Interview with Larry Serpa  
Tuesday April 9th, 2013.  
At his house in Fairfax, California.

Rachel: Ok, so my first question is, could you tell a little bit about yourself?  

Larry: Like...  

Rachel: broad...  

Larry: a broad... essentially I am a field biologist so I am always doing something outside. So... as far as my work with the TNC probably about three days a week I am in the field. But I am fascinated by all life forms from the smallest to the largest, it doesn’t matter to me. people concentrate more on me being an entomologist (PS) or specifically an aquatic entomologist or aquatic ecologist because it is something I spent a lot of time on but really all organisms... it could be a flower blowing in the wind... it does have to move

Rachel: ok  

Larry: Geology I have trouble with so... lava I can do but regular geology I have trouble, but anything that’s alive.  

Rachel: ok so where, so where... you said you work at different places throughout the week. So typically do you have sites that you go to periodically?  

Larry: I spend a lot of time in the central and north coast I do wind up throughout California; it’s always within California somewhere, but mostly central and north coast.  

Rachel: ok  

Larry: So the big block of land about a million acres or so where we have several properties which would be in the Mount Hamilton area which would be east of San Jose and highway 5 essentially  

Rachel: ok  

Larry: also in the Mendocino forest in the north coast area, I spend a lot of time up there  

Rachel: do you have a favorite area?  

Larry: now that would not be nice to have a favorite  

Rachel: (laugh) ok
Larry: so like wherever there is life...

Rachel: ok, I didn't know if maybe like landscape wise or scenic area...

Larry: around water...

Rachel: makes sense

Larry: if we are talking arid scrub land it is a harder sell...

Rachel: ok

Larry: like I said if there is something there that moves, it can be a lizard, it a uh, uh, bee fly, I don't care

Rachel: ok um... next question, what was your childhood like?

Larry: my childhood like... (Pauses) in what way?

Rachel: I guess um, well we can tie it in to the next question, was there anything in your childhood that you can attribute to being umm, what kind of got you into this field? Like the outdoors...

Larry: it was the family I was born into.

Rachel: ok

Larry: so I had very little control over it, it was just the way it happened. My brother was four years older than me, he was in to looking for bugs and reptiles and amphibians, and I never knew anything else. So as soon as I was capable of opening my eyes that's what was there; bugs reptiles frogs and things like that so it seemed perfectly natural to me. I couldn't imagine it any other way

Rachel: ok... (Pause) umm, what is it specifically about aquatic ecology that interested you since that tends, is, what you are known for? What was it?

Larry: that's true... (Pause)... it would probably be more... there are a couple of ways to look at that. one of the reasons maybe that I was sort of inclined toward conservation was in second grade, my father was in the military and we were temporarily stationed, and I would say we were stationed, he would say he was stationed and that we tagged along, but we got dragged out of Marin County and down to long beach. uh, and there was uh, even then, this was a long, long time ago, I am 62 and that would be second grade so you can so the math later but uh there was a concrete lined stream, which we all know is the only way southern California knows to do a stream, but it was, it had a natural substrate bottom, sand gravel, with some flowing water through it so to us it was just full of
all types of life; pacific tree frogs, all kinds of little water beetles, things like that, and then one day when I was out there by myself, I found ferry shrimp which I had never such a thing, had never imagined it, and I was just delighted it was just you know, being in wondery, seeing these fascinating beasts. The next day I came back to see them again and... mosquito abatement had deposited crude oil all over the surface of all the streams to kill all the mosquitoes and of course the ferry shrimp died and I went home crying to my parents they said well that’s unfortunate but they have to do that to protect the rest of the streams and I just knew that that was wrong. Of course in today’s world mosquito abatement would never do anything like that so they have figured out other ways to take care of the problem.

Rachel: um hmm...

Larry: but anyways that was the quad I came out with: conservation. But ah when I did my Masters I focused on uh aquatic beasts because it seemed like something where the, the biodiversity was small enough that you could kind of figure out who all the casts of players were.

Rachel: ok

Larry: whereas if you just went to a meadow and you tried to figure out the ecologies of the meadow there would be you know, maybe, you know ten thousand different species out there and I figured that this would be you know like forth species.

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: turned out there were a lot more than that but it was still a lot less then it would have been in that meadow.

Rachel: yeah,

Larry: something where I could try to figure out everybody who’s, who’s there

Rachel: ok do you think, umm, you moving around like that had an effect on your interests in different life forms and areas, or?

Larry: No.

Rachel: no?

Larry: if you, you know, maybe if you were just fixated on big mammals or something and your parents took you to Africa, and Australia, that might do that

Rachel: ok
Larry: but when you are thinking of bugs, they are everywhere...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: so you know, you could, you could take me to a, ah weedy lot and there would be hundreds of different species.

Rachel: ok, cause you, when you noted the move from Marin County to long beach I didn’t know if the difference in surroundings and environment and ecology kind of...

Larry: well it was more of a city existence ah so it was I grow up in Marin County, in Sun Valley and there were hills everywhere where you could just go and play

Rachel: uh huh

Larry: and you know turn over rocks and logs and things like that, whereas this was more, there wasn’t much that was wild. These concrete lined streams were pretty much it

Rachel: yeah , I spent the majority of my childhood in Bakersfield...

Larry: oh ok.

Rachel: so I know what you are talking about (laugh)... umm... so where did you receive your education?

Larry: Sonoma State

Rachel: Sonoma State for both...both

Larry: for both... both bachelors and masters

Rachel: ok... um what was your experience like there as...?

Larry: I loved it, it was ahhh... the, the instructors at that time, I don’t know now, there was a lot of emphasis on field courses, field biology so you know like, ornithology, ichthyology, herpetology all these ologies that dealt with bugs or frogs or fish or, or plants, whatever but there was a lot of focus on what was going on with organisms, and I liked organisms

Rachel: so were you attracted to Sonoma State because of that kind of field work or did you come to Sonoma State and find it there?

Larry: I...I... should we be totally honest here?
Rachel: go for it (laugh)

Larry: ok... so I... I went to Cal Poly with a friend of mine I... I... didn’t come from a family that had gone to college

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: but a.. but a friend of mine was going to Cal Poly in biology and I just thought that was absurd, I thought that was some kind of scam, there was no way you can go to college and study biology it seemed, it seemed like come on! it's a joke! They’re not going to let you do that! I could see how they’d let you do something else like become a lawyer or an engineer or whatever but anyway that the way it was. So that's where I went, I followed him and we went down there together. Ok, but my girlfriend, now wife, she went to Sonoma State but she was more of a liberal arts person at the time. Subsequently I corrupted her with biology

Rachel: (laugh)

Larry: but anyway, it reached the point that I was down at Cal Poly for two years, it's like ok, we’d like to be physically together except a little more than just a greyhound bus trip every now and again... and so it was a question of if she comes down to Cal Poly and she’s still a liberal arts major and that was like... engineer, architects, aggies, and biology, the only they that would be there for her shed have to take like home ec which that was a hard sell. Or I could come up to Sonoma State and still be biology major so as far as fairness it just seemed like the logical thing to do plus it allowed me to stay with Lynn which I don't think talking her in to home ec would have worked very well.

Rachel: yeah  I don't see many girls being...

Larry: well the home ec majors at that time were focused on... essentially they were dressed to kill every day and they were after an architect or an engineer for a husband...

Rachel: ok! it was that kind of degree...

Larry: …Not biology major, and the sex ratio was like 6 guys to 1 girl

Rachel: yeah

Larry: ...and so yeah , so the odds were good for what they were after.

Rachel: yeah , it's like uh match making system right there
Larry: so what she did, she showed me the course catalog of Sonoma State and all the courses that they offered and I could see that it looked a really good place to go but I was really pleased when I got there because of how field oriented it was

Rachel: good... so that why you continued to do your masters there?

Larry: yes exactly, otherwise I would have flown the coop after I got my bachelors...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: probably to some other place

Rachel: so ... this is a little off topic but how- 

Larry: and also I had a friend in the administrations department who uh, or whatever administration was back then, because ah...

Rachel: yeah ...

Larry: I had thought like everyone else it was like, I got 7 years to get my masters and she said well that’s not really true Larry, you have a 7 year block. So as long as you keep taking course then the ones you first took drop off... that why it took me 12 years to get my masters. I just loved being there and would have been there for forever...

Rachel: there is nothing wrong with that...

Larry: well eventually my girlfriend, Lynn, called my major professor and said look, if you push and I pull, well get this sucker out of here... she might have used different, different terminology. You might want to change that

Rachel: so how exactly did you get her interested in science?

Larry: she got fascinated by it...

Rachel: ok, just seeing you do it?

Larry: yeah ...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: yeah , and you know the field trips that we took, things like that, it’s a, it’s a very seductive thing, life is just innately fascinating and all the little critters have their own way of dealing with the world and each other
Rachel: um hmm, yeah, being, coming from someone who is more social sciences and history, English type thing-oriented, it would be really hard, I don’t-it would be totally different for me to take like, science and math have never been, I loved them, just not my- I’m not strong in them the way I am in history and English so it is, it would be interesting to see what actually you know, what it was for her to move over

Larry: I agree with you on the math side, I never really liked it

Rachel: ah, I just can’t! yeah, it was, ah, the only subject where I struggled ever. So ... ok... so how did you come to work...?

Larry: the main thing, what I find with the, sorry to interrupt you...

Rachel: it’s ok...

Larry: but what I find with people I run across who don’t have much exposure with the biological world, which by the way includes most biologists, is there is a lot of fear based of just not knowing what things can or can’t do. in other words you see some pretty little critter on a leaf but is it going to sting me or bite at me or give me a rash or whatever but once you know something about those organisms you are freed from that fear, even if you know yes, it will bit you, it will sting you, you know what to do and how to stay away from it

Rachel:...what to expect, yeah, how to handle it. I’ve always been, we were raised outdoors so, and we did move, as a kid we moved around a lot so I have been exposed to different countries and different environments so...

Larry: yeah ...

Rachel: it was never a lack of interest or exploration, it was just, and I was always the girl with the nose in the book, like it never...

Larry: (laugh) yeah ...

Rachel: and so you can be both but for me it was always...

Larry: I am old enough to know what a book is...so

Rachel: (laugh) yeah (laugh)... so um, science was, I liked it but I knew it was probably not going to be...

Larry: be your thing...

Rachel: be my thing so... umm, so how did you come to work for the nature
conservatory then?

Larry: conservancy.

Rachel: ... conservancy?

Larry: everyone makes that little mistake

Rachel: for some reason I that’s what, I think that’s a question that we came up, that we all came up with, so I will...

Larry: yup, the nature conservancy...

Rachel: conservancy...

Larry: uhhh, two little girls that live at our Bogs Lake preserve and they ask me, she goes "uh so do you work for nature con?" so, I mean everybody does their own little abbreviation...

Rachel: yeah ...

Larry: ok so... I was uh a masters student at Sonoma State and so was my girlfriend, Lynn, there and what happened was, is the current caretakers at the Fairfield Osborne preserve, the people that were plunked up there wanted to leave and uhh... the biology department at Sonoma State they did a lot of field trips up there and I knew it very well and they asked the nature conservancy if they could appoint the next caretakers because it seemed like a cool thing to do, to have someone they could relate to up there... and the NC said sure, go ahead, because then they wouldn’t have to think about it. But being a university it took them forever to actually come around to do it. They eventually posted it and then they picked my wife and me probably because we have both taken a lot of field class and also they were getting two masters students instead of just one person position there. I think it actually helped us get selected. we were there for about a week up there at the preserve as volunteer caretakers and the phone rang and I said who it is and they said, "it’s the nature conservancy" and they said" who are you?" and I said, "well I am the new caretaker." and they said, "no you can’t be the new caretaker, we just appointed new caretakers." so my association with the Nature conservancy was almost just one week long and it could have been it. But essentially the nature conservancy backed off because they realized they had told the university that they could appoint the caretaker but they forgot about it.

Rachel: because it had taken so long...

Larry: yes, because it had taken so long... it was probably at least, at least, nine months to a year or so
Rachel: ok

Larry: so a pretty long time

Rachel: umm...

Larry: at that time, and from my understanding, I didn’t actually see this in print...

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: but my understanding the nature conservancy acquired natural lands and then they really thought and which conserve the flora and fauna to some degree but then that the most important part for them would be to inspire artists (cough)

Rachel: ok

Larry: so what they did then is they put some artists there, so could be a painter, a sculptor, a poet, whatever and they also didn’t want them to get to comfortable so they tried to, to rotate them out in a year or so, something like that.

Rachel: so there wasn’t an artist there with you...

Larry: no

Rachel: ok...

Larry: but there wasn’t... the current caretakers were still...they had changed their mind so right when we first went up there the artists and residents had decided well maybe we don’t want to leave after all. But, so, but they did leave.

Rachel: so the preserves, the land that they acquired, they preserved in order to allow artists to come and live on the land

Larry: right...

Rachel: when, I don’t know...

Larry: I don’t know how they actually, what they did have some kind of process where they selected particular artists...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: I bet in those days it was more like, well my, my, my aunt has a daughter who really likes art or something

Rachel: I was going to say, where these artists that were there in charge of
preserving the land? Was there any regulation on what they were allowed to do or touch or go?

Larry: basically I mean when we went up there too as volunteer caretakers the main thing they wanted you to do was to make sure that no one stole the place. You know like you didn’t have off-road vehicles up there, you didn’t have people cutting down trees or whatever, that was the primary responsibility and I’m sure that was something that the artists knew too

Rachel: yeah

Larry: they didn’t have to anything with the flora and fauna; they just needed to be inspired

Rachel: pause... interesting, I didn’t know that... umm, this I think might be back tracking a little bit, but when did you first go to the Fairfield Osborne preserve?

Larry: when a, when I first came up from Cal Poly one of the first classes I took was ornithology so there would have been a field trip up there for ornithology. And that professor, Dr. Arnold was a friend of the Roth’s and that was how the university was associated with the place at first

Rachel: umm...

Larry: essentially because they knew him and he said it is ok if I take some field trips up here and they thought that was cool, the Roth’s were all ways into education anyway and then other professors started making field trips up there (cough)

Rachel: so that actually ties right in to my next question, do you know why the Roth family decided to donate the property to the NC in 1972?

Larry: my guess is that had the university had the where with all to acquire property in those days they would have transitioned it just to the university at that time but um the university was not, it didn’t have the capability for that I don’t think.

Rachel: ok...

Larry: so TNC being a nonprofit organization that acquired natural lands was a more natural... way for them to go.

Rachel: um ok... when were you, sorry I probably should have asked this earlier...?

Larry: that would...
Rachel: when were you at Sonoma State? What were the years you were there?

Larry: I was there from 71 to 86

Rachel: ok so right when the Roth family was giving the land to TNC,

Larry: yes, but I didn’t know that at the time, all I knew was that it was a place we went to have a field trip

Rachel: ok
Larry: it was probably right at that time,

Rachel: ok, did you

Larry: so when we became volunteer caretakers, we were co-caretakers, co-preserve managers or whatever you want to call it... ahh... that was in 74

Rachel: mm hmm... ok... (pause) umm did you have any sense of what the Roth’s family vision for the future of the land was when they donated the property?

Larry: no at the time expect for they wanted it to be preserved.

Rachel: what about after? At any point did you?

Larry: yes, because... you know when we were there as volunteer caretakers ah... my...my girlfriend had other jobs also but I spent a lot of time just inventorying all that was out there, the flora and fauna and trying to identify what plants were there, what bugs were there, what mammals were there... whatever... and Joan Roth once, on one of her visits, she had said that she would like us to also ah, establish an environmental education program. Which was like, sounded like it had to do with kids. and my wife and I weren’t, I mean we had been kids but we didn’t have an association with kids and it sounded very peculiar to us, we didn’t have any idea how to do that and also, my girlfriend was, well you know, we have jobs in the real world and we don’t, we do a lot here already, we don’t have time to take on that difficult a role. and Joan Roth just looked at us and said “something can be arranged.” and ah like, a month later our salaries showed up from the NC, we had never had a salary before since we were volunteer caretakers and obviously that’s ok we were gonna do an environmental ed program and I mean, it was, we started in 1976, had no idea how to do, knew nothing really about kids, ah so we tried all ages cause it’s like “what do you do?” should it be second graders? Should it be high schoolers? So we tried them all and we found that the ideal age was 5ht graders. Exquisite little monsters but they no, they were really wonderful kids and what happens is 4th graders, the physical relief... have you been to the preserve?
Rachel: I have, yes

Larry: the Physical relief is a little much for the 4th graders, its a lot of uppy and downy and stuff like that, and we found that sixth graders became very social so ah what happened is there time sense changed, now these, these grades might have, what these grades actually are might be different now from what they were then but at that time 6th graders were, could be thinking about the party they had two weeks ago or what they are going to be doing 2 months from now and that can be what they are talking about whereas the 5th graders were interested in what was in front of their faces at that time so they were ideal to get knowledge into their heads because they were fascinated by what was in front of them

Rachel: yeah

Larry: also part of that social thing, you know, if in the 6th graders one of the girls had bigger boobs then everybody else and she didn’t want to do it then all of a sudden like nobody wanted to do it because she had the status. And again the 5th graders they were just in to what was there in front of them and it was delightful.

Rachel: I can, they, I work with kids now and I can see that it's still the same you know, mindset there, because they have the focus that maybe the 3rd and 4th graders don’t have because they are little bit older but they aren’t so into themselves and into the social scene that they get wrapped up in that so that they are able like you know... be kids

Larry: we found that with 5th graders, as long as you didn’t intentionally try to trip them up with, with vocabulary, they could understand any concept that an adult could understand you just had to phrase it in word they could understand but you could be talking about photosynthesis or whatever and they could follow it perfectly.

Rachel: yeah ...

Larry: whereas the 4th graders it was a little bit of a stretch

Rachel: yeah

Larry: and the 6th graders were kinda well whatever...

Rachel: yeah ...

Larry: ... why would I wanna talk about that...?

Rachel: and then it just gets worse after very grade up...
Larry: ... (laugh)... yea...

Rachel: ... (laugh) .... Umm

Larry: so that was the primary age group we focused on

Rachel: ok... and how long did those, umm, did you, was it targeted to like school groups that would come up for field trips?

Larry: yes, so what we would do, is we would have ah, ( pause) essentially an orientation in the class, be like a 40 minute slide show just to them hyped about the place they were going to and then when they came up, we would- train docents every year and the class would be broken up amongst 4 or 5 docents so they would all have different experience really because if you imagine, if you remember the way the preserve is, they would go in different places and so there was no, everybody didn’t get the same experience and they would be able to compare and contrast for a long time after doing it

Rachel: ok

Larry: but why the preserve was so ideal for that was there is so many different habitats in a very small geographic area so it’s not like you are just going to a coniferous forest, or just going to a stream you are seeing all kinds of stuff...

Rachel: uh huh. yeah

Larry: there’s conifers, there’s oaks there’s chaparral, there’s all the food networks, it’s a delightful place to have them running around

Rachel: yeah ... how long did that program last for?

Larry: (cough) ... forever

Rachel: forever? They are still doing it now?

Larry: yep

Rachel: oh!

Larry: so we Stated in 76 and its still running

Rachel: hmm! ... and you...

Larry: that was actually part of the, part of the deal of the transition

Rachel:.... you and Lynn were the originators, kind of, of that program?
Larry: yeah

Rachel: oh, ok

Larry: actually probably one the first environmental ed programs.

Rachel: yeah

Larry: and in 76 and, and with the focus was on ecology and natural history so ok that a squirrel and what does it eat and how does it interact with its predators and all that kind of stuff. And ah it worked out really well

Rachel: I feel like now days that is such a normal part of the school curriculum, like that was something we went over every grade level just in a different, just going to a different degree in each level and so to think that that had to be start.

Larry: well we were told, when we were, Joan s aid, this is what I want, Joan Roth, so ah Lynn is a real go getter type person, she get things done, you know if if I see something that's not right and I mention it to Lynn she'll know what I'm trying to do but then she can't rest until she solves the problem and she's got to fix things so..

Rachel: so she kinda took the reins on that then?

Larry: oh yeah ...

Rachel: yeah ?

Larry: it could be from, how do you establish an environmental ed program, it could how do you keep the gutter from leaking, it doesn't matter she’s gotta fix whatever it is, and she is just really smart and really really great at it

Rachel: so what then was your personal relationship with the Roth’s?

Larry: umm they would visit occasionally, you know so, either together or independently, he would come up for hikes and things, Joan was more focused on say like the environmental ed program and things, I mean she did make it happen so but anyway they called us and they told Lynn that nobody’s going to come to this and ah we, we, we... you’d have to ask Lynn but we had some deal with the Petaluma school district as for who we were going to kick it off with, and they said we have a nature preserve that we own and nobody goes there and you guys are just starting this thing and nobody’s gonna sign up for it but the program we developed essentially, you don’t you don’t tell my wife that you can’t do something, it’s a, she’ll just nod and say I understand your concerns but basically what it was that teachers just didn’t know what to do when they went to
that preserve

Rachel: yeah

Larry: and we did it for them.

Rachel: yeah

Larry: and you could tell, you could tell by the orientation in the classroom and having the 4-5 docents that split up the kids, they would all, the teacher didn’t really have to do anything, you could tell how good the teacher was by how they acted, whether they do excited and went along, some teachers would literally sit in the car in the parking lot, so well that not gonna be a very good teacher. You didn’t have to even talk to the person at all

Rachel: yeah  ok

Larry: it doesn’t matter at all what your interest is, why wouldn’t you want to be with your kids?

Rachel: yeah ... Um

Larry: even just to make sure we weren’t leading them off a cliff or something.

Rachel: (laugh) yeah ... I think probably depending on what and who the teacher was, because I work with a lot of parents and kids and sometimes you can tell the ones that are just done, they are just so ...

Larry: fried...

Rachel:... fried that they need space, I run a swim lesson program and so they literally come, drop their kids off, and then leave... they are literally like, I need space

Larry: well that’s exactly what... they couldn’t literally leave the parking lot but they did the next best thing, staying in the car. it was a small percentage but you really notice it.

Rachel: yeah I could see that, especially from, the, you being the other, the person who takes over the teaching job on that day, like yeah , umm...

Larry: and initially, just as an aside a lot of the, a lot of the parents didn’t understand the concept of the field trip They knew what a field trip was but they were thinking of it more like going to a museum so they dress their kids up in the finest clothes and stuff like that and sometimes the kids would just freak out because they would get mud on their new shoes
Rachel: yeah

Larry: and we would just have to make it clear what was involved

Rachel: so do you feel as though the land and the ownership of it has lived up to what the Roth’s had hoped for it?

Larry: yea... very much so

Rachel: yeah ?

Larry: because they were in to, as I said, education in general so the university association was cool all by itself and then Joan really wanted you know, to help get the information of the natural world to to children
Rachel: ok

Larry: and so we really did that

Rachel: hmm... umm... I think we may have gone over this already so you can stop me if we need to... how did the preserve get accept- is there like an acceptance policy for the conserve- ...

Larry:  yeah ...

Rachel:....ok...

Larry: then it would be more like you have a a a, chunk of natural land that looks cool, it’s not full of gas stations or anything like and you want to give it to us, and were not even gonna have to but it even that’s pretty much a done deal

Rachel: oh ok, so I guess...

Larry: ... now we have much more extensive regional planning process so it can be so opportunistic, so you’re not just answering the phone and some guys says “hey I got this neat, neat old lot behind my house that I would like to see preserved forever and so ah, but then it’s like nice chunk of land and and we would talk it and be happy about it...

Rachel: so pretty much the Roth’s just...

Larry: by the way those properties are all, they they were acquired ah ah (pause) are really spectacular properties, because some- I mean, we do things in a more scientific way now and the acreage of- we require much larger

Rachel: um hmm
Larry: but the small little places in Jepson Prairie, Fairfield Osborne, Ring Mountain, Bogs Lake, they are really cool places.

Rachel: umm

Larry: I part of it is that someone had to go out there and be wowed by it in order to say "yeah! We do need to accept this"

Rachel: so did somebody come out to the...

Larry: yes somebody, somebody did...

Rachel: so it wasn’t like they just called up and it was a blind acceptance?

Larry: no... but it was blind in the sense that we had not said we are gonna work in the Sonoma Mountain area, we really wanna acquire property on Sonoma Mountain, it was more like we wanna acquire neat properties

Rachel: ok... were you at all part of the transition process?

Larry: of the transition process... Yes

Rachel: what kind of what role did you play in the process

Larry: ahhh helping to develop the easement terms. Lynn was much more into the nitty gritty of it as far was working with the university as far what or would not be done etc., and how it would work out best for the university and for us

Rachel: umm k

Larry: and one of the conditions was the environment ed program, that it would continue, which was a little weird for them but not too weird in the sense that most of our docents came from the environmental ed program

Rachel: yeah

Larry: and we tried really hard to get them from everywhere else, cause it’s just like, it was just too much of a chunk from one place

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: but it was part of their curriculum so...

Rachel: I was gonna say having a nature preserve as part of Sonoma State would be ideal for any type of science program, I feel like it would be right there
Larry: yeah ... yes... right... right... Right

Rachel: yeah ... umm. How did, did your work on the preserve play into your master work?

Larry: ummm, just that I was physically there...

Rachel: ok...

Larry: I mean cause I- aha- I- it wasn't a 24 hour job in the sense that weren't allowed to leave, you could go to a movie or anything like that but you really felt responsible for that was happening whenever you weren’t there so...

Rachel: um hmm... so what exactly...

Larry: there was alotta, lotta peop- people that would wander on you know and do stuff

Rachel: so taking care of it that way?

Larry: yeah ...

Rachel: yeah ? What exactly was the ahh your field of study for your master? Like what exactly was the thesis?

Larry: essentially, it- ah uh ah it related to the aquatic bugs that were up there...

Rachel: ok

Larry: so it was a fascinating place for aquatic life. mostly you- essentially you have all the, all these different types of stream systems up there so it was figuring out who’s who and as I said before it was something that was do-able so you would try to figure out what species were there and that involved ah alotta rearing. Ah let's see... (pause) so its its relatively easy to determine what genus you have, genus would be, like like in the mammal world it would be like canus- so you would know you have a wolf, a dog or a coyote but you wouldn’t know which, and that’s if you are just at the genus level and I wanted to be at the species level so I had to figure out if I had a wolf, a dog or a coyote and with the aquatics insects the bulk of their life span is done in the immature stage and then you can just tell what genus they are you gotta get the adults to determine what species they are...

Rachel: mmmkay

Larry: ... and they, you have to rear them to do that...
Rachel: yeah ...

Larry: you just raise them up and I don’t you don’t start with the eggs, you get the biggest, fattest immature you can get and then you just try not to have them die before they transform into adults and then you can identify what they are

Rachel: so was the preserve kinda invaluable to your...

Larry: ... yeah it was...

Rachel: yeah ? So how did...

Larry: ... because I could go anywhere ah in that stream system especially living on site I could go to any, any one of those streams anytime, I could go there in the morning if I wanted to and I could rear things in the stream too, like you could, you could put like ahh a little, a little screen container in the stream and and it would have pretty much everything it needs it’s got the water current coming through bringing oxygen, little food particles, they can grow up there and transform in nature

Rachel: um hmm...

Larry: ... and that was ideal... and the fact that you didn’t have hoards of public to destroy...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: ... if that meant you didn’t have all that stuff vandalized...

Rachel: yeah ...

Larry: and not not callous, cold- "I'm gonna destroy this" kind of vandalism, but more like pulling it out of the water going "what’s this?"

Rachel: not being aware kind of vandalism...

Larry: exactly...

Rachel: yeah ... do you feel had you not had the opportunity to be a caretaker on the preserve your thesis direction...

Larry: could have been something...

Rachel: yeah ... totally different...
Larry: cause like I said I'm pretty much interested in anything that moves.

Rachel: ok

Larry: and in a lot of universities, they they pretty much, you know whoever your major professor is is gonna kinda orient what your field of study is

Rachel: um hmm... yeah

Larry: on this, there wasn't anybody who did aquatic bugs at Sonoma State but there were a lot of people who were into ecology in general so I had a lot of freedom to to tailor depending on what I found

Rachel: ok, so while you guys were on your, on the preserve, you mentioned a little bit of it earlier but what exactly where your daily responsibilities?

Larry: it was you know make sure nothing bad happened

Rachel: uh huh

Larry: and ahhh that was just, if somebody got, it was a permit system so you couldn't get on the preserve without a permit

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: even if you were a a student and ah so if anybody showed up, you'd ah, ah track them down and ask them for their permit... mmm- most of the time that worked out fine sometimes it didn't work out so good.. so (chuckling)

Rachel: yeah ... for being, in terms of care-taking were you guys responsible for the plant life or mostly just you know

Larry: we were mostly, when we were caretakers we were mostly responsible for making sure the place was protected

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: so like I said; finding people who didn’t have permits asking them to leave, that sort of thing

Rachel: um hmm... ok... hmmm, what were the policies that the property was managed under?

Larry: well, like I said the main policy was that you needed to get permits to be there

Rachel: ok... (pause)...were these permits hard to come by?
Larry: no

Rachel: no?

Larry: so you had to have a legitimate reason other words like you say you know I'm kinda interested in studying the sociology of the people who come there? What kind of people goes there? What kind of trespassers even? You know and if you had a professor that said "that sounds cool" they'd give you a permit to go

Rachel: so you guys really tried to limit it for academic type purposes?

Larry: it was academic purpose, yes

Rachel: so there, you couldn’t really get a permit to...

Larry: ... and the exception, and these people didn’t need permits, would be neighbors, immediate neighbors...

Rachel: ok

Larry: ... because they were useful

Rachel: yeah

Larry: yeah ... they they had, they they had eyes and ears and they were a part of your security system

Rachel: yeah and they would know the land so they would know what to do, and what not to do

Larry: yeah

Rachel: ok

Larry: you know "I heard motorcycles on your eastern border" that sort of thing

Rachel: ok... did you guys have a lot of that? Trespassers?

Larry: yeah, we had a lot of trespassers but its one of those things you know, the word gets out that it doesn't, its not working well to go up there and then people don't do it as much

Rachel: yeah , did you guys have any fence systems to try to keep people out or was it just... eyes and ears...
Larry: there was a physical border fence so people could see it but nothing that humans couldn't get across

Rachel: oh ok

Larry: we had no machine gun in place..

Rachel: ok.. well I would hope not! that would be kind of scary. ( laugh) I don't thing that would be a welcoming place... (laugh)..

Larry: no...

Rachel:.... for little kids to come on a school bus to come up to...( laugh)

Larry: ... not good for the birds either... especially not the little kids yeah

Rachel: umm  so when you first came to the property what where some of your first impressions of it?

Larry: it was really beautiful, there was so much life there..

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: there were, there is a a transmission quarter line which I didn't like initially but I liked later on

Rachel: why- why did you not like it at first and why did that change later?

Larry: well just it it  would detract from the natural look of the place, it was more aesthetics

Rachel: uh huh, ok

Larry:.... why I like it later because I found that in between us and the caretaker that wanted to leave, there were, there was... when they first said they wanted to leave there were some other artists who came in order to take over the position and they saw the power lines and were horrified and left, they couldn't do it. so if they had, if the power lines had not been there, we might never have been able to take over.

Rachel: ok so was it that you came to respect the power lines or was it that you...

Larry: ... no it was just that, the, the, that it helped get us there...

Rachel: ok.. so it stood for a reason... ok... umm so these past, how many past caretakers have there been before you guys?
Larry: couldn't have been a lot because there there there was this artist couple that was there, the ones that wanted to leave and were talking what 72 is when TNC acquired the ownership and we were there in 74.

Rachel: umm hmm... ok

Larry: ... so this other couple were there at least a year or so, so it was either one or two sets.

Rachel:....one or two... how long did you guys stay as caretakers?

Larry: ummm... my wife was there for probably like 6 years and and then we acquired the Ring Mountain preserve in Marin County and and she became the preserve manager of that

Rachel: ok...

Larry: ... and so uhhh so moved down to Marin and I stayed at Fairfield Osborne for another 6 years after that

Rachel: so for about 12 years?

Larry: I was there for 12 years

Rachel: ok, so pretty much your whole time at Sonoma State you were also the caretaker?

Larry: correct

Rachel: ok

Larry: actually literally the whole time

Rachel: yeah ! (pause) ok. and as a caretaker, just to clarify my own understanding you stayed, you lived on the site right?

Larry: full time

Rachel: so the only, ah like I'm assuming like people who have only visited, the only place I've seen facility wise is that you know the visitors center so where you guys located in relation to that? how accessible was it for you>\n
Larry: the ah, visitors center is a mansion in comparison to where we were so there umm if you left the visitors center and were heading down the hill there
would be a driveway on the left and that went to what was originally ah ah a litt-sort of studio for Mr. Roth and they had a larger house there at the time which burned down before the place was acquired by the nature conservancy and so but they but that’s studio is what we lived in so it was a 20 by 20 foot structure with also an attached little bathroom so that’s where we lived. that’s still, that still existed as a structure you can still go look at it but its not considered to be habitable.

Rachel: I was gonna say, are there current caretakers? do you know if that’s still a program?

Larry: there there is somebody in charge of the preserve and she lives up there and ah and ah her residence is adjacent to the facility you are talking about...

Rachel: ok... ok

Larry: ... the education center

Rachel: ok

Larry: ...so that’s where she is based.

Rachel: and is its still kind of the same job description type as?

Larry: more ahmmm I would I would, more university oriented but but definitely I mean in in charge of the environmental ed program and you know (cough) more association with university cops so if there was a problem she would call campus security and campus security would come up there

Rachel: oh so Sonoma State has fully taken over...

Larry: well they own it

Rachel: yeah

Larry: they physically own the land

Rachel: umm...

Larry: so yes so... so we would have to have something serious enough to call a sheriff and then you’d pretty much need a dead body which we fortunately never had

Rachel: I was gonna say.. that would make and interesting story. Um so lets go ahead and do one more question and then we can take a little bit of a break...
walk around a bit. Umm what was your, oh I already asked that, what do you know about the early history of the preserve? like how, going back even to the Roth family and their...

Larry: your ahhh coworker probably extracted that from Lynn

Rachel: ok

Larry: what she did one of the people we kicked off, or tried to kick off but wound off not being able to kick off... ahh was a guy whose mother had grown up as a little girl on it and she was in her eighties (pause) obviously it seemed inappropriate to kick this guy off because he had a lot of memories of the place and my wife interviewed that that old woman so she found out a lot about what happened...

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: ... ahh in the early days..

Rachel: do you know what her...

Larry: I know some of it I know I know, but again you are probably going to get a lot better information from Lynn but ah so they they pretty much were living off the land. it is a concept that sounds romantic, living off the land, buts it kinda like " gosh if we could only all just live off the land!" its like well the land doesn't like that because humans are can have very intensive usage when there are living off the land. so I mean they they cut the oak trees for firewood and for selling the wood they would would what the woman told my wife was that she pretty much knew what everything tasted like so she knew what chipmunks tasted compared to raccoons and ahh anything conceivable anything that could go into a pot did.

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: she said eventually they acquire sheep and then they stopped eating everything else because it was, it was a much better food source

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: but when people live off the land its pretty much, it gets hit pretty hard. (laugh)

Rachel: so they were living there before the Roth family?

Larry: oh we- like I said we probably ran into this guy like in ah like around 19- I don't
know. it could be, probably we were only there a couple of years...

Rachel: uh huh

Larry: ... and his his mother was in her eighties and she was a little girl there so it was a long time before that

Rachel: cause I mean in in the class and in the interviews everybody is, we have some people interviewing the Roth’s so obviously they are going to get more of that information, um do you know when the Roth’s acquired the land?

Larry: I don't know that off hand but you will get that...

Rachel: yeah ... I figured I would but I figured it didn’t hurt to ask

Larry: and they gave it to us in pieces so...

Rachel: oh...

Larry: ... and that was for tax purposes so it was something, you know like... it made perfect sense for all parties what they would do is they would they would give us a little piece and they would get a tax right off for that year and so it was, it was, it was at least ten or so little often little rectangular things often with what would be a potential house site somewhere where you could plunk a house so it would be more valuable as a tax right off

Rachel: hmm... hmmm

Larry: (sneeze)

Rachel: I guess just in terms of people  how we've talked about it in class and umm hearing people talk about it, I assumed it was like one lump sum donation and then that was that so how many years then did it take them to fully donate the land?

Larry: more time then we were there.

Rachel: huhhh

Larry: so they because they owned an additional several hundred acres which now the university has I believe, the university or Sonoma County .. somebody has it ahhh which, so whatever the remainder was, the Roth’s have donated almost all of what they had and that property, that extra property that was the Roth property, we used for the environmental ed program even though we didn’t physically own it
Rachel: hmmm

Larry: but every you know every couple of years they donated another little piece

Rachel: hmm

Larry: practically it had no impact on what we did since we used the whole property anyways...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: but it was just you you you see it on the map the preserve...

Rachel:..name and title was different, yeah

Larry: ...really a little bigger

Rachel: ok

Larry: and the Roth’s could have at any time said "well you know, we are through with this" and stopped doing it but they had a very long term commitment...

Rachel: hmmm

Larry: ... like still ( laugh)

Rachel: yeah ... ok

-excerpt: taking break, checking machine.-

Rachel: ok... so... lets see here, next page, what was your, just to get the specifics I guess, what was your title role and responsibilities at the preserve?

Larry: originally it was volunteer caretaker before we were TNC preserve managers,

Rachel: and when did that crossover happen? do you remember the date?

Larry: caretaker? uh umm caretaker in 74, don't remember what what what month in 74

Rachel: ok

Larry: but it was about two years so it probably would... I know it was July 76 when we became TNC employees and that was ahhh from then we were
preserve managers.

Rachel: and then when you became the employees was there, you guys pretty much just got the job right? all the, like you said earlier a paycheck just kinda of started showing up.

Larry: correct

Rachel: ok so there wasn't..

Larry: ... to be associated with us, your gonna establish the environmental ed program

Rachel: ok

Larry: the nature conservancy is not in to, they would- the nature conservatory never started an environmental ed program, its not not they kind of deal where we would spend resources on although we have worked on a lot of minds that have... I mean you figure it started in 1976 and always at least a thousand kids a year, that a lot of thousands

Rachel: um hmm and that's just at the Fairfield Osborne..

Larry: yeah

Rachel: so does the TNC, do they offer anything similar to that at any of the other lands you guys have acquired?

Larry: ummm ummm some of the other lands there might be some other agency or group that is using that as a site

Rachel: ok, so kind of like what is going on now...

Larry: yeah

Rachel: ok umm

Larry: so now now the university owns it but we retain a conservation easement which has various stipulations which ah essentially means that the university cannot do specific things

Rachel: ok, what is...

Larry: ... like they couldn't cut down the forest and and put put like ah ah ah a big housing complex up there
Rachel: I don't think that would go over well...

Larry: no it wouldn't

Rachel:.... on any account

Larry: but I mean but eh... how knows two hun- five hundred years from now that might seem like a really smart thing to do...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: ... but legally they cant

Rachel: that's good. what, I mean do you have any current relationship to the land up there, the preserve? do you...

Larry: part of my job is what I do is ummm I work on developing easement terms so we have some property we might be, we might be putting an easement on and then sell to a third party or we might give to say like a State park but we want we want to make sure things don't go bad in the future so we develop the easement terms to protect whatever conservation targets we seem to consider most important out there you know maybe we are worried about frogs or salamander or a kit fox or whatever ...

Rachel: um hmm...

Larry: so we make sure those things are protected...

Rachel: ok, so in the recent years have you done any work up there again?

Larry: so what I do, anyway, I help develop the easement terms but then also part of my job is to monitor the sites that we have easements on so I probably look at twelve different properties a year and Fairfield Osborne is one of them so every year I go out there and I compare what’s happening to what the easement says cant happen...

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: and see if there is any conflict and if there is a conflict or perceived conflict then we work it out

Rachel: ok

Larry: figure out what’s happening

Rachel: so while you were there up at the preserve what kind types of plants and
animals did you encounter?

Larry: lots

Rachel: (pause) I know, I'm guessing it's probably a really long list if we wanted to actually list it all out. But I mean that in terms of your masters thesis, what exactly, what animals exactly were you working with that you found there?

Larry: the, the, the aquatics insects, there would be about 180 species that live in the streams

Rachel: ok, were you surprised at that many?

Larry: yeah I thought there would be around 30 (laughs)

Rachel: so you thought that by taking the, like what you said earlier, you thought that by doing aquatics you were going to have a small number, so the easy way!

Larry: so in other words I had been out there on field trips where we sampled the stream and came up with about 12 so I thought well there is probably about 30!

Rachel: um hmmm

Larry: so... so it was it was a bit of a surprise but part of what I didn't understand when I was starting out was that different species are tailored to different times of the year so there might be a may fly that comes in June and then there's another that comes out in November, they both do the same thing but they don't compete because they are doing their things at different times

Rachel: and they are entirely different species?

Larry: yeah

Rachel: ok (pause, clears throat) how would you describe the research, education, and management activities that went on during those decades?

Larry: in those decades there were a lot of field trips not much research

Rachel: ok... ok

Larry: so a lot of different classes went up here so there could be mycology, that's mushrooms, herpetology frogs and salamander and stuff, birds, just all the different ologies would go up there on field trips and the the plant people would go up, the plant experts and things like that. it's like 6 road miles from the university, pretty ideal as far as getting your class up there fast.

Rachel: yeah, so there wasn't really any other students that were taking
advantage of it

Larry: I think, I think there were two other masters before mine and ahhh there were student projects too scattered, I wasn't aware of a lot of those, they might have gathered them up by now. so there so there were student projects that were happening

Rachel: ok

Larry: say you are taking some course, it could be you know on birds or something and you are required to do some study and you might choose to do it there but I don't I don't I don't have a list of that but I know some occurred

Rachel: yeah ... do you feel as though the preserve has kinda been under utilized or was under utilized in that way of students coming and doing their research?

Larry: as far research, as far as research I think they've they've, now that the university owns I think they have solved that problem but uhh it was so

Rachel: umm hmm... do you think that that was maybe just a lack of awareness or understanding of what exactly the preserve held? or why do you think people were not so umm...

Larry: I don't, I don't

Rachel:.... jumping at the bit to get up there...

Larry: you know its kind of hard to explain because it was not as though the professors didn't go there, they went there a lot

Rachel: umm hmm... yeah

Larry: you you think it would be natural for them to point their students towards doing research up there
Rachel: and I would feel that if the students knew, cause if they had gone there on their own for field trips...

Larry: right... right

Rachel:.... they would know what was there even if the professor wasn't pointing them towards it and they would you know see that as a prime location so I guess I am a little surprised that there wasn't more.

Larry: ...its convenient, yeah ... right... yeah . I think a lot, even for a lot of students it was just more convenient to just do things inside a building you know you have some kind of lab apparatus
Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: and you know you got.. you know vending machines, you got bathrooms( laughing) its doesn't rain on you

Rachel: yeah ... that's true. so (sigh) we've already kind of touched on this already but what did the-

Larry: did you remember to turn that back on by the way?

Rachel: I did, I jumped for a second when I thought that I hadn't um actually yeah we are good. so what did the nature conservancy do on the property during the 70's 80's and 90's?

Larry: well primarily the main thing the nature conservancy was concerned with was for the whole period even before we were employees when they just had caretakers up there was protect the flora and fauna, they just didn't know what flora and fauna was because they didn't have anybody out there looking for it ah and then the environmental ed program. once that happened in 76 and that was a big chunk of our time went into that

Rachel: was there any catalog going on- cataloging going on of the of the flora and fauna?

Larry: I did a lot of that

Rachel: you did a lot of it? oh ok

Larry: pretty much for all the different groups.

Rachel: so now they have it, before it was just protection now its an understanding. ok. umm...

Larry: although I should should probably go back and spend some field time and kind of update what aquatic beasties are out there

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: there's , there's somethings I couldn't do as well as I can do now

Rachel: umm in the most recent time of you going back there, had anything changed? has there been a huge, you know, change in what it was then and what it is now?

Larry: still no unicorns out there but I keep looking
Rachel: (laugh) (cough)

Larry: umm you know you you constantly find new things umm I found two new species in the little spring box there so those are probably species that are new to science so people who you know aren't deep into biology think that they think that everything is know and that the vast majority is unknown you know so I mean pretty much you could go over to the flower there and watch some bug for an hour and you would know more about that bug probably then anybody in the world

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: so you know um a lot a lot of it is done by extrapolation so ah people have studied some other bugs in that family so and the family is a big group and so when you see it, like I see you know some solitary bee I can extrapolate well what that's doing because I know what the family does but I don't know the specifics of that species

Rachel: um hmm... ok umm and this is kind of a speculative question, but had maybe the Roth's not even gotten involved and the then the nature conservancy and then Sonoma State, do you think the land, I mean what do you think the the land would be like now had nobody really bothered?

Larry: I think, I think it would have been more like a ranch kind of thing

Rachel: ok

Larry: I mean you just move down the hill a little bit and you see a lot of that where...

Rachel: yeah

Larry: ... it it just you know its sort of loose subdivision where there's bigger chunks of property but there's a house on five acres or something like that

Rachel: so in your opinion is it important to kind of save land from that future?

Larry: yes

Rachel: yeah ... that's kind of a "duh" question... (laughs) uhhh why did the nature conservancy decide to donate the land to Sonoma State in 1997?

Larry: because we were, we had a lot of... like I said we still consider them to be Crown Jewels, these lands that are really exquisite little places but they are little so...
Rachel: hmm

Larry: ... ah you know at that time when we donated Fairfield Osborne it was probably like 230 acres, something like that uhh Bogs Lake, we still own that one, its about ah 180 acres.

Rachel: uh huh

Larry: a lot of, a lot of properties about that acreage you would often have an employee or two stuck at that site so just from a- a funds basis its, its not doing very well. in other words, you have a lot of money going to very small acreage and what we do now is we essentially are involved in properties that have much larger sizes so instead of 200 acres it might be 20,000 acres

Rachel: ok, so...

Larry: (cough)

Rachel:... so that's why the land got...

Larry: ... and its like 20,000 acres but you you don't have somebody living there so you have somebody that's working on that property but also maybe on five other 20,000 acre properties.

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: so you see you can protect much vaster landscapes instead of just really cool neat places

Rachel: um hmm... when the...

Larry: ... and we didn't pave them over we made sure they all had good homes

Rachel: yeah

Larry: and it kinda worked, it worked out... there's a lot of kicking and screaming during that whole process ah from some of the long term employees but it worked out for the end really well because most organizations would which you would transition a property to would, are not going to take it if its going to be a money pit

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: so usually what was required was for us to do an extensive amount of fund raising to get an endowment for that property so there was more money available
for that property then there ever had been before and that was for forever so it was a real good situation for the property.

Rachel: yeah so when they, when you did donate it all over to Sonoma State were there any provisions attached to it? like was there something they they needed...

Larry: there was a conservation easement so..

Rachel: ok

Larry: ... the thing that most people know of is you know you buy a piece of land you probably don't own the mineral rights

Rachel: yeah

Larry: ... so the owner ship of a property and things are like a bundle of sticks and one of those sticks would be like the mineral rights. well ok, you don't have that. when you write an easement you can take away essentially, even though we don't like to phrase it like that, you can take away other things like you cant build anything up there...

Rachel: ok

Larry: or you could have cattle but you can only have this number of cattle

Rachel: ok

Larry: or when the cattle have grazed at the end of the year, there has to be this much grass left

Rachel: ok

Larry: so you have a lot of control in, in what kind of stick you leave on the ownership of the property

Rachel: since, well did the Roth's have any part in that as the original owners? did they have any say in what kind of the provisions were attached to it?

Larry: no but we knew, we knew what they wanted...

Rachel:....wanted

Larry: and with us that’s often in donor intent. ok so there might not have something expressly said but we can understand what they would like
Rachel: um hmm

Larry: and one of those things is the environmental ed program

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: like I said, ah, that's something that has continued through time. if it were just the nature conservancy and no Roth's involved the environmental ed program would have died when we transitioned it to Sonoma State- Sonoma State university...

Rachel: hmmm

Larry: ... but that was ah ah strong component of the donor intent, we made sure that that followed with the ownership of the university

Rachel: yeah ... since that was really their key wish... it really...

Larry: yeah  but a university is kinda, its a hard thing to get to, to agree to do you know

Rachel: yeah

Larry: so I I wouldn't, you know we had just transitioned it without talking about that and putting it in the easement, I could see that not have happened

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: that they would have said "well this is just too much effort"

Rachel: yeah .. yeah .. umm so what exactly was your role in that whole transition?

Larry: my role was working on the easement terms and talking with Lynn, Lynn was the active party...

Rachel: ok

Larry: ... so far as interacting with the university. and talking with Lynn and she would be like "well they are thinking about do this" and I would be "well that's fine with me" or like "whoa"

Rachel: yeah

Larry: but pretty much she knew how, how you know the way my mind worked
Rachel: ok...

Larry: we have been together since 69 you kind of figure out what the other other person thinks

Rachel: well you would hope you would by then I mean if not then maybe there’s some problems

Larry: yeah

Rachel: ok, so pretty much it was writing up the contract of agreement?

Larry: yeah, it’s a conservation easement which is just a bunch of terms

Rachel: ok so kinda like a pre-nup?

Larry: its very much, yeah you could look at it that way

Rachel: so just a pre- arrangement...

Larry: yeah

Rachel: ok

Larry: some of it is exactly just like that, well for some inconceivable time if, if some court decides that the property will be you know sold or split up in some way and the conservation easement doesn’t exist then what happens?

Rachel: yeah

Larry: so that those terms would all be, all be worked out

Rachel: ok, umm how do you think the preserve has been effected over the years as its kind of undergone shifts from owners and different programs on it and ...?

Larry: I- I think it’s done phenomenally well so I have, I have no complaints about it

Rachel: yeah

Larry: you know like I said, I go there every year to to monitor the conservation easement terms and and I’m pleased with what’s going on

Rachel: cause I guess I could, I guess just in national parks, trying to limit the amount of visitors they have on it, I could see you know, the amount of kids that come up and field trips that come up as a concern for some people who you
know are hesitant about letting tons of people up there in fear of a potential you know mess- up I guess so has do you - have you found that that has been an issue at all?

Larry: I haven't- it hasn't, it hasn't tripped that kind of a thing in my brain. when they talk about other things like you know like, ok now we are having people camp out there and we want to develop a campsite. what does that mean? well actually what they were thinking was was if some researcher was doing something and wanted to spend the night with owls or whatever I mean, that I don't have a problem with that, but it you know when I first heard that I was, it sound like it was gonna be like place where you could just go, like a State park and camp out

Rachel:....a recreation area

Larry: yeah a recreation area which is never a good place just for recreation, its really too small for that

Rachel: um hmm, yeah , so you haven’t seen any negative side effects from having people come up, in like an increase amount of people coming up over the years.

Larry: no I mean there’s, I I see changes, you know more like the power line transmission cord that here might be more research apparatus up there but that’s not, the bottom line is its not impacting the flora and fauna, the flora and fauna don't care, I don't care whether there’s more metal up there

Rachel: and it doesn't sound like it has been affected

Larry: no the flora and fauna have not been affected

Rachel: ok do you think...

Larry: but if they wanted to do something like, ah, which Sonoma State knows not to do, but sometimes these universities want to do something like, well what would happen to, how much more watter would there be in this creek if we cut down all the trees? well well that's a viable research topic...

Rachel: that would be scary.

Larry: ...like- ah your your not gonna be able to do it but sometimes they like to do it

Rachel: yeah , like do you think that maybe the fact that the the groups that have kind of stepped in and helped facilitate and preserve have been people and groups that have been, you know have been environment friendly mindsets has
had a you know ah a helping hand in it?

Larry: yeah ... yeah ... well like a lotta environmental ed docents went on to jobs that might be in in planning departments or something like that and ah its not just the kids, we've have like 5th graders who have turned out to be docents down the road or whatever but you know all these people, its not just the kids its also all those docents, all have a vested interest in the preserve remaining a viable place

Rachel: yeah

Larry: so there's quite an advocacy group there

Rachel: yeah  (pause) so what do you think is the, we have three questions lefts, what do you think is unique and special about the property?

Larry: well the the main thing I would say is that you have ah a lots of different habitats in a relatively small area which means you have a tremendous amount of biodiversity and plus you've got a lot of water...

Rachel: uh huh

Larry: ... water always means a lot of life and there's all kinds of streams there...

Rachel: if ..

Larry: ... some of them are perennial some of them are spring fed so they are very constant, some of them, some sections of streams dry up completely, some barely have any water at all, maybe they only have water for one or two weeks- all those kinds of conditions mean different types of organisms can do well there

Rachel: yeah ... in comparison to some of the other um properties and preserves that you oversee, how does it compare with its biodiversity? is it like...

Larry: per unit area...

Rachel: yeah .

Larry: per square foot I mean it its way up there

Rachel: yeah

Larry: there's just a lot life in a fairly small area but you part of that is because there's so many different types of habitats

Rachel: yeah
Larry: (cough) you know you got you got some places that's 30,000 acres but maybe its all oak wood... and grassland

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: ... and that's it

Rachel: and do you think that's just, I mean is that, cause I feel like that is a fairly consistent thing in Sonoma County , you have so much in one area you can drive one mile and it is a completely different you know landscape then where you were ten minutes ago, do you think that that has to do with the area that its in?

Larry: it might have to do with it, its the Sonoma volcanics, so a lot of volcanic soils, a lot of volcanics don't have a lot of water, there is a lot of water up there for whatever reason so its its, maybe that has something to do with it. volcanic soils tend to be really fertile. ahh, and you, there might be different, more more hard volcanic rock or it might be more volcanic ash so its very different

Rachel: um hmm. what is your favorite memory of your time living on the preserve?

Larry: one from twelve years?

Rachel: ok maybe not just one but (laugh) something that comes to mind? it can be many different things

Larry: once I had, I was, I had a weak moment... ok so there was thing California red-legged frog that I caught at one of the ponds, and I noticed it had several leaches stuck on it and thought "oh the poor frog! it has leaches stuck on it." now this isn't a nice thing to do to the leaches but I would remove the leaches from the frog...

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: ... but that is not as easy as you would think it is. the leaches did not want to go away from the frog, they had a good food source there. so I'm holding this frog in one hand and I'm trying to pull of the leaches with the other and, id never heard red-legged frogs say anything, I knew that they were supposed to be capable of, of talking, you now, more like grunts something like that. id never heard anything. the northern red-legged frog is not supposed to say anything at all, but anyway, so it-it - I'm doing this for like two or three minutes and then its starts grunting a little bit, and I was like "oh that's cool!"...

Rachel: (laugh)
Larry: ...to hear it talking like that. this must be, you know what its capable of
doing but I'm still working, holding this frog, I dunk it under the water every now
and then...

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: because frogs like that. but you know I'm holding on to this frog and its
beginning to think its not going to end well. I mean the frog is probably thinking "I
don't think this is gonna work out to my best benefit" so after about five minutes, I
was done to one leach, one leach left! I had gotten the other four off and I'm
working on the last leach and the frog reached the point of finally deciding it had
to change something. and it released this scream that was like a woman that was
being murdered violently you know with a knife or something like that and it was,
it paralyzes me. just incredibly loud vocalization where if I had, my hand was
actually frozen, I could not move my hand otherwise I would have dropped the
frog but there’s no way, I was completely mind dead. it just blocked up my mind,
it was such a devastatingly loud scream that came out if this frog and it went on
for probably like 5 or 6 seconds and I was just paralyzed and you know once I
calmed down I let the frog go and he got to keep his last leach by the way but I-
I just definitely knew that California red-legged frogs can vocalize now, when they
want to. and probably what that's designed to do is when they're, when they're
really accosted by some predator to point where they think they are going to die,
it's started out kinda mellow, me picking up the frog and there was no pain
associated with it there was just, but ah but maybe they would do that a lot
sooner like if they were grabbed like a raccoon or something...

Rachel: I think that would scare me. it would deter me

Larry: I- I mean I am in a total mind freeze I just couldn't have done anything. it
sound like, you know when people say that mountain lions can sound like a
screaming women, well it sounded louder then a mountain lion, I am holding the
thing...

Rachel:... uh huh... and it came out of such a small little thing

Larry: yeah

Rachel: do you think that had you not, you know, had you not even found the frog
and had the leaches stayed on, do you think that would have like been
detrimental to the frogs life?

Larry: no

Rachel: no?

Larry: cause it ah it it was more that I was just trying to be nice...
Rachel:....yeah ...

Larry: ...what happens is that the leaches glom on they drink some blood and they fall off so its its just a very you know it was probably something that he would have put up with, its like fleas on a dog

Rachel: I was gonna say, if it was like a one of those parasites that they don't even notice is on them you know
Larry: yeah  yeah   and I doubt the frog is that aware of it

Rachel: ok

Larry: I'd say that the dog is more aware of the fleas

Rachel: yeah  cause I think, I think leaches have such a negative connotation because they suck blood but I mean in reality they don't, I don't know, they are gross...

Larry: yeah ... minimal amount of damage sort of thing

Rachel: yeah  yeah . (we umm, my sister went swimming in a pond one time when we were younger and came out and leaches everywhere and my mom just was like, "Ohhh...")

Larry: where was that?

Rachel: we lived in um uh Pakistan and Bangladesh growing up and she- we were at a friends birthday

Larry: those are big leaches...

Rachel: (laughs) yeah , we were at a friends birthday party and they had like a pond attached to their backyard area and all- a bunch of the kids went swimming in it and my sister was the one who got the leaches

Larry: ahhh

Rachel: it was just luck of the draw I guess but

Larry: well she might have tasted better

Rachel: yeah  I don't know, it was just really funny they all like stood up and my sister was the one that had them like everywhere (laugh)

Larry: (cough)
Rachel: and my mom was like, of course your daughter but...

Larry: well you know my wife is more, more attractive to mosquitoes so if she's around I'm never bothered at all ah, as a kid fleas really liked me

Rachel: do you, what do you think that has to do with?

Larry: your smell

Rachel: your smell?

Larry: everybody has a different smell, not enough for us to tell person to person but for the critters, I have a coworker that ticks just love so you could be walking down a trail and there could be like 5 of us and none of us would have ticks and she would have like 18

Rachel: yeah, cause I have heard like, I mean there is ah, even us humans have like an underlying sense of smell that were not even aware of which is why we are attached to certain things and even, you can have like an attraction to a certain person based on it, like it would be the same thing...

Larry: ... and not know why...

Rachel:... yeah exactly, not know why, not even, when you know smell them you don't even know that you are smelling them differently then somebody else. Its like a mental, like it connects somewhere else so that would be the same kind of thing with fleas and ticks and mosquitoes I am assuming

Larry: yeah its that same kind of thing

Rachel: ah ok umm...

Larry: ...like I have almost no smell on me as far as you know... its just not something, for some reason I just don't smell like a human at all but my wife has an intense smell, sense of smell, so maybe she is selected partially for some person who had very little smell...

Rachel: yeah, balance each other out

Larry: ... to balance out her capabilities so that way she's not overwhelmed by the person she is with

Rachel: is there anything else about the preserve that, you know comes to mind, a fond, fond memory?
Larry: the whole, the whole place is a fond memory so..

Rachel: yeah

Larry: where its still, because I was there so long and you know, its gets so, you don’t just know the plants when its flowering, you know when the first little leaves come up so I am really physically bonded with the site so when I physically walk out there its like I am home still

Rachel: why did you guys, why did, because Lynn left earlier from what I remember, so why, why did you like, leave? could, would you have had the option of staying and being the caretaker?
Larry: I, I- because we were expanding to the more vaster acreages, having someone being physically on, on that small property was not, ah... that’s a swallowtail, a swallowtail (distracted by swallowtail butterfly)

Rachel: oh

Larry: it just, it just was not a good use of resources

Rachel: ok

Larry: we did have ah, somebody who took over my position when I left and they were just still based there

Rachel: so it wasn't that you were ready to move on and didn't want to be there anymore, it was more of a job relocation sort of thing

Larry: it was essentially like that because I would have stayed for forever

Rachel: ok yeah . um what do you hope that future students will learn from studying the preserve? like what are your, I guess, in connection with that, what are your hopes and dreams fro the whole, for the future of the preserve?

Larry: I think just that there is so much life our there and so much biodiversity on one small site and just to be aware of that, its hard for people to notice that sometimes because they are into their own thing and I'm often out on properties where people are out there doing something they might be walking with their friend but they would never notice what is out there, they don't even see me . its like you got this 62 year old man with a butterfly net, how can you not notice that? I mean that, that’s pretty obvious but they just because they are so focused on the socialness of being with their friend, and they are talking about, its like the whole 6th grader problem, they are not seeing what’s in front of their face at all and that’s what I hope is that people will get more back to looking at what’s in front of them at that moment.
Rachel: yeah, how do you think that that can be done?

Larry: I think maybe that people have to be trained to do it, you have to actually say "ok... in the next 5 minutes you gotta find 3 living things or something like that.

Rachel: um hmm

Larry: which sounds impossible to some people but its actually pretty easy

Rachel: so you think that nature is something that should be experienced alone, like do you think you get more out of it if you are one on one with it or with a group?

Larry: I think it would depend on the individual. some people have to be with other people and within my program it worked out really well because we, we essentially we got plastic boxes we called bug boxes that were cheap so if they got destroyed it was no big deal and it allowed people to put something in there and it protected the beast from if you squish it and it also protected you from the bee that might sting or whatever and then it allowed you to share things really well so somebody finds a scorpion under a log and now the whole, he or she can bring it back to the group and now everybody gets to see the scorpion without being worried about the scorpion stinging you. that's what I think, I think that people would just be more comfortable sharing things in groups it might just be two people, it might be parents and children or whatever but I think that most people would be less likely to just do it by themselves

Rachel: I guess I was thinking more along the lines of like if, I feel like social groups could also potentially, not ruin an experiences but detract from somebody being able to absorb what they're seeing and pay attention to what's going on with the plant life, especially if its like 6th graders who are more you know more willing to focus on on the social interactions they are having and not what is being surrounded...

Larry: ... right, it need to be guided to some extent, you gotta be quiet, ah my my ornithology teacher, or bird professor at Sonoma State, he was really good at, what he said was we can walk down that trail and hope to see some birds or we can just sit down here and be quiet and see what birds come to us and often you would see more life that way. its not just birds but with something like mushrooms, the thing about mushrooms is that you are not going to scare the mushrooms but what the way your whole sensory apparatus works is if you were walking through the woods you don't see things, you are very good at seeing thing that move that gets your attention but ah its much ah better to actually stop and just stare at some part of the forest floor and that how you would pick up more mushrooms but if you are just walking, you space out and you miss things
Rachel:... you would miss things, yeah. and I think that that is something that can be applied to like everything. you, we tend to move so quickly through life that we don't notice... yeah

Larry: right...right...

Rachel: so I could...

Larry: like I said, you don't see they guy with the butterfly net.

Rachel: (laugh) yeah ... umm

Larry: ... or the serial killer or whatever

Rachel: I know! no but just, you miss out on so much that's around you. I mean especially up here we are so lucky to be surrounded by so much but I feel like no one, nobody really notices or pays attention anymore. I think on one hand because its day to day, you see it every day so you loose that sense of wonder and then there's also the you know, you rush through life on a day to day basis and don't really stop

Larry: right and you can revitalize that sense of wonder its like, well you always, I mean you know, since you a little kid, you've been in oak woodlands, you have seen oak woodlands before but maybe you haven't noticed the caterpillars that are chewing on the leaf because you never bothered to look that close or you didn't see the butterfly flying around.

Rachel: yeah, yeah ... I guess its just getting people to slow down and pay attention again and all...

Larry: yeah, for example that black swallowtail that came by, its right there, do you see it?

Rachel: yeah...

Larry: that's a female and what's she doing is going to just the smallest leaves cause they are the most tender with the less toxins in them and she's laying her eggs on that. she, that species the papilio swallowtail only feeds, the larvae, the caterpillar, only feed on that one plant

Rachel: ahhh

Larry: and then the flowers are are pollinated, not by the butterfly but by little gnats and they are trap flowers

Rachel: hmmm
Larry: so the little gnats go in there and they can't get out so the flower eventually lets them out after they dusted the pollen and then they go fly out and eat another flower and that's how they pollinate the plants and the the caterpillars wind up being like that big (demonstrates with hand) and they are black with these orange protuberances on them, they are really weird looking little caterpillars, they are really cool... (pause) but anyway there are all kinds of stuff going on like that

Rachel: yeah

Larry: when we planted the plant at first we, the butterflies, they weren't interested, they would come and look at it... it wasn't big enough.

Rachel: umm hmm

Larry: and it had to reach about half the size you see now (points to bush) before the butterflies would thought that is was worthy

Rachel: hmm... umm

Larry: and they come find us, the females are just flying around and they're, they're picking up the smell, "oh there's, the host plant is somewhere around here" and they track it down and there's no, there's nothing that she can drink from there, so she's gotta get her nectar somewhere else...

Rachel: (clears throat)

Larry: ... any way, so I mean very plant has different critters that are tied in to it in different ways

Rachel: yeah ... so is there anything else you would like to add about the preserve that you think we haven't gone over yet?

Larry: I I think we have pretty much covered just about the gist of it, but it is a fascinating place so I know you , I I could have spent my entire life there

Rachel: yeah

Larry: easily

Rachel: yeah , so its kind of like whenever you get to go back its a happy...

Larry: yeah

Rachel: ok, well I think we are done.
Larry: ok.

-machine turns off-