

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF

restore

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE CACHE CREEK NATURE PRESERVE

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AUDIO TOUR INTERVIEW WITH

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STOP 6:

The Barn



Stop 6: The Barn

What was the toughest thing about the gravel wars for you?

I think one of the toughest things about the whole gravel wars episode, and particularly because I was on the planning commission, was innumerable meetings and many, many reports to read, but it was worthwhile because I learned so much from that process and understood so much better why we want to have good science to base our opinions on or our regulations on.

What lessons do you take away from the gravel wars?

I guess there are some lessons we all can take away from the gravel wars and I think one of the most important ones is that we respect various viewpoints. Everybody has a reason why they are spending time and effort to come forward and express their concerns, their viewpoints, and I think we need to respect that. Many technical studies were done and they provided a good basis for the regulations that were ultimately approved, but I think overall learning to work with people is a key to that whole period of time.

Can you briefly make a connection to how the gravel wars resulted in the creation of the Cache Creek Nature Preserve? I know it's complicated, but I want to connect gravel wars, conservancy and preserve.

The Cache Creek Nature Preserve was not part of any requirement under the area plan or under the mining permit. It was a donation from Teichert, one of the mining companies, to Yolo County. This site had been previously mined and it needed restoration, but it had been mined at a period of time when really not much reclamation was required at all. So I think in a roundabout way the fact that Teichert donated it to the county with the understanding that the Cache Creek Conservancy, which was also formed at this time to be the bridge organization between all of the different competing interests and bring the conflicts to more of a congenial result, the fact that the Cache Creek Conservancy would manage it was important also in that we had an organization ready to manage it, it was donated to the county and it could be restored and be a showcase and demonstration area of what could be done.

What do you think makes this preserve a model for other communities?

The preserve can serve as a model for other communities because it shows how competing interests can come together and work for something that's very positive. And we, on our board even, when we started and continuing to this day, we do have various interests represented. We have land owners. We have the gravel mining companies represented. We have the environmental community represented. We have restoration people, education people, amongst our board members so we have a lot of input from various people and we are making it work for something that's really positive for the people of the area.

And how do you think other watersheds could benefit from studying this case or this model?

I think other watersheds can benefit from studying this model in that it shows how collaboration and a very strong desire to have a positive outcome and to actually implement something positive on the ground can be done.

The Barn, continued (p.2 of 4)

And yes, the mining companies did provide and continue to provide some of the funding for the nature preserve and the conservancy to do this and so I think that shows a big commitment on their part and that they too are interested in showing how something that has been mined without any reclamation really being required can still be restored and be something that's very positive for everyone.

I just have a last couple of questions to ask. Overall, what do you think the public can learn from the agricultural history of this place?

I think when the public comes out here to the nature preserve, they're coming out to see a natural environment and perhaps see some wildlife and birds and look at plants and trees and they don't realize that this land actually has a very different history over time. One of them for a period of well over 100 years is that this land was in production agriculture and that even though agricultural use was here, the land is still the land and it can be beautiful and it can be natural and it can be restored.

What do you think overall the public can learn from the gravel wars and how they were resolved?

I think from the period of the gravel wars, the public can learn how important it is to first of all have good science, good technical studies if you're going to make a decision that affects a big public interest and having a surface mining area in Yolo County, which is what this area now is as a zone, is important if you're going to do that that you base it on good facts and a lot of input and a lot of listening to each other, to have concerns put on the table and to see if those concerns can be addressed and alleviated and if not you need to think further down the road as to why we would be doing this.

What does the preserve actually represent to you having grown up with it?

The Cache Creek Nature Preserve has been a big part of my life for pretty much 20 years I would say, but it is important and I think it showcases what can be done with a lot of hard work, a little bit of money and lots of good people working together to make something that is beautiful, is meaningful, that a lot of people can access that normally would not even know that there is a creek out here.

Thinking back, we've talked about so many things, is there anything in particular you appreciate most about this place personally?

I think the nature preserve is really a place of beauty, but it also shows what can be done with an area that has been disturbed in the past that has had a lot of human intrusion and yet it can be restored and serve as a model. We do a lot of environmental education out here particularly for younger children, elementary age students, so that we are sharing what we have learned and the beauty of nature with the next generation.

What are your hopes for the future of the preserve?

I think in the future we will see the preserve continue and thrive and remain as a natural area in a more developed area, close to agricultural production, but it will be a place where people can come, enjoy nature, experience the environment, a place for children to learn and we're doing that today, but it will continue.

The Barn, continued (p.3 of 4)

I'm going to ask you again because I know this place means a lot to you in your heart. I had no idea. It's more like 30 years that you've been working on this place.

Well not quite that long! More like 20.

I guess, but I mean, you know, you've talked mentioned to me that you might be retiring so I feel like asking –

But then you'll make me cry!

What are your dreams for the future of this place?

My dreams for the future of this place are sometimes pretty fundamental, but one of the things that I would really like to see here is real bathrooms for the public to use instead of porta-potties. And we're in modular buildings for our offices and so at some point having a little nicer facility, although there's really nothing wrong with them, but we want to upgrade our facilities here. We need a bigger visitor center. We could use more public space at some point in the future. We do a lot of educational programs here. We have a lot of students go through the site and having more space for them particularly when the weather isn't real good would be nice.

Yeah, I bet. I bet. Is there any hopes or dreams you have like when you have your farmer hat on, your ag hat on, is there any hopes or dreams you have for this place?

For the nature preserve, I would like to see us develop more site-specific educational opportunities that focus on the irrigation and the importance of Cache Creek as providing water for agriculture. And we do have some of the old farm machinery here and I think we can expand on the agricultural history of the area and the changes in agriculture over time which again, this place certainly lived through that period also when we went from the machinery that was drawn by horses or mules such as the Holt harvester in the barn to our important equipment that we have today that is modern and efficient and clean and does such a good job of helping the farmers produce their crops.

Okay, Close your eyes and I want you to think of just five words that describe how you feel about this place and when you're ready, just say, "The five words that describe how I feel about this place are," and just tell me what they are.

The five words that I would use that, in my mind, can describe this place are beautiful, serene, open, inviting and meaningful.

You love this place!

[laughs] I guess I only had four!

The Barn, continued (p.4 of 4)

I'm just trying to figure out a way to convey how much you love this place. Why do you love this place so much? Why do you put in all of this time and heart and energy?

This is an important place, more than just a job for me, but it's been part of my life for a long time and going through the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors when so much of this was in the development stage, working with a small committee to plan what this place was going to be, how it would be managed, what the values were that we felt were most important, I think I've lived it for 20 years at least so it is important to me and very meaningful in my life.

And what do you want other people to love about this place?

I want them to understand nature. So many of the people today, both adults, but particularly children, are not out in the environment, out in nature where they can feel it and hear and experience it, where they're by themselves on a trail and can listen to the sounds of the nature around them or the creek rippling in the distance or leaves rustling. Most children are afraid when they're like that and we don't want them to be afraid. We want them to love it and enjoy it and learn something from it.

Alright. Is there anything we didn't discuss in this interview that you'd like to talk about.

[breathes a sigh of relief] No.