here, the outreach, through the education program here so that people better understand what it is we do and the end result of what we do, both providing the materials and the jobs, which we see as important, but also fulfilling the needs ultimately of the site for the community to enjoy in perpetuity. So we take it as part of what we do and it's okay yeah, that's part of our business and we understand it, but making sure that the community understands our business a little better than they have in the past is of ultimate value to us I believe.

You were saying yourself that you are learning and passing onto others, but what do you think the industry as a whole can learn from what happened here?

Yeah, I think the mining industry can learn from what happened here that while it was painful at the time in '96, ultimately the program and the implementation of the program and following through with our commitments has proven to be invaluable.

And again, collaboration with groups like the conservancy here in Yolo County, working with the neighbors and the environmental community here has led to a successful business for us and a happy community and if we can combine business success with public relations in a positive way, that's a model and it's not only a model for the county, other counties to embrace, but it's also an industry model.

So similar to – people's fears are people's fears and it doesn't matter whether it's Yolo County or another county in the state and they're only going to be answered through performance and so when you have performance such as we have here, that's something that can be mirrored up and down the state and that's why it's being used as a model elsewhere.

Do you think your opponents walked away learning any lessons and if so, what lessons did they learn?

Well I think some of the opponents that we had in 1996, and I don't think I know, I've talked to a number of them since even recently and I think they've been pleasantly surprised at the outcome. Many of the folks that I talked to that were in opposition to our activities then, in fact I had a phone conversation with one not too long ago and she said you know, I've learned a lot from actually observing your operations since your approvals and I don't have the same position today that I had then based on what I've seen.

And so again, it comes back to performance and it comes back to following through with commitments. And at the time it was difficult to convince people that this industry could be responsive, could be responsible, and follow through with the commitments that we'd made. Do you see the deer over there? Sorry about that.

The Barn, continued (p.2 of 3)

No, it's nice. How did the controversy lead to the creation of the Cache Creek Nature Preserve?

The controversy in the '90s led to an understanding on the part of the producers that there was a need for a bridge between us, the county and the landowners and public. And the conservancy came out of that. There was a lot of research put into how do we form that bridge and the conservancy was the answer.

So how did the controversy lead to the creation of the Cache Creek Nature Preserve?

Well, the controversy in the '90s led to the creation of the Cache Creek Conservancy because there was a need for a bridge between the producers, the county, the landowners and the public. So after a lot of research it was determined that by creating a conservancy that could be involved with these reclamation sites, and the nature preserve here is one of those, we could form a link that would be not necessarily a county entity or a producer entity, but one that we would all interact with that could bring all the sides together.

We had a difficult time having that bridge, but the conservancy has worked extremely well in bringing those groups together and getting that collaboration to really work.

And what's the relationship between the Cache Creek Conservancy and the Cache Creek Nature Preserve?

The Cache Creek Conservancy was formed to basically help the county to implement the Cache Creek Improvement Plan on this 14 miles of Cache Creek. The county has engaged the conservancy to manage this, what we would call this jewel along Cache Creek here of the Cache Creek Nature Preserve and so the management that the conservancy has done at this site is a model again for how it can help the county to implement its plans along Cache Creek.

Thinking back over all we've talked about, what do you appreciate most about the Cache Creek Nature Preserve in your whole history here from landing at 23 and building that huge plant, throwing tomatoes at each other and kicking back in different spots and knowing Jack Combs and going through the controversy and all that? What do you appreciate most about this being a part of your life?

Well, as far as this particular site, this Cache Creek Nature Preserve, I appreciate the fact that I've seen it from a different state to its current state and it's constantly evolving and what I appreciate about it is the fact that it is changing and that change is like any change, it's different and it's different almost every day.

But I can sit here now similar, believe it or not, I sat here before work and after work in a very similar environment to this. It wasn't as green, it wasn't as pretty, but the wildlife was still here and I think that there is now more wildlife. There's been an improvement to the site from a habitat value side and sitting here this evening and watching the deer come up in the trees and listening to the birds and the frogs and all that, I enjoy being able to do that and just know the history here of all the people that have been involved in this site. It's special.

The Barn, continued (p.3 of 3)

What are your hopes and dreams for the future of this place?

Well, I would hope and dream that somehow someday the county would continue to manage to fund this site in perpetuity and that the future generations can enjoy what we're enjoying here this evening or even an improved area. It's hard to picture that it's going to get a lot better than this, but in any landscape it can continue to mature and grow if it's properly managed. So that's my hope is that the county will continue to find a way to fund this so that the public can continue to enjoy it.

I've asked you a bazillion questions, but I wonder if there is anything that I didn't ask you or anything you've always wanted to say or something that you'd like to kind of mention that might make its way to listeners in the audio tour about any aspect of anything we've talked about.

Sure.

Open mic.

Open mic. Well, I guess you mentioned the fact that I've been here since 1974 and I came out here as a young man that was basically looking for a job and was pretty much focused on earning a living and that was my primary goal and 35, 37 years later, 38 years later I'm here understanding that your focus has to be broader than that and you have to understand how the work you're doing impacts not only the environment, but your neighbors and I'm happy that I was a part of that growing process for the industry and Yolo County and myself and I think that through the course of all those years there's been a huge positive impact by a lot of different individuals and I'm happy to be a part of that group.