

SALVATION IN STEWARDSHIP: EXPLORING THE RHETORIC
OF LAND ETHICS

by

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ABSTRACT

Using contemporary rhetorical theory of ethos as place, this paper explores the environmental rhetoric of Aldo Leopold, Wallace Stegner, and Annie Proulx, in an effort to locate effective rhetorical appeals to aid in bridging the gap that currently exists in the discourses of environmental politics and ethics. In an effort to locate a rhetorical common ground for the ethical consideration of the environment, this study presupposes that rhetoric shapes our view of responsibility, and that a land ethic shapes our view of what it means to be good stewards of the land. This paper hopes to situate a classic, yet renewed discourse of stewardship-based rhetoric that is ignited on a personal level through imaginative exercises toward a “place,” within which environmental discourse may be effectively reconciled. Within this place, all users of rhetoric are equal and dependent on the other to develop and implement real solutions toward the ethical treatment of our environment, its resources, and each other.

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INTRODUCTION

The environmental struggle of the 21st Century is an ever-changing battle between economic and political factions, and this is nothing new. From the beginning of civilization, humans have adopted powerful biases towards nature. Out of the pure need to survive, many cultures worshiped nature, praying for the right to live another day. As groups of people began to settle into villages and cities, however, as Roderick Nash argues, they “developed an ecological superiority complex, and bet our evolutionary future on the idea of controlling nature” (xii). The belief in man’s dominion over nature, as Daniel Payne contends, supported a worldview that is an “anthropocentric one that sees the earth as a virtually limitless storehouse from which humankind can extract resources and where it can dispose of waste and alter the landscape with little concern for the ways in which these actions will affect the local and global environment” (2).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the anthropocentric views of Americans would begin to be challenged by scientists and literary figures. By the beginning of the twentieth century, a movement toward conservation was well under way with the central tenants being “the protection, management, and controlled use of natural resources” (Payne 5). The leaders of this movement were Gilford Pinchot and John Muir, both of whom advocated valiantly for the rights of nature. Further, both men argued against what Roderick Nash would later label the “Myth of the Garden,” which “embedded into

Western thought the idea that wilderness and paradise were both physical and spiritual opposites” (Nash 15). The myth of the garden was rooted in Genesis 1:28, in which God says to man, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it” (NASB). It is argued that man’s anthropocentric view of nature was initiated by this verse, and, in the mid-nineteenth century, produced the mistaken belief that the American wilderness was the second coming of the Garden of Eden (Nash 25). As David Cassuto points out, the mistaken belief led to well-intentioned notions, such as the discourses of “Manifest Destiny” and the “American Dream,” and the rhetorical assertion that “the rain would follow the plow” (7-11). These ideas, as Pete Gunter and Max Oelschlaeger explain, led to a “frontier mythology” that puts forth the notion that “nature’s bounty is unlimited, virtually free for the taking,” an idea that will be discussed at length in the following chapters (iv). It quickly became apparent to environmental advocates that these ideas would prove to be unsustainable, which prompted a search for new theories for how Americans should interact with and develop their environmental resources.

In searching for new theories from the myths above, Pinchot and Muir would eventually find themselves divided. Pinchot argued for the management of natural resources based on ethical and economic grounds, which sparked a movement that still holds the “Conservationist” moniker to this day (Payne 5). Muir, on the other hand, began a new movement that would come to be known as “Preservationism,” a discourse that calls for the complete protection of specific natural areas, regardless of their future usefulness as economic resources (6). Due to the opposing views of these two movements, the rhetoric of the frontier mythology “lingers on in the belief that economy and ecology, or jobs and the environment, are at odds” (Gunter and Oelschlaeger iv).

Another resulting effect of these competing movements is that the anthropocentric view of many Americans has changed to a more biocentric view of the relationship between humans and nature. Arguably, the shift from anthropocentric to biocentric beliefs can be attributed to nature writers, who set out to “combine esthetic, ecological, economic, and ethical rationales into a persuasive polemic for political change” (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 2). Pinchot and Muir, as well as the writers studied in this thesis, have accomplished much in the way of changing the paradigm of environmental thought on the national political stage. This change in thought has resulted in environmental policies intended to protect the environment while simultaneously promoting economical profit. The victories of environmental advocates, though, have not been easily won, and are not so firmly engrained in the environmental ontology of the general public as to be considered controlling. In fact, those who oppose environmental reform have made strides in political discourse in recent times, serving as a reminder, as Daniel Payne cautions, “that political victories can be ephemeral and that the struggle for public opinion and political influence is unrelenting” (4).

The political back-and-forth on the national stage has resulted in fragmented beliefs within the populace of many localities. With a general understanding of the environment’s critical role in our everyday lives and of the economic implications that follow, it is relatively easy to understand why disparity as to how to allocate environmental resources exists across local, regional, and national levels of American society. To an outsider to the environmental debate, a member of the general public who is largely uninterested, the arguments seem little more than petty bickering between extremists on either side of an elitist fence (Nash 343). To those involved in politics,

jading political and economic interests create impenetrable barriers to meaningful policy, much less change (Cassuto 131). For a student attempting to understand the multitude of issues that plague environmental actions and policy, the search for truth and answers becomes exhausting at best, and overwhelming to a point of inertia, at worst. The most discouraging result of the political back-and-forth is the near abolition of an environmental ethic. In American politics, there is not an apparent common ground for reasoned discussion of ethical environmental action, in which opposing viewpoints can be heard, debated, and reconciled.

In fact, the struggle over how to treat our environment creates a rhetorical platform within politics on which the very definition of what nature *is* remains debatable (Cassuto 28). The dichotomy of definitions posited by opposing political powers has sparked a resurgent demand for a renewed and refreshed lexicon with which the discourse of environmental debate can be reconciled. The achievement of a renewed lexicon will require the study of environmental writing to locate a rhetorical common ground on which all facets of the environmental debate can be reasonably discussed and resolved. The location of a rhetorical common ground is not merely aspirational, as M. Killingsworth and Jacqueline Palmer contend; it is absolutely necessary if rhetoricians hope to “win the favor of the mass public by creating language that stimulates first consent and then identification” of an ethic that will affect positive change for the future of the natural environment and humankind (25). Essential to locating a common ground is the characterization of the natural environment as having intrinsic value beyond human-centered, anthropocentric understanding. This requires an ethical view of the environment that is centered on nature and considers factors “other than human needs and

desires” (Payne 3). Coming to a biocentric view necessitates that human ethics be extended to the land. Simply put, the environment must be considered relationally, just as one would consider person-to-person or person-to-community relationships.

In an effort to locate a rhetorical common ground for the ethical consideration of the environment, this study presupposes that rhetoric shapes our view of responsibility, and that a land ethic shapes our view of what it means to be good stewards of the land. The purpose of this thesis is two-fold: 1) to explore the environmental rhetoric of three authors who have made major contributions to the discourse of American environmentalism; and 2) to situate a classic, yet renewed discourse of stewardship-based rhetoric that is ignited on a personal level through imaginative exercises toward a “place,” within which environmental discourse may be effectively reconciled. Within this rhetorical place, all users of rhetoric are equal and dependent on the other to develop and implement real solutions toward the ethical treatment of our natural environment, its resources, and each other.

This study is necessary because, hopefully, it will add to a movement toward restoring ethical behavior toward the natural environment. It hopes to inform environmental discourse by highlighting writers who were effective in changing the general perceptions of people toward the natural environment. The exploration of environmental rhetoric is important because the doxa of environmentalism are flawed. Doxa are "assertions about the way things are—what exists, what human nature is, how the world operates" (Crowley qtd. In Holiday 391.) As Judy Holiday explains, such assertions "become naturalized and internalized as real," producing "social norms through language and practice" (391). Rhetorical study is therefore important as a way to

understand how arguments and discourse have shaped and disrupted realities. Further, Holiday suggests, this understanding helps us see where and how we might intervene in order "to transform 'the given' into 'the possible'" (391).

This study explores the work of three authors, whose environmental rhetoric has challenged doxa toward a new "possible"—a new environmental ethic. Aldo Leopold, Wallace Stegner, and Annie Proulx are each well-respected writers that have taken on the task of addressing what they see as a fundamental problem within the existing environmental discursive system: a lack of ethical treatment towards the land on which they live, stemming from an unethical treatment of each other as people. Leopold, a scientist by profession, is generally considered to have laid the foundation for American environmental discourse in the 20th century. In his book, *A Sand County Almanac* (1946), he created and called for new ethical metaphors to expand our understanding of the environment as a reciprocal system in which humans are a part, but not central. Stegner, arguably the preeminent creative writing professor of the 20th century, took up Leopold's call for new metaphors in attempting to redefine traditional perceptions of the American West through many fictional and non-fictional works. Notably, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian* (1954), inspired a few prominent politicians, which, in part, aided in the creation of the "Wilderness Act of 1964" and several environmental policies affecting the West. Proulx, as the author of several highly acclaimed novels and short stories, is known for her relentless research into the locales on which she writes. She has a gift of capturing the essence of a place and its people, however outlandishly humorous they may seem. Further, she oftentimes broaches controversial topics or themes that are destructive to the place and people in an effort to provoke meaningful thought. In her novel, *That*

Old Ace in the Hole (2002), Proulx posits an environmental metaphor that follows the formula and language of Leopold and Stegner's stylistic devices as a saving grace to a destitute, fictional locale.'

These authors, I argue, work "beyond simplistic or modernist definitions of ethos as individual 'character,'" and emphasize the "notion that location underwrites all rhetorical situations" (389). They are able to communicate compelling solutions about a divisive subject because they not only "acknowledge and attend to their ethos," but have acute knowledge of the communities and factors that compose their ethos. All three writers situate themselves within an existing discursive system, acknowledging the existing social context and structures that inheres "normative values," which legitimize who can exercise agency (392). From within this system, they exercise the agency to introduce new ethical assertions, "expand[ing] our repertoires of what there is to know and imagine, especially with respect to enlarging our perceptions of what constitutes ethical knowledge" (388). They create environmentally ethical metaphors, for example, that point toward a sustainable ecological future, and in doing so, they acknowledge "collectively invented future" that may exceed his or her current inventional reach (398).

In the case of environmental ethics, Leopold's call for a renewed paradigm provides, not only the ethic, but also powerful metaphors that stretch the bounds of how we imagine the environment in science, literature, and everyday life. Stegner, through his challenge of "eastern" perception, is the undisputed champion of the West. He set the standard for western-centric metaphors that focus, largely, on creating citizens to match the scenery of an arid land. He challenged an entire region rethink the beauty of the West toward the resurgence of a region that once inspired the entire nation. Finally, in *That*

Old Ace in the Hole, Proulx focuses on a singular locale to put forth a workable metaphor to save a particular place. She extends the progression of environmental discourse to offer a place hope, an alternative to the current state of circular destruction. ...

The definition of ethos as place, according to Julia T. Woods, gives the central tenant of rhetoric the ability to include a “range of voices and experiences and perspectives” from the speaker’s community into the common discourse (qtd. in Holiday 389). Ethos, from this assessment, is the result of an individual’s relationship with the community that he is addressing. This “social” nature of ethos expands the character of the speaker to the character of a place, increasing the speaker’s authority because “location underwrites all rhetorical situations” (Holiday 389). The significance of this revelation becomes apparent when exploring the works of Leopold, Stegner, and Proulx because “those who would work to create a better world must do so within discursive social systems that originate prior to themselves and that will exceed themselves” (Holiday 393). As discussed above, all three writers have mastered the concept of targeting their rhetoric towards existing discursive systems. Further, all three writers submitted their ethical discourse into a system that, inherently, will out grow their rhetorical impact, which invites new imaginative exercises by those that follow. The circular understanding of ethos exemplifies the useful wisdom of approaching rhetorical ethos in this manner; it always leaves ethos incomplete, thus, in constant search of invention.

Through their various works, all three writer’s accomplished the arduous task of locating a “place” for environmental discourse that not only recognizes and respects what is concerning to a particular place, but imagines what is possible by challenging

environmental doxa through rhetorical invention. This is extremely important because ethical knowledge challenges the ethos of a place, which, if effective, eventually changes the doxa. Therefore, as will become apparent, it can be said that each of these authors utilizes the present social norms of a place as the core ingredients of inventing new ethical knowledge to apply to and reshape that place, not to make the place something that it is not.

In inventing new ethical knowledge using the present social norms as the core ingredients, each author gains credibility by addressing a place through its own ethos and is, therefore, able to “create” a new discursive place that changes the ethical knowledge of that place for the better using imaginative rhetoric. More importantly, in creating a new discursive place for their particular area of influence, each author is able to locate a common ground that could be useful in bridging the gap between conservationists and preservationist’s ideologies. After all, the purpose of good rhetorical practice is to enable us to find common ground for genuine discussion. Expanding the ethical knowledge of a place is important because it promotes “respectful communicative relationships,” and the desire to “consider others’ needs and desires” (Holiday 401). The study of rhetoric is crucial to building relationships because it expands people’s understanding of “themselves in relation to others, the interrelationship between location and learning, and ethos as always incomplete, framed, and interested” (403).

Understanding the interrelationship between others, and location and learning, is critical because it informs our view of ethics. In their book *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*, M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer

posit that, “[t]he difficulties of the environmental dilemma are compounded because the ethical problem issues from a crucial epistemological problem--humankind’s ‘alienation from nature’” via civilized control over it (4). Humankind’s alienation from nature is of critical importance because the ethical domain of person-to-person and person-to-community relationships “overlap into” and come to depend upon the relationship between a person and the environment (4). This ethical dilemma between people and the environment is significant because a personal perspective of human interaction with the environment affects relationships between people, communities, and the world at large.

In the environmental debate, the opposing voices have contrasting definitions of ethics concerning the environment, which has created a large gap between the two. While one side holds that nature is merely a conglomeration of resources for human use, the other side treats humans as an muddled annoyance to natural history; and neither side has been willing to give ground to the other (Killingsworth and Palmer 4). These attitudes have created an ineffective. The authors of this study, particularly, utilize invention through metaphors to ignite their audience to imagine themselves within an ethical place. Proulx, because the work studied is fictional, employs invention to create characters. The most effective character that she creates, from an environmental ethics standpoint, is Ace Crouch. Within Ace, Proulx forms a character through which the audience is able to imagine the place renewed. Further, and not likely by coincidence, Ace stands as the Leopold of Proulx’s panhandle, flexing ethical imagination towards restoration and sustainability.

In utilizing the rhetorical tools of ethos as place, the authors studied herein have gone far in creating ethos’ that invite ethical community involvement by building upon

the cultural discourses already in place. As will be discussed later, their ability to do so is of the greatest importance because of the fractured nature of ethical attitudes and people's regard for the community of the environment. These fractures must be banded together in order to correct class distinctions, environmental erosion, and economic disparity (Killingsworth and Palmer 5-7). The discourses of Leopold, Stegner, and Proulx do not replace or answer the political and standardizing rhetorics that are prevalent in American environmental thought. However, a refreshed perspective of these author's works will draw energy and direction toward reconciliation and influence their sense of purpose and relationships to other discourses resulting in ethical revival (266). They have built ethical arguments towards this end, by understanding the spiritual underpinnings and scientific theories of environmental ethics. Their works act as guideposts leading to ethical common ground toward a stewardship that honors the land while bringing economic, physical, and spiritual hope to communities.

As such, the intended consequence of this thesis is to show the expert manipulation of a complex reflexive relationship between the politics and ethics of environmental discourse that is derived by social values through rhetorical invention. Moreover, to show that it is necessary and possible to locate places for ethical discourse within all arenas of public discourse, given effective rhetoric through the recognition of logical arguments that honor the culture of a particular place. Most importantly, I hope to show the power of rhetoric in shifting the ethical considerations of people towards a brighter future for the land on which we live, and for ourselves.

THE FOUNDATION OF A DISCOURSE: ALDO LEOPOLD'S RHETORICAL INFLUENCE ON LAND ETHIC

Aldo Leopold (1887-1948) is widely acknowledged as the father of wildlife conservation in America. The impact of his research as a scientist has been so far reaching that its effects have been felt in almost every arena of academia – and society as a whole. His works are widely studied in the practical applications of forestry, agriculture, range management, and wildlife management. Given his scientific background, it is perhaps most impressive that his writing has garnered critical respect in the arenas of literature and philosophy. The broad impact of his life's work is due to his excellence in forestry, wildlife management, activism, and teaching. While being highly respected as a teacher and scientist, the factor that sets him apart from the other scientists and teachers of his generation – and places him among the most influential environmental advocates in history – as Wendell Berry contends, is his ability and decision to write in a manner that “does not discard any perspective in order to speak from a different one” (qtd. in Meine xii). Leopold's multifaceted and logical approach in writing “The Land Ethic,” the concluding chapter in his most impactful work, *A Sand County Almanac*, published in 1949, formed the foundation for the discourse of stewardship that dominates environmental theory and places him amongst the great environmental writers of American history.

A Sand County Almanac is a seminal work of literature because within it Leopold submits the revolutionary concept of “The Land Ethic,” defining a reciprocal relationship between man and the land that sustains him. Further, it is within “The Land Ethic,” that Leopold invents a new ethical discourse that builds upon a combination of conservationists and preservationist’s principles. In his essay “Shades of Grey,” Bob Budd credits Leopold’s ethic with trying to “teach us to understand systems: to see ourselves as part of a greater world” through an ethical lens (112). Leopold was a man whose life and writings were a living example for how to move through the land and how to live with it. Stephen Frese, a historian, explains that Leopold’s “writings present an eloquent plea for the development of what he called ‘the land ethic’—the belief that although people have the right to use the bounty of the land, they must ‘limit freedom of action in the struggle for existence’ while accepting the responsibility to treat the soils, waters, plants, and animals in ways that restore and nurture their well-being” (99). While it is a tall order to ask a people to limit “freedom of action” on their land, “Leopold was driven by the sheer weight of his experience to the realization that only a combination of personal responsibility, scientific knowledge, and hard-won wisdom can sustain the land, forests, and the people who inhabit them” (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 2).

More importantly to this paper, “The Land Ethic” is a perfect example of the power of rhetoric in influencing society’s perceptions towards a meaningful and lasting change in land use. In “The Land Ethic” Leopold located an ethos of environmental ethics that has forever changed the doxa of environmental rhetoric. In the decades that followed the posthumous publication of *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949, “The Land Ethic” gained approval from “environmentalists and radical greens alike, [and] became

central to diverse environmental discourses with sometimes conflicting approaches and ends” (Gabrielson and Cawley 611). He constructed this ethical ideal through invention that has become “naturalized” and circulated many times over within various environmental discourses (Holiday 391). The pinnacle work of Leopold’s career is an authoritative, competent, thoughtful, and honest appeal to society for the birth and nurturing of an “ecological conscience” by creating an ethos for a discourse of patience and enlightened introspection.

The environmental stance Leopold would eventually adopt placed him between the increasingly politically and economically charged conservation/utilitarian movement of Gifford Pinchot – among other notables – and the leave-it-be mentality of John Muir’s preservationist movement; which has most informed the modern day environmental movement. In short (by any standard), Pinchot actively endorsed the “wise” extraction of natural resources – lumber, water, minerals, fossil fuels – and the development of wild habitats with the support of the federal government, while Muir campaigned for the government’s protection against such actions in all wilderness areas. While it has been the followers of John Muir's preservationist rhetoric that have furthered many of Leopold's ideas, Leopold’s solution for the ethical treatment of land does not track exactly with Muir's movement. In fact, Leopold pragmatically states that “A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management, and use of these ‘resources,’ but it does affirm their right to continued existence, and, at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state” (204). Leopold understood that it was an unrealistic goal for the government to stop all development in “wilderness areas,” but sought to promote responsible people living with the environment to interact with the living and breathing

biotic community including use and development. His vision of responsible stewards living with wilderness was developed through years of observing the conflict between the philosophies of conservationism (Pinchot) and preservationism (Muir).

Leopold wrote *A Sand County Almanac* well after Muir's death in 1914, but, as Leopold's biographer Curt Meine points out, his ethical framework for the treatment of land began to be shaped during his time at the Yale School of Forestry and his subsequent assignment to New Mexico during the height of the Pinchot/Muir feud between 1904 and 1914 (78). As a scientist, Leopold understood the importance of land as a valuable resource; but, as a lover of the land, he understood that land was equally, if not more, valuable for its intrinsic ecological and aesthetic value. In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold explains that, "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect, [...] that land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics" (viii-ix). Leopold's idea of community comes from the intertwining of conservationist and preservationist principles, which Leopold struggled with, as is apparent in "Thinking Like a Mountain," until he came to form the idea of a land ethic for himself (129). In large part, Leopold's dichotomy in thought is because he held both "a Muir-like appreciation of nature and a Pinchot-like intent to use nature wisely" (Meine 78).

That is not to reduce Leopold's stance on land ethics to a mere middle ground between the two opposing parties, but a balance between and, arguably, radical improvement of both philosophies. Community, as Leopold envisioned it, is concurrently preserving and using our environment. Leopold argues that "a system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided," because it

“assumes that the economic parts of the biotic clock will function without the uneconomic parts” (214). This statement inherently implies that a system based solely on preservation is also not practicable. As Wendell Berry points out, it is possible to understand “Leopold’s concern for the welfare of the land as divisible to a concern, on the one hand, for the preservation of substantial tracts of wilderness in as many regions as possible, and a concern, on the other hand, for the maintenance of health [...] in the much greater area of the economic landscapes” (qtd. in Meine xiii). Arguably then, it is Leopold’s hope to see humans living on and with the land while using what is necessary for physical survival in a responsible manner. If done ethically, all that is valuable about the land will be preserved for future generations. Appealing to our natural instinct to protect what we hold dear, Leopold imagines a place that is realistically achievable by men and women concerned with intrinsic character.

In his book, *Voices in the Wilderness: American Nature Writing and Environmental Politics*, noted environmental advocate Daniel Payne defines conservation as the “protection, management, and controlled use of natural resources,” and preservation as the “protection of specific areas unconnected with their future usefulness as economic resources” (5-6). As a forester in the early 20th century, Leopold understood the benefits and drawbacks of both viewpoints; therefore, he rationally submitted that Americans should live in community with the land to preserve and responsibly use what is left of the wilderness, while each “private owner” takes accountability upon themselves to ethically steward the environment with which he interacts (Leopold 214). Promoting the postmodern ethical ideal of “inclusion” before postmodernism existed, Leopold postulated it would take a community of politicians, economists, and scientists, along

with those who believe in the moral, spiritual, and aesthetic power of wilderness, to commit to live in community with each other in order to have a prosperous future for all living things (Holiday 395). “This synthesis of the logic of a scientist with the ethical and aesthetic sensitivity of a Romantic,” as Roderick Nash argues, “was effective armament for the defense of wilderness” (182).

Leopold, forming a synthesis of conservationist and preservationist ideals, asked that people from all walks of life ethically communicate to each other with “love and respect,” and extend that communication to the land (223). He argues in “The Land Ethic” that, “Obligations [to the land] have no meaning without conscience, and the problem we face is the extension of the social conscience from people to land” (209). The extension of a social conscience between humans to the land would ideally build a community in which humans could find peaceful sanctity in the wilderness while using its resources responsibly for the betterment of society at large. Leopold’s logic acknowledges an environmental ethic as the only means through which humans can obtain a responsible view of the natural environment, a view that recognizes our obligation to cultivate the land with its best interests in mind. Further, it is a view that requires a new discourse located within the current doxa, which he provides through his stewardship-based rhetoric that relies on social conscience. His assertions pursue a shift in doxa from dominion to relationship. He pursues this through a logical argument that embraces an emotional appeal for respecting the land. Having a conscious realization of the value of land as both economically and intrinsically beneficial, Leopold hopes that his audience will understand that they have an ethical obligation to “cultivate and keep” the land as God commands Adam in Genesis 2:15. To see land as a physical, spiritual, and

emotional entity that does much more for our culture than merely being a source of physical and economic sustenance is to be conscious of its true ecological value and will hopefully lead to the land being in fullest partnership with the human community. Ethically working with the land to form "community," instead of forcing it to conform to our requirements, is the only way to create a fully sustainable and profitable relationship; this is the meaning of what Leopold coined, "The Land Ethic."

In his call for a land ethic, Leopold insists that people should explore and utilize all of the benefits that the environment has to offer for its extrinsic qualities, but that there should also be sections of wilderness left alone to be studied for its intrinsic values and the "assertion of rights for nonhuman nature" (Gabrielson and Cawley 611). He does not expect people who live in the remnants of the wilderness to pick up and leave, nor does he ask that people stay out of the wilderness that is left; he in fact makes the argument for people to remain and enjoy the wilderness while learning to live with it. His insistence for this stance creates a dichotomy of thought that exemplifies his internal struggle between conservation and preservation. Furthering his line of reasoning, Leopold argues for the *conservation* of the remaining wilderness through his promotion of recreation, science, and the sanctity of wildlife in the wilderness. He explains that, "Wilderness areas are first of all a series of sanctuaries for the primitive arts of wilderness travel" (Leopold 193). In positioning wilderness as a safe haven, a place of tranquil silence where meditation is welcomed, Leopold evokes an emotional response to *preserve* wilderness as a place to run to in times of need or distress. Like a beautifully appointed tabernacle or cathedral, wilderness commands awe and respect. There are rules when walking through a historic church. In the same way, there are boundaries to

follow when traveling through the wilderness. The rules and boundaries aren't there just to protect the historical or physical value of the structure, but to preserve what the structure represents: the presence of something greater than ourselves. One can use the church and even depend on it and its members in times of distress, but abusing it cuts off the benefits of future parishioners. Wilderness travel, he argues, is essential to the sanity of man, who is inherently driven to nature in the search for the fulfillment of the ancient desires, and thus, worth saving. To a spiritual person his phrasing begs the question, what is more deserving of conserving: a building made by men to honor the creator, or the creation made by the creator?

Another reason that Leopold argues to preserve wilderness is for science to have it as a "base datum of normality, a picture of how healthy land maintains itself as an organism" in order to practice the "science of land health" rather than "land doctoring" (196). He explains that "in many cases we literally do not know how good a performance to expect of healthy land unless we have a wild area for comparison with sick ones," and thus should not make assumptions as to how to treat the symptoms of unhealthy land until we can treat the cause of the symptoms (197). Rhetorically, Leopold's position as a respected scientist gives him the agency to make such a blunt argument without further explanation because he "lived" it throughout his career and personal life, and was a witness to the benefits of observing wilderness. His agency grants him authority to define who can participate in the discourse (Holiday 392). Here, he opens the discourse to scientist, but in his land ethic he opens it to the environment.

He finally argues for the conservation and preservation of wilderness for the perpetuation of the shrinking masses of wildlife whose natural habitats have become

increasingly insufficient. He makes an appeal for ecological health and biodiversity simply because there cannot be one without the other. While many people have argued that shrinking bear and wolf populations (now slowly being reintroduced) are acceptable and natural, Leopold holds that we should understand that “relics of the Old West, [the bear and wolf] add meaning and value to the new” (199). He understands that enthusiasm for this idea will require a “long view of conservation, and a historical perspective,” but finds that in the end it will help to provide the understanding that “raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise” (199-201). Obtaining a historical, scientific perspective is a theme repeated throughout Leopold’s writing. Its effectiveness lies in the nostalgic emotions that history provokes, as well as the logical implications of learning from the past to avoid repeating misguided blunders. Leopold promotes community with the environment as our only option for long-term survival; meaning that we must restrain ourselves from interfering too much with the environment’s natural processes towards restoration in order to allow for our existence.

Humanity's and the environment’s long-term existence is the central force driving Leopold’s passion to develop and instill a “land ethic” into society that is “an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity” (203). Bob Budd best encapsulates Leopold’s ideal by insisting that, “The fate of landscapes ultimately lies in the hands of people on the land, [...] only when we strive to learn and share, rather than lecture and control, will we find our ability to care for land enhanced and expanded” (113). One could infer in reading Budd’s statement that Leopold’s ethic is anthropocentric, an approach widely debated in modern environmentalism; and, a characterization that many of Leopold’s champions would reject. Yet, if Leopold’s land ethic is applied to everyday

interactions with the environment, then humans will truly be able to live as one with the environment, and reap the benefits of the land for future generations. In that sense, of making life sustainably better for humans, Leopold's ethic is arguably anthropocentric. Leopold's point, though, is that by becoming stewards of the land as a whole people, we can build a stronger biotic community and a stronger society; which bodes well for all life forms.

To that end, Leopold endeavors to exercise the power of rhetoric to influence society's perceptions of a meaningful and lasting change in land use through "The Land Ethic." In this essay, Leopold sets out to define the politics and ethics of environmental discourse through rhetorical invention (Holiday 388). He introduces his "land ethic" by comparing an act of Odysseus to the actions of modern society to portray the difference between property and companion, and how ethics have evolved over time. He begins, "When god-like Odysseus returned from the wars in Troy, he hanged all on one rope a dozen slave-girls of his household whom he suspected of misbehavior during his absence" (201). For the ancient Greek, the slave-girls were property, thus, expendable and replaceable. Today, we recognize that slavery and mass murder are wrong; in the same manner, Leopold is arguing that land is not expendable, but a result of the lingering myth that man possesses dominative control over it. For Odysseus, it was permissible for him to hang his slave girls based on the ethical structure of his day. The slave-girls were his property, and he had the authority to do with his property what he pleased. Because Odysseus had the right, he hanged his slave-girls rather than spend the time and effort to prove their innocence or to correct the situation because it was more efficient and expedient. It is apparent that Leopold uses this example to show that "the disposal of

property was then, as now, a matter of expediency, not of right and wrong” (201). Then, as now, people react based on what is immediately advantageous, rather than what is ethically right. By analogy, Leopold is illustrating how ethical structures evolve over time, just as slavery had gone from generally acceptable to outrageously inhumane. Responding to the popular view of the time that Nature was created by God merely for its economic and physical benefit to man, Leopold’s introduction ultimately concludes that our perspective of land should not continue to hold to a traditional “Abrahamic” concept of dominion. Further, that as our ethical structure towards slavery has transformed, so should our structure of ethics towards the land rather than holding fast to the incorrect interpretation of Genesis 1:28 in which God give’s dominion over the earth to man.

In order to change the modern-day ethical structure, Leopold understood that there must first be the development of rhetoric that reshapes our imagination, and informs a broad audience of the importance of stewarding the biotic community. For his arguments against expediency and unfruitful land practices to transform, Leopold purposely pleads his case to a broad range of people, but especially to “those who cherish the land most deeply [...] those who work with its resources directly and daily” (Killingsworth and Palmer 58). He understood, as Daniel Payne argues, that his audience is “one that would recognize and appreciate his down-to-earth rhetoric far more than it would the ‘assumptions and paradigms’ of academic philosophers” (125). Considering this insight, Leopold interrupted the politically charged discourse of environmental conservation to submit a clearly stated call for social change in the perception of the environment’s worth. In “Wilderness,” a section of *A Sand County Almanac*, this call

can easily be found in Leopold's use of a laborer's lexicon to employ the ethos of a laborer and the pathos of sentiment:

To the laborer in the sweat of his labor, the raw stuff on his anvil is an adversary to be conquered. So was wilderness an adversary to the pioneer. But to the laborer in repose, able for the moment to cast a philosophical eye on his world, that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life. (188)

This didactic selection of prose – among many others – superficially appeals to laborers who know the “sweat” that rolls over their face as they hammer on an “anvil” in the vacillating climates of America to build a better future for all people who are in pursuit of the “American Dream.” However, through this metaphor, Leopold encourages his audience to slow down and think about how wilderness is used and unappreciatively abused. This selection also displays “a shrewd rhetorical move [...] that demonstrates his insight into the historical motives for seeking environmental amenities” (Killingsworth and Palmer 58). By addressing the “laborer in repose,” Leopold connects the laborer's ability to connect with the environment as “nature lover,” without losing his/her identity as a worker. His positioning of the laborer in the act of reflection “treats the laborer and the nature lover not as two distinct characters that represent the opposing sides in a debate, but rather as two moods of one and the same character, a universalized human character” (58). Leopold's move from individuality to a universalized character is highly effective because most readers respond to it with “nostalgic longing” (59). Leopold's appeal to the nostalgic longing refers back to the romance of America's frontier days, when explorers and settlers set out across the untamed wilderness to carve out a new

America, appealing also to a sense of pride in country. Patriotic pride of place resounds within most of Leopold's audience, beckoning for them to cherish nature as part of an American identity that is not particular to one set of society.

Along with finding a broadly acceptable rhetorical lexicon, Leopold employed the power of suggestion in building accessibility and trust between himself and his audience. I agree with Killingsworth and Palmer's contention that, "Leopold's art lies in his suggestiveness, his technique of enfolding short but vivid hints of fuller reasoning within a highly condensed passage that communicates an overall feeling rather than an enumeration of particular points" (59). That's not to say that Leopold does not particularly define the terms that he uses, as he does when he states that, "An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation of social from anti-social conduct" (Leopold 202). However, his ability to seamlessly transition from scientifically technical language to literary devices such as suggestive metaphors highlights the effective "art" to which Killingsworth and Palmer refer. Regardless of which technique he employs, Leopold's ethic is a "mode of guidance" which defines the parameters within which the capability to make informed decisions concerning the treatment of other people and the biotic community is found (203). The rhetorical tight rope that Leopold walks offers scholars and policy makers a scientifically sound foundational ethic to create more definable goals for the future of land use, while his broad lexicon and plain-language allow his ideas to remain accessible to a general audience.

Pursuing the idea of rhetorical suggestiveness further, I look to a more literary and personally involved telling of Leopold's experience with wolves in "Thinking Like a

Mountain,” a short and brutally honest appeal for internal introspection. Often cited as evidence of Leopold as an eco-centric thinker, the honesty of “Thinking Like a Mountain” is in Leopold’s candid telling of his own failings as a steward of the biotic community early in his career with the U.S. Forestry Service. From 1911 until 1924, Leopold was stationed in various parts of New Mexico. For the majority of these years, he adamantly led an effort to exterminate deer-eating predators in an attempt to create revenue for local and federal governments. He argued that killing wolves, bears, and panthers would increase game populations, producing “a specific number of new hunters per number of new deer, which at x dollars per hunter would amount to x-plus dollars of additional revenue per county per year. To increase the number of huntable deer [...] it would be necessary to offer a bounty on the ‘varmint’ (wolves, bears, panthers) that eat huntable game” (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 4). This logic proved attractive to sportsman politicians and economists, but within two decades he would realize his error in judgment and begin campaigning for the re-introduction of the “varmint.” In *Texas Land Ethics*, Pete Gunter and Max Oelschlaeger ask a question in Leopold’s defense, “Who would have thought that shooting a wolf would kill a fish?” (5). Their question insinuates the phenomenon that Leopold began to observe, that is, “the interdependence of all living things which shared an environment” (Nash 192). Within a few years of beginning the extirpation of predators, Leopold began to notice abnormalities in deer herds and in the landscape. He wrote, “I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anemic destitute, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. Such a mountain looks as if someone had given God a new pruning shears, and forbidden Him all other exercises” (Leopold 130-132). This passage evokes

an emotional response of compassion for the plants and trees, which is given a logical foundation by his observation as a scientist. The passivity in this observation highlights an underlying feeling of regret resulting from Leopold's propagation of the policies that led to such destruction.

The effects of the increasing number of deer not only destroyed vegetation, but the soils that held them, and the wildlife that depend on them. As Gunter and Oelschlaeger explain, the dilapidated trees, "in turn, loosened their grip on soil already denuded of substory plants; water-absorbing soils, leafmulch, subsoils, and gravels eroded downhill, exposing bare rock, increasing flooding, and silting once pristine creeks and rivers; fish populations quickly declined" (5). The extermination of wolves, bears, and panthers had actually began a destructive cycle within the whole biotic community that no one, especially Leopold, foresaw. Therefore, "without excuse, but also without excessive guilt," (Finch xxi – intro. to *Almanac*) Leopold wrote "Thinking Like a Mountain" in a rhetorically strategic move to avoid positioning himself as being "above other men," as advised by his former student, Albert Hochbaum (qtd. in Payne 129). In being honest about his former mis-dealings, Leopold opened himself to scrutiny, but more importantly, provided his audience an example of what it is to turn from our ecological sins – no matter how well intentioned they are – and instead investing in the land's restoration; which becomes our redemption.

The authority of "Thinking Like a Mountain" is in Leopold's use of metaphor, or literally, "carrying something from one place to another" (Kennedy 222). To the majestic mountain, he transfers the human abilities of hearing, feeling, and discernment in order to reveal the powerful truths that nature has to teach us. Like a human – only more

intuitively, the mountain “can listen objectively to the howl of a wolf,” understanding that the wolf is integral to the protection and fertility of all life forms that depend on the mountain’s resources (Leopold 129). To “think like a mountain” is to “think in the long run: not just for a year, and, in many contexts, not just for a generation” (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 8). In the short run, the extirpation of wolves does create a number of new deer and peace-of-mind for cattle ranchers, but in the long run, overly populated deer and cattle herds will ruin the very land that sustains them. Leopold, through the lenses of the mountain, articulates this point by exclaiming:

I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades. (132)

The fear of the mountain is found in the interconnectivity of the whole biosphere. As Gunter and Oelschlaeger explain, “predator affects deer affects tree affects soil affects watershed affects fish, [...] Fish affect birds affect insects affect plants” (8). The mountain realizes that, without its predators, it will lose its vitality, worth, and diversity in terms of a healthy ecosystem. Rhetorically, Leopold is pleading that we empathize with the mountain, for fear of losing the wildness, which represents “the salvation of the world” (Leopold 133). To embrace what the mountain knows about its wolves “is to attempt as fully as possible to understand all of this living web work and to try to structure one’s actions in terms of it” (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 8). Thinking like a mountain is thinking in terms of the “long-run,” requiring that humans change their

measure of success from terms of “safety, prosperity, comfort, [and] long life” for ourselves, to measuring our success in terms of the safety, prosperity, comfort, and long life of the land (Leopold 133). This concept changes the idea of human as head of the biotic community to human as equal partner with soils, animals, and water. The eco-centric metaphor of “Thinking like a Mountain” is Leopold’s rhetorical experiment in the human power of imagination. More than that, the dramatic telling of his wolf encounter acts as an example of the uniquely human ability to see and think beyond our own interests. It is an example of how to use our imagination to think beyond the limitations that have been instilled within us by outdated moral and ethical structures; an example that Leopold desperately wants followed.

Leopold tests the effectiveness of metaphor in his challenge against the conservationist image of the “balance of nature,” with his development of a more comprehensive metaphor: “The Land Pyramid” (214). The land pyramid challenges the “ignorance” of the “balance of nature,” which serves as his precondition to inventing the land pyramid. This image provides his audience with a concrete, universally identifiable shape. The land pyramid, Leopold advises, is composed of layers, chains, and complex circuitry which produces and sustains a “fountain of energy” that works locally and then is “pooled on a world-wide scale” through air and water currents (215-218). The base of the pyramid is the soil (the land) that forms the foundation for the “energy” of life that is conducted upward to the “apex layer, which consists of the larger carnivores” (215). Humans find themselves on the middle layer, dependent upon organisms in the layers above and below for their survival. The “sustained” mechanized circuitry moves energy through a complex web of food chains, such as, “soil-corn-cow-farmer,” with each

species within that chain being linked to a “hundred chains” (215). Chains represent the interconnectivity of the biotic community; wherein, if one link is changed or destroyed, “many other parts must adjust themselves to it” to sustain the movement of energy within the pyramid (216). The overriding point of “The Land Pyramid” is that the land – the bottom layer – is a living, breathing organism that is essential to the success of the biotic community, which determines the success of humankind.

As “The Land Pyramid” demonstrates, the basic premise of Leopold’s land ethic is that man should see himself as being in a reciprocating, communal relationship with the natural environment. It is beneficial for humans to see the natural environment as a partner in life because the ecosystem – land, water, plants, and wildlife – is essential to the survival and expansion of humankind. As history has progressed, humans have gone through cycles of recognizing the extent of their dependency on the environment. The land pyramid, arguably, serves as the clearest marker for Leopold’s leaning toward preservation over conservation. As previously discussed, men and women have seen themselves as conquerors of the land from the earliest recordings of history, appropriating his or her environment to suit his or her needs for food, shelter, and protection, and often abusing it. The abuse inflicted on the land led to the need for conservation, but, as Leopold came to find, “Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land” (Leopold vii). He saw that a deeper change was needed because conservation is still too economic versus ecological. Through an Abrahamic concept of land humans have viewed themselves as conquerors of their environment throughout most of history, though at least some had a healthy respect for the land because they were forced to work with it on a daily basis in order to survive.

The Industrial Revolution, however, created a disconnect between humans and land by giving birth to the age of consumerism; in which going to the grocery store is easier and faster than digging dinner out of the ground. People have dismissed the origins of our growth as a dominate society by taking for granted how “raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise” (200-201). This dismissal, plus our “Abrahamic concept of land,” has created a society that has forgotten, as William Cronon says, to always “be conscious that they are part of the natural world, [and] inextricably tied to the ecological systems that sustain their lives” (87).

To address the issues of mis-use and our fledgling view of the environment, Leopold argues that we have to re-position ourselves as “biotic citizens,” and be willing to absorb what the “layers” surrounding us have to teach us (Leopold 223). We must become a society that “reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, [which] in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land” (221). If we can create a society of Leopold’s “laborer in repose,” we can create an ethical relation to land and “examine each question [about land] in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient” (Leopold 224). The challenges inherent in the plight for a biotic community are far too vast for one man to overcome on his own; but, in writing *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold gave us a new discursive lexicon with which to talk about ourselves in relation to the land, and a rhetorical space in which to imagine our great-grandchildren in a sustainable and profitable relationship with the land. More importantly, he gave us metaphors to ponder, expand, and experiment with toward a realistic ethical change in land use and the doxa of environmental action. In order to overcome political and economical pressures to

maintain the current state of the human/land relationship, we have to place ourselves in Leopold's ethical discourse by realizing that "nothing so important as an ethic is ever 'written' [. . .] it evolved in the minds of a thinking community" (225). Therefore, we have to (rhetorically) continue to build upon this base datum of ethics to see our societies' value of land redefined toward a healthy future for the whole biotic community.

THE DOWN-CIRCUIT: THE ETHICAL IMPACT OF WALLACE STEGNER ON THE ARID AMERICAN WEST

Wallace Stegner is arguably one of the most influential American writers of the 20th Century. His audience has grown considerably since his death in 1993, but he was generally ignored outside of academic circles the previous fifty-five years in which he actively wrote. Between 1937 and 1992, Stegner wrote thirty books for which he received more than a dozen nationally recognized awards; nevertheless, the *New York Times* failed to review *The Spectator Bird*, which won the National Book Award for fiction in 1977, or to mention *Angle of Repose*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1972, until after the awards had been given (Packer 220). Notwithstanding the lack of notoriety for his writing, Stegner was very well known and highly respected as a teacher of literature and creative writing. After receiving his B.A. from the University of Utah and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, Stegner went on to teach at the universities of Utah, Wisconsin, and Harvard before accepting a position at Stanford in 1945 (211). Stegner taught at Stanford until his retirement in 1971, choosing to leave partly because of his frustration with students, who in his opinion were getting "progressively brighter and worse-educated, so that they need to be told more, and give you more hell while you're telling them" (213). Under Stegner's direction, the Stanford Creative Writing Program produced many of the finest authors of the last century including Wendell Berry, Ken Kesey, Edward Abbey, and Larry McMurtry.

Stegner is, and will continue to be, remembered as an educator and writer; however, his legacy is his influence upon the perception of the western United States as evidenced in nonfiction writing about the West and in the environmental policy of the West. Stegner exemplifies what Holiday argues when she contends that, “those who would work to create a better world must do so within the discursive social systems that originate prior to themselves and that will exceed themselves” (393). Stegner injected himself into the ethics and politics of the West in order to reinvent how the whole United States perceived the West. One work in particular, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, Stegner's biography of Major John Wesley Powell, caught the attention of two Secretaries of the Interior, Stewart Udall (Kennedy administration) and Bruce Babbitt (Clinton administration). Both Secretaries applied Stegner's range of ideas to their policy writing (Hanson 563). The desire to influence real change in the American environmentalism led Stegner to spend the majority of his career attempting to redefine how people viewed the West in order to end, as he saw it, the gross ill treatment of the land and its resources. Stegner tirelessly tried to bust the mythical frontier ideal that encouraged rugged individualism over cooperation in an effort to see the West restored to what he would eventually coin, “the geography of hope,” through a strict adherence to presenting the most unromanticized vision of the West that he could (Where xxi). Ironically, because of his desire to see the West become the geography of hope, Stegner became the hesitant champion of romantic ideals of what the West could be if the hope of its geography is embraced and nourished by its inhabitants. However, his new romanticism has a very different ethos from the romanticism that broke the West. Building upon the “ignorance” of the mythical frontier, Stegner constructs an ethical ideal through invention that builds

upon and expands Leopold's stewardship-based discourse (Holiday 390). It also shows how ethos' of place are located within "epistemologies encapsulated in language [...]" among competing 'gathering places'" (389). This new romanticism imagines the West through the lens of aridity, instead of through the lens of the lush, green gardens of myth. Along with that, and perhaps more importantly, he gave the West a space to be discussed within the national discourse.

The West that shaped Stegner as a child was the tinder that ignited his passionate hatred for the societal norms that contributed to the West's environmental exploitation in the early twentieth century. The region was constantly being re-defined by "boom-and-busters" who would drain the land of its natural resources before moving on to the next entrepreneurial adventure and a new plot of land. This movement, of which Stegner's father was a part, is directly attributable to Leopold's definition of the Abrahamic concept that land is merely for man's enrichment, giving no value to the land aside from what can be taken from it. As Stegner grew in his understanding of environmental awareness, and in his frustration toward the "boom and bust" mentality of the American Frontiersman, he began writing to encourage ethical decisions with regard to perception, aridity, and personal character. Stegner's attitude toward the myth of the West prompts Gretchen Holstein Schoff to write that, "If there is really such a thing as an ethos of a region, Stegner went very far in shaking out the ingredients--individualism, loneliness, ego, rapacity" (Schoff 40). In other words, his works admonished westerners for the idea of rugged individualism, and, instead, worked to create a new West whose people work together toward sustainability and the rebirth of an inspiring geography through imagination. In step with Leopold, Stegner became an advocate of an environmentalism

that blossomed from “his abiding hope that Americans might eventually learn to live well [...] in their places on the land” (LaDow 275-76).

Stegner’s hope for a sustainable future came from his appreciation of the aesthetics of the West, and the region’s tendency to disrupt violently human ideals of a serene environment. In fact, it is the aesthetics of the land that inspire Stegner’s vision of what an ethical western culture should look like. Aesthetics of the West, according to Stegner, must embrace the land, scale, and aridity of the region. These defining characteristics shape the visual, tactile, and emotional boundaries within which humans must act in order for a reciprocal relationship between the two to work. Interestingly, it is conventional wisdom that the scale and aridity of the land spurred on and perpetuated the myth of the rugged individual (the cowboy) being best suited to survive in the West. Stegner, however, argues that the exact opposite is true. He argues, as Ralph Hanson put it, that the harshness of the environment created “individuals who were part of a group rather than the mythical loner. Instead of rugged individualists, the West was an area where people depended on one another rather than on themselves” (Hanson 562). Stegner believed community and cooperation are the only workable formula for success in the West, and any region. It is to that end that Stegner forms an ethical argument to create a “socially constituted [...] political world” within society’s mind where the West could be appreciated for the barren, arid, hauntingly beautiful region that it is (Holiday 391). In order to accomplish his goal, Stegner had to erase society’s definition of what beautiful land should look like - small, bright, green, conquerable - and replace it with a Western definition - big, neutral, yellow, indomitable. Arguably, Stegner’s reinvention

of perception gives the West a new rhetorical value that even exceeds his own “inventional reach” (Holiday 398).

In developing an ethical rhetoric based on revisionist aesthetics, Stegner’s first call to action is to change the way in which we perceive the land. In taking this step, he acknowledges his “ethical responsibility to participate by actively disrupting normative discursive practices” (Holiday 398). Perception, according to Stegner, takes our senses of sight, taste, touch, scent, and hearing, and then formulates an image of a new situation or revelation based on our previous experiences. Stegner challenges his audience to stop looking at the West through the familiarly clichéd Hollywood vision, and to start perceiving it through new eyes in order to fully appreciate its beauty, to see it as a community to which we belong, and to better conserve and use its valuable natural resources. New eyes can only see a different future if society can comprehend its past. Like Leopold, Stegner understood that a historical perspective – a long view of conservation – is necessary to usher in a new prosperity of the land. Perceptions of westerners that have been trained in another climate, Bonney MacDonald warns, “lead to a geographical ignorance by which land can too easily be mapped, mined, and seized for private gain” (501). In his essay, “Thoughts on a Dry Land,” Stegner explains that “perceptions trained in another climate have had to be modified” in order to receive the beauty of the west (Where 52). Stegner's use of "modified" denotes a gentle approach to changing people's perceptions. Seeking a departure from standard practices, Stegner understood that he would get nowhere by distancing himself from his audience by making outright attacks on their flawed perception. Therefore, he utilizes language that is suggestive, which enables his work to situate itself as community building rather than

community destroying. Further, because perceptions are trained, this is his call for new voices to begin writing new literature that accurately define the West and its people without overbroad and offending criticisms. Stegner, while angry at the results of the myth that MacDonald warns against, believed that people's perceptions would not change if they were made to feel ignorant in their current beliefs. In turn, many of Stegner's suggestive corrections are implicitly written to mute the damning affects of harsh, yet true, denigrations, which do not lessen the impact of his rhetorical inventions. His belief in a softer approach stemmed from his mother's influence. To him, she exemplified the patient and abiding spirit he hoped that Westerners would embrace, which directly opposed the "get-rich-quick [...] selfish and violent" mentality that the "busters," like his father, held (Packer 209-10).

If anything is evident from the West's past through Stegner's eyes, it is that misperception had a crippling effect on the land and its people, whose search for private gain was often decidedly fruitless before the first spade broke ground. Because of this past, Stegner posits that in order to write about, talk about, or simply enjoy the West, we must re-learn to "see...to like new forms and colors and light and scale...and develop new techniques, a new palette, to communicate" our desire to re-invent the west (Where 52). Here, Stegner invites an imaginative exercise much like Leopold did in "Thinking Like a Mountain," except his is focused on aesthetics rather than ecology. Stegner puts forth a canvas with high-reaching, jagged lines and asks his audience to color it in with neutral tones, and then vociferate its beauty. To indulge in this process, his audience has to "[get] over the color green" and go through the process of learning to love the color brown (54). Stegner explains that, "you have to quit associating beauty with gardens and

lawns; you have to get used to an inhuman scale; you have to understand geological time” (54). Consistent with his desire to modify aesthetic paradigms, this more direct and pointed approach toward his readers is indicative of Stegner’s apparent struggle between wanting immediate change and knowing that change takes time. Intended to break westerners of attempting to turn the west into the east, Stegner’s words go further by stirring the pride westerners find in the gargantuan and harsh landscapes of the West. Like the deepening of the Grand Canyon, Stegner understands that a trickle of water could, over time, create a gaping hole in the earth. Likewise, this sharp prick to stimulate a shift in thinking is his way of starting the modification process against the traditional romantic drama of western landscapes. This statement also represents the potential of western people to affect the future actions that will shape the West’s re-imagined hope through geological time. The same geological time that caused the West’s success prior to the boom and subsequent bust.

This line of reasoning follows Leopold’s ethic, in that, forming a new perception of the land means understanding the system as it is and accepting that ethical ecology requires a “long view of conservation, and a historical perspective” (Leopold 199). Also like Leopold, this remonstrance demonstrates that as ethics evolves, so does aesthetics, and with it a better sense of the land. Stegner’s novels and essays signal exactly his commitment to re-envisioning the west as it was before being spoiled by human exploitation. His writings in *Big Rock Candy Mountain* and “Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs,” among other essays, display a realist’s West that reveals its beauty along with its unforgiving nature, without being overly romantic. These writings also explore the reciprocal effects between the West’s geography and its people. In doing

so, Stegner attempts to re-establish how the geography of the West can be the “geography of hope,” in which we can live in harmony within the limits of the natural environment (Where xxi).

Furthering the possibilities for re-envisioning the geography of the West has – and will – require the interpretation of the land by its authors. In an essay entitled “Defender of the Voiceless: Wallace Stegner’s Conservation Legacy,” Elia T. Ben-Ari quotes Curt Meine, who insists that, “as long as we are attempting to fit our cultures to the landscape, we’re still going to need writers to help us...understand and articulate [the landscape] for us and to show us the human drama of it” (Ben-Ari). Too often, earlier western writers’ romanticized illustrations of the west contributed to the growing myth that the West was a never-ending resource, a myth that led to the misuse of its natural assets, and, to mistakes such as Leopold’s early enthusiasm for the removal of western predators. Despite the resulting trauma to the region, it was Stegner’s goal, as Judy Holiday might put it, to “transform ‘the given’ into ‘the possible’” (391). Like Leopold before him, Stegner was a driving force in breaking the resulting iniquities of that myth; and, in one form or another, he inspired a new generation of western writers who echo the call for new ethical solutions to the West’s growing issues of sustainability.

The myth of the West contributed to the irresponsible boom and bust attitude of early frontiersmen and later developers in their approach to the West, in which they recklessly used up resources and then moved on to repeat their sins in an untouched place. Their attitude resulted in the creation of a West that is starving for revival through stewardship, a West where natural resources are diminishing through overuse and misuse. The myth has also resulted in a people who are starving for a new sense of identity, one

that Stegner would agree can only be found in a new perspective of themselves and the geography that surrounds them.

Stegner's own father was a prime example of the dangers of the boom and bust attitude, as Stegner revealed in his essay, "A Migrant Childhood," from *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*, and chronicled in his novel, *Big Rock Candy Mountain*. His father had been sold the myth that the West was a never-ending resource in which one could find self-sustainability and adventures like those depicted in popular westerns. As a result, he dragged his family across the West, becoming "a boomer, a gambler, a rainbow-chaser, as footloose as a tumbleweed in a windstorm" (Where 3). The West, in his father's view, was supposed to be a place to find hope for a better future; as Wilbur Jacobs says, it was supposed to function "as a gateway to freedom, as a means of escape from old bondages" (7). However, as Stegner experienced first-hand, the ideals of freedom and peace were exchanged for the pursuit of economical gain and rowdy adventure. Looking back on his childhood, Stegner painfully admitted that he could not have "been more brainlessly and immorally destructive" to his environment as a result of his inherent (albeit short-lived) desire to emulate his father (Where 9). His statement here recalls Leopold's repentance in "Thinking Like a Mountain." Despite that experience, Stegner was able to develop a new perspective to see the "wilderness idea as something that has helped form our character and that has certainly shaped our history as a people" (Wilderness 112). This assessment of wilderness follows Leopold's view of wilderness areas as sanctuaries that act as a refuge in the search for personal introspection and enlightenment, or, as Leopold stated, "That land yields a cultural harvest" (ix). Like Leopold, Stegner eagerly acknowledges that our character is formed, in part, by

wilderness; that we actually gain some of our moral and ethical quality from wilderness. In doing so, Stegner effectively connects our present to our past, in order to encourage us to look far into the future and imagine what a world without wilderness might look like. In “A Home for Civilization,” Jennifer Ladino states that, “Stegner has repeatedly suggested that one way to escape the mythical West—and avoid feeding into longstanding tropes like rugged individualism—is to connect the past and the present” (229). In seeing the West through Stegner’s new eyes, we can remember the opportunity that the West once represented, and more importantly, why it did so.

In the search for new ethical perspective, westerners have to be willing to open their imagination to the land, so that they are able to observe life on a western scale that is much different than Eastern geography permits. Stegner recalls a time when he picked up his aunt (from Iowa) at the airport in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was not looking at the landscape, but talking as they drove through a panorama of monumental cliffs and mountains. As they approached the Sevier Plateau he “saw it hit her, and [he] heard it too;” the majesty of the level plateau and the cliff “surging more than a mile straight up above that lush valley,” had taken her aback. Yet, all Aunt Min could say was, “That’s nice. It reminds me of the river bluffs in the county park at Fort Dodge” (Where 52). Looking back on the event, Stegner remarks, “She couldn’t even see it. She had no experience, no scale, by which to judge an unbroken mountain wall more than a mile high, and her startled mental circuitry could respond with nothing better than the fifty-foot clay banks that her mind had learned to call scenery” (Where 52-53). She had nothing to compare the grandness to, and seemingly no interest to try to imagine anything larger than she had previously known. The rhetorical effectiveness of this passage is in

the visualization of perceptions trained in another climate. As Stegner would have said, she could not fathom the cliff's inhuman size, barrenness, or lack of color; her perception was so overwhelmed that she could not admit the vista's power over her. Even though the sight of the plateau had stirred something inside of Aunt Min, to the point that her reaction was physically visible, she had no alternative lexicon to describe what she felt other than what she knew from Iowa. Through vivid imagery, Stegner highlights the fundamental issue of making environmental decisions concerning the West founded upon an Eastern view of the environment: it is impossible to act in the best interests of a place that you can't effectively describe or see.

Along with learning how to judge the scale of the West, understanding aridity is of the utmost importance in creating a new ethical perception of the west. In his book *Dripping Dry*, David Cassuto explains that, "More than any other single characteristic, aridity defines the American West. It has shaped the land west of the hundredth meridian, the components of the social contract enacted among its inhabitants, and the compact between the inhabitants and the land" (1). One can see the many ways in which aridity defines the West, as Stegner says, through "the very landscapes—the erosional shapes of mesas, buttes, and cliffs; the profiles of canyons; the habits of rivers," how it "clarifies the air and electrifies the distances" (Marking xii). Aridity is what creates the harsh living conditions in the west, the blazing dry heat in the summer, the breath-taking cold in the winter, and the extreme spikes and plunges in temperature that take place in mere minutes during any season.

Aridity shapes the west in many more ways than through climate, as Stegner explains in a passage worth quoting in full:

Aridity, more than anything else, gives the western landscape its character. It is aridity that gives the air its special dry clarity; aridity that puts brilliance in the light and polishes and enlarges the stars; aridity that leads the grasses to evolve as bunches rather than as turf; aridity that exposes the pigmentation of the raw earth and limits, almost eliminates, the color of chlorophyll; aridity that erodes the earth in cliffs and badlands rather than in softened and vegetated slopes, that has shaped the characteristically swift and mobile animals of the dry grasslands and the characteristically nocturnal life of the deserts (Where 46).

This almost poetic, fervent portrayal of the wonders of aridity speaks of attributes normally associated with ruggedness as if they are, in fact, landscapes of beauty. Through rhetorical invention, Stegner has given the West an aesthetic that is not easily perceived without looking through the lens of aridity. His efforts in this passage are effective because of the emotions that are stirred. It touches on the pride and individuality of westerners, while creating a commonality of place. The commonality of place, here, is ethos as located within the environment (people and land). This passage is clearly an example of an attempt to transform “the given” into “the possible,” the old perceptions trained by myth into a new perception trained by aridity (Holiday 391). Taken as a whole, this passage creates a mental image that all westerners can relate to and find pride in, which creates a space that evokes meaningful discussions about the land.

The quality of aridity is responsible for how the American West was initially perceived, and, is the means through which westerners should perceive it once again, but

in a wholly new way. In following Stegner's train of thought, the new way would be operating in the West with aridity as the central tenant, instead of applying eastern modalities in which humidity is the determinative force. Aridity demands community to survive in a land where water is scarce, whereas a person can survive alone in places in which water is readily available. By being the force that shaped the land, animals, people, climate, and vistas, aridity was the driving force behind the myth of the West. The severity of the land gave writers the inspiration for rugged characters that became the symbolic image of the West to the rest of the world. The differences in land gave flexibility as to the type of character that could be created; the mountains provided Robert Redford's "Jeremiah Johnson," while the plains gave us Clint Eastwood's "High Plains Drifter," as examples. Characters like these have inspired people for over a century to explore the West, creating a huge market for tourism that both opened and closed the west. A double-edged sword, it sparked instantaneous growth and wealth, but also the need for roads that have permanently scarred the landscape. Stegner argues that only the recognition of aridity and the real effects that it causes will inspire new characters, new metaphors, and real change for the West.

Looking to Stegner, we find the saving qualities of the west through the same intrinsic ideal of aridity that incited its degeneration. According to Stegner, the lack of water in the West "changes the agriculture of the West, [and] turns a farmer's values upside down" (Marking 100). The aridity of the West causes water to be more valuable than the land, as opposed to the abundantly watered east, where the land holds the value. The change in the dynamics of irrigation – for farming the West – has spurred "all the irrigation laws of the American books, all the cooperative systems of water use, and a

whole battery of government agencies...concerned with the public responsibility to impound and distribute water that is too expensive and difficult for one man or a group of men to handle alone" (Stegner, *Marking* 100-101). Aridity brought western people together with America's government-echoing Turner's "American dream," and inspired a morally driven change and cooperation, a task that very few powers in this world are able to accomplish. The collaboration of government and westerner has given a foundation for a new perspective on the West because it "dotted the West with reclamation and power dams, public works on an enormous scale, which not only give the western landscape some of its quality, but provide the footings for an entirely new sort of civilization" (Stegner, *Marking* 101).

Stegner believed the West needs, "a civilization to match its scenery" (*Where* xxi). In order to create such a civilization, Stegner argued that society needs to understand that, "[t]he Westerner is less a person than a continuing adaptation;" and that westerner's adaptation to the land - not its adaptation to them - is necessary for both to be prosperous (*Where* 55). Stegner argues that people have to "endeavor" as individuals to be "morally upright...with an innate sense of right and wrong," to see society become ethically responsible in developing the land (*Marking* 97). Stegner, always blunt, yet gentle, consistently argues for ethics as the salvation of the West. Careful in the words that he chose, Stegner rhetorically calls forth westerners, in particular, to adapt as civilized humans for the stewardship of the land they possess. In essence, he argues for westerners to welcome aridity as an environmentally ethical exercise through humble submission to the grandeur of the high peaks, vast plains, and pigmentation of the raw earth. Like buffalo roaming from patch of grass to patch of grass at the beckoning of the

shifting weather, Stegner argues for civilization to become cognizant and responsive to the land's very nature. This picture of rugged communities is Stegner's ethical argument for communities of character - honest about the blight of their surroundings with the self-effacing flexibility to accept the land for what it is and the courage to act for long-term success rather than short-term gain.

Stegner's idea of a "civilization to match its scenery," echoes Leopold's call for a biotic citizen. His pathway toward an ethical end differs completely, yet both end at the same conclusion. Stegner posits that a way to develop a sense of right and wrong is to return to the tranquility of the wilderness. He comments that, "I suspect that the man who contemplates empty landscape while he drives his own car has something of a spiritual advantage on the one who, boxed in a subway or bus, contemplates tomorrow's news in the five o'clock final of some tabloid" (Marking 101-102). Peace and wisdom, Stegner suggests, are native to the wilderness of the West, therefore, "something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed" (Stegner, Marking 112). Thus, standing by and watching the "Wild West" deteriorate (or actively participating in the activities that cause it) will only result in the deterioration of westerners. Stegner's emotional call to wilderness prompts the wise revelation that western land "is a country that does not quickly heal," consequently, the land must be allowed to develop us as ethical stewards of its resources (Stegner, Marking xii).

In his essay, "The Sense of Place," Stegner explores Wendell Berry's belief that, "if you don't know where you are you don't know who you are" (Where 205). Stegner argues that Berry was not talking about the literal place that a person is located, but a rhetorical place that becomes naturalized in the local discourses as a result of the ethical

knowledge that comes from working on the land, and valuing it for one's profound investment in it. Berry is referring to place as *ethos*, as defined by Holiday. Karen Burke LeFevre, notes that, "ethos arises from the relationship between individual and the community" (qtd. in Holiday 389). When put together, *ethos* becomes a social gathering place for thought and invention toward an ethical discursive system that values the land and its people. Similarly, Stegner (with the influence of Leopold) has created a western *ethos*, a place for all to come and join in the discussion of ethical environmentalism in the West. Through a fresh perspective of aridity, Stegner created a rhetorical platform that extols the attributes that first inspired the hope that Americans placed in the West. This platform has the paradoxical effect of reprimanding past unethical actions based on individuality in a manner that is not condescending, while celebrating many of the very same attitudes, only redirected toward community thinking.

Within the place that he created, Stegner posited his vision of what an ethical western culture should look like through an exploration of the West's aesthetical features. Further, he gave us a metaphor to imagine what may result from citizens that match their scenery. By embracing the land, scale, and aridity of the region, he creates a realistic view and attitude toward the West that is accessible, logical, and galvanizing for the entire nation. More importantly, through the defining characteristics of the West, Stegner shapes the visual, tactile, and emotional boundaries within which humans must act in order for a reciprocal relationship between the land and people to work. Stegner once stated that, "no place is a place until it has had a poet" (Where 205). In spite of his hesitant, romantic aspirations, Stegner – in true post-modernist form – became the poet that gives the West its place; and through his insistence for the ethical treatment of the

land, he gives us the wisdom and rhetorical tools to re-claim it as “the geography of hope” (Where xxi).

THE GEOGRAPHY OF HOPE GOES LOCAL: ANNIE PROULX'S ETHICAL
ELUCIDATIONS IN *THAT OLD ACE IN THE HOLE*

Enter Annie Proulx, uncharacteristically hopeful, into the Texas Panhandle in *That Old Ace in the Hole* (2002). Proulx, winner of numerous awards including the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1994 for *The Shipping News*, is known for her insistence of the “Real-ness” of geography, and the belief that a region or “place” shapes the identity of its inhabitants, which operates within the postmodern definition of ethos (Hunt 1). Within that “Real-ness,” Proulx’s landscapes are often rugged, harsh, and unstable. The same landscapes create characters that mirror those qualities and often end as broken and depleted like their landscape. Along the same vein of critique, Julie Scanlon describes Proulx’s writing style as “spare, clipped, and taut [...] resembling the craggy landscapes and characters of which she writes” (94). Despite her propensity for writing about failing communities, both landscapes and people, Proulx makes an escape from her usual doomed finality in *That Old Ace in the Hole*. To qualify, *That Old Ace in the Hole* does not escape Proulx’s sense of impending doom, as much as it offers a rare sliver of hope – a possible pathway for its characters and landscape to reconcile to one another. Further, as a didactic novel, it is an argument for reconciliation that is ripe for rhetorical analysis. The novel is, as Wes Berry proclaims, Proulx’s “vision of individual lives and communities [...] whose fates are shaped by a culture that glorifies unbridled economic growth [...] which] can be destructive or hopeful” (169). The same American culture that “glorifies unbridled economic growth” is also typically one that embraces the biblical

narratives of the Garden of Eden in its imaginative perception of the Plains region (to its detriment). Proulx, in turn, has taken that biblical perspective and, through rhetorical invention, fashioned it into ethical metaphors that work toward a restored landscape and society (Holiday 388). Like Stegner into the West, Proulx places herself within the discursive system of the Texas panhandle. She then challenges the Abrahamically-based doxa that has been “internalized as real,” and makes an assertion for the ethical restoration of the land, its people, and the doxa (391). It is in Proulx’s attempt at reconciliation through environmental rhetoric in a fictional, yet realistic, place that we find the ethical metaphors of Leopold and Stegner extended and given new life in a localized setting.

Primarily set in the Texas panhandle, *That Old Ace in the Hole* is a roundabout coming of age story of Bob Dollar, an orphaned, directionless young man from Denver, Colorado. Looking for a paycheck by scouting for hog farming sites in the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles for “Global Pork Rind” (the antagonist to the panhandles), Dollar finds himself in an internal struggle between his love for a place (people and land) and a desire to complete the task he set out to do (Proulx 5). His desire to finish the job, as it were, is a desperate attempt to separate himself from his apathetic parents who were unable to follow through and stay rooted, much like Stegner’s own father. After days of driving through “a region of immeasurable natural complexity that some believed abused beyond saving,” Dollar finds himself in Woolybucket, Texas, a small, rural town that has seen its best days come and go (3). Woolybucket, the self-proclaimed, “BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD,” is located just off of the northern Llano Estacado, or “staked plain,” of West Texas (64). The Plains, including the Llano, have a storied past that bleakly

looks forward to a dim future; but is a place that Deborah and Frank Popper – of Buffalo Commons fame – have proclaimed to have “inspired extraordinary literature and art evocative of their physical distinctiveness and the difficulties that human settlement encounters there” (492). The Plains, both Proulx’s and the actual, are generalized as a vast and ecologically diverse region that has been repeatedly “abused” by its people, exploited nearly to exhaustion (Proulx 3). Farming, ranching, and drilling (for water, oil, and natural gas) have defined the ecology, economics, politics, and culture of the Texas panhandle since, as Matthew Cella verifies, the “frontier ‘closed’ in 1890” (174). While farming, ranching, and drilling have proven economically profitable for certain people of the panhandle, they have also encouraged an unsubstantiated attitude of prideful resiliency in the Plains people, who ensure that the “idea of the frontier hangs on” (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 24). Setting aside ecological and socio-economic issues for a moment, the problem with the frontier “idea” – the American conquering of the West – is that it is based on myth; the same myth of the garden against which Stegner so adamantly struggled. The inimical myth is that the arid, wild Plains could be transformed into a recreation of the Garden of Eden, and that, “technology and God would see to it that the Great Plains became the world’s agricultural capitol” – which it did, briefly (Cassuto 59). This myth, in relation to the Panhandle, gained popularity through “late-nineteenth century promoters and settlers ... [who] regarded [the Plains] as a potential garden,” and through “Periods of high rainfall and federally subsidized” settlements that initially induced a boom in agricultural success (Popper 492). The initial successes of early Plains settlers solidified belief in the Garden myth, which still holds true today for many of the Plains people, and especially for Proulx’s panhandle people.

Proulx explores the Garden myth in many of her characters in *That Old Ace*, but none so forcefully blunt as Moises Harshberger, an original settler of Proulx's panhandle. Here, Proulx makes an obvious nod to the Moses of Genesis with "Moises," and a cleverly direct pun with "Harsh burger" or possibly "evil cattleman." Harshberger – a prominent cattleman – "felt that the land was servant to him and it owed him a living, owed him everything he could get from it" (Proulx 86). This statement, made by LaVon Fronk (Harshberger's granddaughter and Dollar's landlord), places the ecological attitude of the Plains people at the forefront of Proulx's environmental intentions in the novel. Harshberger, as a forerunner of the Plain's culture, embodies the belief held by the people of the plains, and many religious people for centuries, that the "environment, garden-like, ministered to his every desire" (Nash 9). Harshberger's fantasy of entitlement is based on Genesis 1:28, in which God says to Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." This verse, for many people, has defined the human relationship to the environment for thousands of years, and has caused many people to reject the notion that humans can - or should - live in relationship with the land. The implicit attitude of dominion in Genesis 1 can be found in some of the religious people of Texas Panhandle, of whom Alex Hunt, editor of *The Geographical Imagination of Annie Proulx*, observes that "the people of the Texas panhandle understand their relationship to the earth and their use of the natural environment in large part through their understanding of Genesis chapter 1" (186). The reliance upon this interpretation of Genesis 1 is, as Carolyn Merchant notes, "the most important mythology humans have developed to make sense of their relationship to the earth" (2). In realizing

the rhetorical power of the Garden myth's terminology, Proulx explores a pastoral alternative through Bob Dollar, Ace Crouch, and Brother Mesquite. These characters ultimately plan to turn Woollybucket into the standard of a sustainable relationship between humans and the land.

Proulx begins her exploration of the pastoral relationship by chronicling Bob Dollar's ever-expanding appreciation for the plains ecological history and beauty. As Dollar travels into the Texas panhandle he finds himself in "not so much a place as confronting the raw material of human use" (Proulx 3). What Dollar sees through his windshield is the remnants of an ecologically drained prairie, of which the only landmarks are scars left behind from previous booms - not unlike the "agribusiness" that Dollar is attempting to usher in. The scars, as Proulx describes them are:

skyscrapers, mosques, and spires metamorphosed into grain elevators, water towers and storage bins [...] condensation tanks and complex assemblies of pipes and gauges [...] Orange-and-yellow signs [that] marked the existence of underground pipelines, for beneath the fields and pastures lay an invisible world of pipes, cables, boreholes, pumps and extraction devices, forming, with the surface fences and roads, a monstrous three-dimensional grid. (2)

The scars, as Proulx has illustrated them, represent the storied "boom and bust" past of the West - as exemplified in-depth by Stegner - and hinted at through Dollar's father, who could "never settle on anything" (8). Initially, Dollar's observance of these scars drift to the back of his mind as inconsequential, but will later resurface as his understanding of the history, ecology, and aesthetics of the plains grow.

Bob Dollar's basic understanding of the beauty and history of the panhandle is cultivated by the writings of Lt. James William Abert, member of the 1845 expedition to explore the Canadian River, which runs through the Texas panhandle. Dollar quickly develops an affinity for Abert, and, as Rodney Edgecombe reasons, Dollar's own ecological excursion "parodies and critiques [Abert's...] since both men are sent to open up the panhandles to commercial exploitation" (80). Abert's romantic depictions of the Canadian River Valley spark Dollar's appreciation for "the subtle beauty of the panhandle," a realization he first comes to upon accepting LaVon Fronk's invitation to take up residence in her abandoned bunkhouse (Proulx 67). According to Elizabeth Abele, Dollar's self-revelation creates a "tug-of-war between geography and man's harnessing of geography [that] continues throughout the novel—always with the sense that the land, despite all odds, cannot be fully contained" (118). Like Stegner in his ode to aridity, the overwhelming effect of the land is its most intriguing feature to Dollar, and it is the feature that draws his building devotion to it rather than to Global Pork Rind and the economical gain that GPR represents. Ironically, it is man's inability to contain the land that has created a false sense of pride within the people who have "stuck" to the land, by grit and faith, a concept that Proulx eloquently relates through LaVon Fronk and narrator, who proclaim:

"the panhandle was the most complicated part of North America, the last piece of Texas to be settled. Light soil, drought, bad wind, terrible heat, tornadoes and blue northers. And you never can tell which one is comin next. It's a weather place." She implied that the remote and level and, tempestuous blasts, tornadoes drilling down from super cells and the

peculiar configuration of the territory worked with the wind to blow away the human chaff, leaving the heavy kernels. It was defeat to give up and pull out. It took sticking qualities—humor, doggedness, strength—to stay. (102)

The passage goes on to imply the Bible as the source of the doggedness of the people, but more importantly it magnifies the mythical assertion that the plains people, like Adam and Eve in Genesis 1, are supernaturally entitled to dominate the land and drain its ecological resources because of their God-given “sticking qualities.” The advantage for Proulx in this passage is that it is entirely true concerning the weather, and echoes Stegner’s pointing towards aridity as the factor that sets the West and its people apart. The ecological and social effects of the romanticism and aesthetical value placed on the land that Proulx builds within the novel’s characters begin to lay a foundation for an interweaving pattern of theologically-based rhetoric, with nods toward Stegner and Leopold, that becomes fully revealed at the “Round Robin Baptist Bible Quilt Circle” (RRBBQC) meetings that are hosted by LaVon Fronk (171).

Proulx confronts the Garden myth directly with the quilting of the RRBBQC, a group of mostly middle-aged and elderly churchwomen from Wooleybucket, who make quilts to auction off for charity. The ladies’ first and finest work, “The Garden of Eden,” is Proulx’s most obvious directing toward an Edenic narrative that indirectly comments on the “conservative and judgmental theology” of the Wooleybucket people (Hunt 189). The “Garden of Eden” quilt was raffled, given away, sold, and then somehow placed in an art gallery in Dallas where it found its way onto the cover of *Art in America*:

In the center of the Garden stood a magnificent apple tree loaded with shining satin apples, and twined in its branches was an oversize diamondback rattler with a tongue of tiny black beads that seemed to flicker. In the cocoa-colored soil grew Mexican hat, Tahoka daisy and rabbitbush...Adam was naked except for cowboy boots and a hat...Eve, chatting gaily with the snake, her back to the viewer, showed long pink buttocks. She was wearing a charm bracelet...and Bob could make out the state of Texas. (173)

Setting the Garden in Texas is a sagacious choice made by Proulx that calls attention to the myth of the plains as garden-like, and acts as a commentary on the beliefs of the ladies in the RRBBQC. The rattlesnake, soil, plants, and Adam and Eve's attire call attention to the biotic community of the panhandle, and the sins that have rendered it nearly useless. Adam's inability to maintain dominance over the snake leaves him ashamed and bewildered like the broken cowboys of Wooleybucket. Eve's ignorant chattering and naked buttocks ironically exemplifies the judgmental gossip of the RRBBQC and their continual insistence of the sinful nature of women. Of course, the RRBBQC do not include themselves in that generalization – save for Dawn Crouch, the youngster of the group who is single, pregnant, and the target of many sharp jabs at extramarital relations. Together, Proulx implies, Adam and Eve represent the curses that result from their gross mistreatment of the Garden, and their ignorance of those curses. From a reader's point of view, Proulx's restyling of the Eden scene, interestingly, does not come across as a jab at God, religion, or the bible, but towards people who have interpreted the Edenic narrative for their own selfish gain.

In Proulx's panhandle (and the actual Texas panhandle), the curses extending from the mistreatment of the land are numerous: sparse water, poor soil, whole species of plants and animals gone, and little hope for a sustainable economical and ecological future. Of the sins that brought about these curses, none has been more detrimental than the gross over-pumping of water from the Ogallala aquifer to sustain the "agribusiness and corporate farmin" that largely control the economics of the panhandle (Proulx 111). Ace Crouch, an Aldo Leopold-like character who is a windmill turned advocate and Proulx's voice for land ethics, lectures to Bob that "the Ogallala and technology [...] has kept us from adjustin to the bedrock true nature a this place and that's somethin will catch up to us one a these days [...] the awl is pretty much gone [...] Now the Ogallala is finishin up" (111). Crouch's distressing prophecy concerning the region's natural resources serves as a warning to Dollar against any future "resource booms" that are brought on by agribusinesses (like Global Pork Rind), and heightens Dollar's understanding of the region's ecological difficulties (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 24). Wes Berry explains that Crouch's warning also highlights the fact that "Long-term economic possibilities in the place are tenuous," and sets up an "essential conflict" in *That Old Ace in the Hole* between local and global economics (178-79). Proulx imparts her theological narrative to the conflict between local and global economics by positioning it as a battle between, for lack of a better phrase, good and evil.

Good verses evil, local verses global, is most powerfully - yet in ironic fashion - depicted by cattle ranchers Advance Slaughter and Francis Scott Keister, whose family histories make them inherent rivals. Keister, "a scientific rancher, methodical, correct, progressive," represents the corporate economic system by adding "a battery of growth

stimulants including antibiotics” to his cattle’s feed to insure short pregnancies, quick maturation, and high returns at market (Proulx 55-56). His system “relies on computers and the products of pharmaceutical companies” that keep him obligated to the global economy in order for him to sustain his large house and hi-tech breeding facilities (Berry 179).

Conversely, Slaughter’s shabby ranch is sustained by old-fashioned ranching techniques that produce far fewer calves per year than Keister’s. Slaughter’s “out-dated” beliefs stem from his philosophy that when it comes to sex and calf rearing, “[cows] knew what they were doing” (Proulx 56). His cattle take far longer than Keister’s to put on enough weight to go to market, yet curiously, “the two men’s ledgers balanced out at almost the same figures, for Keister’s operation was costly and his heifer mortality rate high as the champion bull semen made painfully large calves” (57). In writing this, Proulx makes it obvious which method she prefers and which method she deems as evil; and, she ensures that evil loses in the end when Keister is murdered by his wife for his adulterous relationship with Evelyn Chine (read Eve Pork) - Bob Dollar’s competing property procurement agent who is also from Global Pork Rind. Further, it is an effective argument for technology to work with the environment, instead of attempting to dominate and control it.

While the telling of Keister and Chine’s adulterous demise provides a comical twist at the end of the book, it is not the first or most important shedding of blood in *That Old Ace*. The murder I am alluding to is Cain’s envious killing of Abel, a monumental story of humanity from Genesis that arguably carries environmental implications. To explore this event, we return to the RRBBQC where Proulx re-tells this story through

another of the ladies' quilts, appropriately named, "Cain Killin' Abel" (Proulx 174). In this quilt, the ladies create another overtly ridiculous depiction of the panhandle and panhandlers in a biblical context:

The ground was a great tawny pasture dotted with mesquite and Spanish bayonet. In the distance there was a corral and a figure bending over a branding fire. In the foreground, a burly farmer, his face contorted with rage, stood over a recumbent shepherd, preparing to smash his face (which resembled that of James Dean) with a huge rock. Three blue-eyed sheep looked on. Blows had already been struck and copious blood stained the ground. The killer's blue overalls were spattered with red satin gore [...] Abel, wore jeans and a plaid shirt with pearl buttons. His dented cowboy hat lay on the stained ground near several broken teeth. (175 - 176)

From Proulx's description we find the costumed Cain and Abel in a battle that represents the ecological battle of rancher verses farmer. From a strictly Christian theological standpoint (the ladies of the RRBBQC), we deduce that Abel is the clear victor in this battle because he is the one with whom God is pleased, and he is considered the first martyr for the advancement of the Judeo-Christian movement. However, aside from prominent theological contexts, many scholars find that this pericope from Genesis 4 symbolizes a "conflict between large ranchers and small farmers," which is fully alive in the Texas panhandle (Hunt 190). Proulx's telling of this story highlights her interest in "narrative ecology, her understanding that narratives recirculate in our culture with real-world effects," which she reveals through brothers Ace and Tater Crouch (190). Further,

it goes far in constructing a new ethical ideal for the panhandle through rhetorical invention in an attempt to “naturalize” a new ethic (Holiday 391).

The Crouch brothers, mainstays of Wooleybucket, are the products of a rough and tumble childhood that found them looking for work as young teenagers at the Cutaway Ranch, a large cattle operation in the panhandle. Ace, the older brother, became an assistant windmill to a Dutchman named Habakuk van Melkebeek. Ace, though more prosperous than his brother, is saddled as a windmill the rest of his life and destined to climb up and down rickety old ladders until the Ogallala aquifer is half gone. Ace does not kill his brother, but as the first-born he dominates their relationship and Tater’s assets. Tater became a herdsman on the Cutaway and winds up poor and disabled, living downwind from a hog farm in a constant, nearly intolerable stench. Tater (Abel) spends his retirement broken and broke - living in the shadow of his older brother. Ace (Cain) attains an untold wealth of windmill and oil money through Habakuk’s will, and controls a great deal of land that enables him to block people from selling out to Bob Dollar and Global Pork Rind.

As previously alluded to, Ace/Cain, gains an ecological wisdom through which Proulx revises the story of Cain so that Ace becomes the central figure in the pastoral restoration of the panhandle through bison ranching. Thus, instead of Cain bringing a curse on the land, Proulx positions Ace to “free the land of its agricultural curse” (Hunt 190). Humorously, it is Dollar’s deceptive idea of creating “nature estates” that sparks Ace’s creative juices (334). In her rhetorically circular fashion, Proulx’s amendment of the Genesis story takes her panhandle from Genesis 1 to 4, and through Ace, back to Genesis 2.

Matthew Cella contends that, “At the core of Ace’s endeavor is a desire to redeem the damage done to the landscape and to locate a more responsible and reciprocal relationship to the Great Plains environment” (182). A reciprocal relationship, as stated by Cella and defined by Leopold, can be found in the second telling of the Garden story in Genesis 2:15, which says, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” This is the idea that Ace carries forward to change Proulx’s panhandle into a geography of hope. As opposed to Genesis 1:28, the language here suggests that it is God’s intent that humans cultivate and keep the land instead of subduing it. These two words, important to Proulx and the long line of ecologically driven writers before her, are at the crux of Ace’s radical vision, and perhaps the pivotal words for other real places similarly situated in geography and beliefs. The Hebrew word cultivate is translated to mean, work, labor over, husband, and serve. The definition for keep is to guard and keep watch. These words shift the paradigm of Proulx’s plains people who support Ace’s “noble project” of building “Prairie Restoration Homesteads” that are complete with covenants to “maintain habitat for prairie species” (356-57).

Ace’s vision for the restoration of the panhandle is well received; in fact, Dollar is told that, “all them people is sellin their land, but not to you” (338). Dollar, however, could not buy in initially. He believed that Ace was simply “hung up on the past” (334). It seems though that Tater/Abel speaks for Proulx’s panhandlers in convincing Dollar that Ace is focused on the future when he says that, “while we last we must not give up the panhandle to you or nobody. This is our place, and we are going to hang on to it” (339). Tater is essentially parroting what Ace had told him, but interestingly, it shows how the

“sticking” qualities that are a given a negative connotation in the beginning of the novel are among the same qualities that may turn out to save the panhandle; restoring their land by building modest homes “for decent people who got some respect for the land” (334).

The language used by Tater, and Ace, is an obvious nod to Leopold’s argument that “We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us” (Leopold viii). In direct opposition to that “Abrahamic” concept of land, Ace begins to change the perceptions of Proulx’s panhandlers through his hard earned “respect” for the land that understands the land as belonging to them, but in consanguineous sense. He began to “see land as a community to which we belong,” and he was able to convince his fellow panhandlers that it is possible to “use it with love and respect” (viii). In opposition to Moises Harshberger’s sentiment that the land owed him, Ace began to dream of the “esthetic harvest [the land] is capable ... of contributing to culture,” by loving and respecting it for what it is capable of through an ethical ecology (viii).

Further, both Ace and Tater’s recently found regard for the land imitates that of Leopold and Stegner. Like Leopold in “Thinking Like a Mountain,” and Stegner in “Thoughts on a Dry Land,” both Ace and Tater seem to recognize their own hand in the destruction of the land and have determined to take ownership of their mistakes, and of the alluded to restoration of the plains. In the words of Ace while speaking to Dollar on the top of a rickety windmill, “We sorted it out, Tater and me, that we got an obligation to the panhandle ... I got the responsibility. And the power” (Proulx 336). In saying this, it is apparent that Ace in particular has realized that he “owes” the land, not the other way around. This mighty shift of paradigm is symbolic of the same ethical transition that took

place within Leopold and Stegner, and, like both, Ace sets out to imagine the people of the panhandle in relationship with land.

As stated above, it is through Dollar's "idea" of "nature estates" that Ace begins to imagine an ethical solution to the panhandle's environmental woes. In an effort to restore the panhandle's native species and their habitat, Ace determines to build a "big consortium, the Panhandle Bison Range," by buying as much land as he can and taking "down fences and open her back up" (340). In reality, this idea comes from Frank and Deborah Popper, who created a metaphor they named the "Buffalo Commons" (491). The Buffalo Commons is a metaphor in which the federal government would create a nature preserve in the driest part of the Great Plains, where current farming and ranching methods were proving to be unsustainable. As part of the preserve, the government would re-introduce buffalo and other native plant and animal species to the plains (493-94). Not afraid to give credit where it is due, Proulx, through Tater, mentions the Poppers by name: "We got them Poppers comin down a talk at the church next Thursday. They're already doin this kind a thing in the Dakotas" (340).

The Poppers created the Buffalo Commons "as a literary device, a metaphor that would resolve the narrative conflicts – past, present, and, most importantly, future – of the Great Plains" (Popper 493). Ultimately, their metaphor caught the attention of the Plains media and people, and they traveled the plains speaking at a "range of forums" (494). Like Leopold and Stegner, they determined to use metaphor as "a means to connect with and understand a messy world," because "It creates – in a literary fashion – a place apart, space for reflection. It reaches people that more formal approaches may not. It works especially well in times of great change, disorder, or disjunction" (498).

Further, it creates an ethos in which the environmental rhetoric of the Buffalo Commons metaphor is “internalized as real,” and then circulated through ethical discourses that have become “naturalized” and are beginning to reshape the Abrahamic doxa in the plains (Holiday 391). Such is the case in Proulx’s panhandle. Ace’s idea of a reclaimed panhandle begins to take hold in the imaginations of the people of Woollybucket. In large part, the seemingly overnight shift in ecological values is due to the devastation of the land, which had created a sense of hopelessness. Large agribusinesses, Global Pork Rind, and oil and gas companies, with the help of the people’s Abrahamic concept of land, had thrown the land and its people into a state of chaos that was finally coming to a head. But, unlike the Popper’s metaphor, Ace’s “Prairie Restoration Homesteads” would not involve the federal or local government (356). This is another example of fiction reflecting reality because the point of most resistance for plains people was “federal intervention,” which they felt had “harmed their region and kept it in a semicolonized state” (Popper 495). Regardless, the point of Proulx’s introduction of the Popper’s metaphor is to bring hope to the region. Using Ace as the figurehead, Proulx ends her story with a feeling of righteous anticipation. Her people, led by Ace and other notable citizens of Woollybucket, have a tangibly renewed optimism of how the land will respond to Ace’s plan of action.

Proulx’s use of the Buffalo Commons metaphor and her people’s reaction to it serve as a prime example of the power of rhetoric to change what is into what is possible (Holiday 391). Like Stegner, who redirected the attitudes of western culture toward community thinking through a fresh perspective, Ace is able to give Proulx’s panhandlers a renewed vision of their land through the very same pride and attitudes that caused its

destruction, which has also created an open space for dialogue about environmental ethics. Their pride is now based in their ability to care for the land, and their attitudes reflect the belief that they owe the land respect and that the land owes them nothing. This is yet another example of creating agency through the use of the existing discursive system. While the characters in her story are fictional, they epitomize the actual excitement that the Buffalo Commons created in real life. After the publication of the Buffalo Commons, the Poppers explain that the metaphor materialized “more quickly, particularly in the northern Plains, and with less federal intervention than we had anticipated” (496). Following the directive of Leopold, and the example of Stegner, Proulx took the Buffalo Commons metaphor and extended it. She placed it within a particular place, and, using the existing discursive system, gave it new life. As the Poppers put it, “The metaphor crystalized a regional story and became usable for the future; metaphor helped move the story past nostalgia to make understanding of place a forward-looking means for adaptation” (501).

While Leopold and Stegner gave us effective metaphors, Proulx gives an example of what it looks like to extend a metaphor toward an effective change in perspective. Through *Ace*, she constructed a mental image of the panhandle, which led to the panhandlers seeing their place anew. This effect is what Leopold had hoped for in writing his land ethic, and why Stegner advocated for the creation of fresh perspectives. In the end, Proulx accomplishes the task of creating an ethos for the panhandle to discuss its ecological future. She shines an ethical light of hope through rhetorical invention into a region that is left in a “kind of worn, neutral stuff, a brownish dust possessing only utility.” Like Bob Dollar dreaming of operating a book store as he peered through the

dusty windows of an old lawyer's office for rent, Proulx revealed the "thin crack of an idea" that will hopefully open the panhandle's imagination to what an ethical relationship with the land might look like (359).

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APPENDIX: A CONVERSATION WITH JIM BILL ANDERSON

Jim Bill Anderson is a prominent cattle rancher who has been recognized many times for his ethical stewardship of the Anderson Ranch in Hemphill County, Texas, which has been passed down through his family since 1946. I happened across Mr. Anderson's name while searching for articles about Aldo Leopold's land ethic. In 2010, Mr. Anderson was awarded the "Leopold Conservation Award" for the State of Texas. He was given the award because "he has restored [his ranch's] native grasses, eradicated water-sucking invasive plant species, managed its quail, Rio Grande turkey, white-tail deer and the rare lesser prairie chicken while operating a working cattle ranch" (Sand County Foundation). I immediately brought this find to the attention of Dr. Alex Hunt, my advisor through this process. Dr. Hunt encouraged me to reach out to Mr. Anderson, and much to my surprise, he agreed to meet with me. We arranged for Dr. Hunt and I to visit his ranch just outside of Canadian, Texas. Unfortunately, a snowstorm hit the panhandle and prevented our adventure, but Mr. Anderson rescheduled and he and I were able to finally meet in Amarillo, Texas, in early 2011.

I was nervous. I don't know why, but I was. I felt like I was meeting a legend, even though I hardly knew anything about the man. The years of working the land were apparent in his hands as we shook to introduce ourselves. Dressed casually, Mr. Anderson looked as if he would be just as comfortable in a boardroom as I assume he is on the back of a horse. I sat down across from him and tried to put together a coherent

sentence. We were separated by a nice, but standard office desk. I placed my phone (recorder) on the desk and took out my notepad; I was prepared to conduct a professional, reporter style interview. That plan went out the window, so to speak, in a hurry. I fumbled around, dropped my pen, and then finally looked across the desk. Mr. Anderson was sitting in his chair with a relaxed sense of confidence, which reminded me that no one was on trial. His tough looking, rancher exterior could not hide the kindness in his face. Without saying anything, it was apparent that he cared about people as much as he did his land. He kindly broke the silence, without a hint of humor at my expense. I started recording, and, after I stumbled over every word while trying to explain my thesis to him, we had an excellent conversation.

What surprised me the most about our conversation was the natural fluidity with which Mr. Anderson spoke about land ethics. It was so engrained into his every statement about the environment, that it came across as a truly natural concept to him. He had not restored his ranch because of theories he had studied or because he was an extreme environmentalist. He restored his ranch because it felt right, because it was a part of the moral fabric that had been instilled in him from a young age. As I reflect on our conversation, I can't help but think that even though he wasn't consciously aware of it, he had been influenced by an environmental rhetoric that stemmed from a combination of Leopold and Stegner-esque principles. And, though he would never say this, he exemplifies Leopold's land ethic effortlessly and extends Proulx's metaphor for the Texas Panhandle through pragmatic moralism.

The transcript of the conversation between Mr. Anderson and me is a fitting end to this thesis because it demonstrates the practical effects of rhetorical theory. Our

conversation underscores the doxa of the Texas panhandle, which are internalized as real, recirculated and reinforced through discursive systems that oftentimes reflect the discourses of American myth. The manner in which both of us speak about the land, and land ethics, shows the relationship between rhetoric and ethics as “naturalized” (Holiday 391). We personify the reality of rhetors existing in the discursive system in which we are participating. It shows how we operate in the ethos of the panhandle, while we also define that ethos through our imagining of a panhandle restored.

The success of the Anderson Ranch, and Mr. Anderson, is a real image of ethical knowledge that has challenged the ethos of the panhandle and changed the doxa of Hemphill County. In his sphere of influence, Mr. Anderson has had a big hand in creating a civilization to match its scenery (Texas Legacy Project). As a rancher, he has shown that the ethical treatment of the land, which recognizes the limitations of climate and soil, will result greater benefits for cattle rearing and the proliferation of native species of animals and plants that had almost vanished in the panhandle (Morthland). As the Vice Chairman of the Hemphill County Underground Water Conservation District, Mr. Anderson has been instrumental in Hemphill County’s effective management of the drought-like conditions that plague the remainder of the panhandle.

Through Mr. Anderson’s thoughts, it is apparent that he views nature in a relational manner that focuses on the needs of the land to bring about greater results for his community, both land and people. In doing so, he has affected political change in his community through a combination of aesthetic, ecological, and ethical rationales concerning the land (Gunter and Oelschlaeger 2). He has made his impact by “building bridges between private landowners, conservation groups, economic development

interests, and government agencies” (Sand County Foundation). To a large degree, Mr. Anderson embodies the practical aspirations that Leopold hoped he would inspire. Further, his actions illustrate the power of rhetoric to effect change in our environment.

Mr. Anderson could not have imagined the firestorm of thoughts that went through my mind when he told me that things should be done “decently and in good order.” To me, being vaguely aware that the principle came from the Bible, Mr. Anderson’s words conjured up images of the Frontier and Garden myths that Leopold and Stegner had so ardently warned against. His statement shows how the language of the preceding myths has infiltrated the discourse of plains people. Yet, interestingly, Mr. Anderson’s belief of doing things in their proper order has resulted in the restoration of his land. This manifestation confirms Judy Holiday’s contention that “Rhetorical invention is the principal source of politics and ethics” (388). The Frontier and Garden Myths had created a cultural doxa of man’s dominion over the environment in the panhandle, but, through rhetorical invention at some time during Mr. Anderson’s life, biblical principles had become the medium through which a new ethos has been formed toward restoration. At some point, the rhetorical social norms of the panhandle had been utilized as the core ingredients of inventing new ethical knowledge, which people like Mr. Anderson have applied to the land and reshaped it.

Mr. Anderson credits his father and grandfather with teaching him the ethical knowledge that has formed his beliefs. Both men, he says, took a “long term approach to ranching,” which requires people to “take care of things.” This statement, coupled with the achievements of Mr. Anderson, obviously confirm Stegner and Leopold’s arguments that a historical perspective – a long view of conservation – is necessary to usher in a new

prosperity of the land. As Stegner argued, achieving a long view of conservation requires the proper perspective of the environment in which one is located. Mr. Anderson revealed that he has the proper perspective of the arid west in which he lives when he warns, “You gotta be flexible in this part of the world.” Through his first-hand experience, he has learned to acknowledge aridity and the environment’s power over the outcome of the land’s performance, and to work with that knowledge instead of treating it as something it is not.

He goes on to say that “first of all, you get the most production out of the native rangeland by cooperating with it [... by] allowing each plant, each species to do the best they can.” While he does not quote Leopold, it is obvious that “The Land Ethic” has made its way into the doxa of the panhandle. As Mr. Anderson would say, “it’s more of that stewardship stuff.” Stewardship, he argues, “is good business.” He would contend that being a good steward is worthwhile because it is aesthetically, ecologically, and economically profitable. Further, he understands that the stuff of stewardship is exactly what the panhandle needs to once again become a geography of hope, and has imagined building a nature preserve on his own land in an effort to educate the younger generations of Texas panhandlers. Only time will tell, but perhaps Mr. Anderson is the real-life old ace in hole.

The following is the unedited transcript of our conversation, which was transcribed by Daily Transcripts. I offer this conversation with the qualification that the transcribing software may have had some trouble with our Texas accents.

[Begin Transcription]

DUSTIN: I'm glad that we finally go to meet. I was looking forward to it. Ah, I guess I can, I'll start out by kind of telling you what my thesis is gonna be about a little bit. Um, basically, it's gonna be about land ethic. Um, I'm gonna start with a, with an introduction um, about, ah, Aldo Leopold, ah, Wallace Stegner, and then I'm gonna tie in rhetoric, ah, and the rhetoric that they use in, in rhetoric ah, you know, just persuasive rhetoric um, of how people... I don't wanna say manipulate, but persuade people from ah, to change, you know, change their views concerning different things and-and um, you know, what I'm concerned with ultimately I think is to um, you know, ho-, how do we communicate to people ah, the importance and the value of-of land ethics. Ba-basically. I mean, that is, that's broad, but-but that's what I'm getting to. Um, so I guess I'll just start, you know, I, how I found you is, looking through all of this, come up with the ah, Aldo Leopold Award, ah, so I'll just start with that I guess. Or is there anything you'd like to start with?

JIM: Oh no. Just get me started. I don't know what to talk about.

DUSTIN: Okay. [LAUGH] Okay. Um, let-, what-what did that mean to you to win that award?

JIM: Well, I mean, of course it's a, it's an honor because of the-the guy it's named after, but ah, the-the-the-the value that I suppose for me is ah, getting people's attention and maybe influencing somebody else, you know? It seems, it's-it's almost natural to me, for me personally, to take care of the land. Stewardship, that comes naturally to me. It always has, so but anyway, so it-it didn't have any, I guess there's not, it didn't, I don't need or want a lot of recognition, but it's ah, I understand the value of it and so...

DUSTIN: Okay.

JIM: As a matter of fact, I-I prom-, I promised myself that I wouldn't do anything else that might need to be put in print or-or-or photographed anymore, but then here I am.

DUSTIN: [LAUGH] Yeah.

JIM: But I, I was intrigued by what, you know, your concept.

DUSTIN: Well, good. Yeah. I'm glad...

JIM: It got my attention. If it had just been another article for a magazine, I probably wouldn't have done it, 'cause I've been overexposed.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Well, and there's quite a few articles I think you have to read. Quite a few I saw...

JIM: A lot of them are the same, so...

DUSTIN: They are. They are. They are a lot the same. Um, you said it comes naturally to you. Um, what do you think...

JIM: Stewardship does.

DUSTIN: Yeah, stewardship, yeah. Ah, what do you think your, the previous generation's ah, what do you think their impact was on that?

JIM: Well, ah, my ah, it started with my grandfather ah, who was a rancher. I don't know of anybody who didn't apply the ah, the best principles or the best ah, technological, technology we had, they had at the time. You know, which now, looks ah, prehistoric almost, with some of the things we know now, but they do, but anyway they have the same attitude that ah, long term, long term approach to ranching and ah, and so that in itself requires you to-to ah, take care of things. You know? Be a good steward and take a long-term approach. So I guess I got that from him and then, I've done a lot of ah, I had, had to work one summer at the USDA Ranch Research Station in Woodward,

Oklahoma. I learned a lot there about native plants and how they function. You know, how to care for them, get the most of them...

[NON-INTERVIEW]

JIM: Ah, and you know, the thing I as was, people need to, I-I've tried to impress on people with ah, the things I do are not just for ah, recognition as a steward of rangeland. They-they're ah also economically viable, and that's that that long-term thing. You don't overgraze. You don't um, try to overwork or over mine something, you know, for a year or two years or whatever, six months. The long-term approach. Especially when your, in-in agriculture in our part of the world and-and the weather is pretty... [LAUGH] It can change be pretty wild, yeah. You know. Ah, I always get tickled, the average rainfalls. I mean, what, good grief. I mean, some years it's 15, some years it's 30, I mean, so.

DUSTIN: Yeah. You never know.

JIM: No, you don't and ah, you don't know when it's gonna fall in the winter or the spring or so anyway. So it-it's, it's also the smart thing to do and-and the most rewarding financially, fiscally, long-term, too.

DUSTIN: It makes sense.

JIM: It is. And I mean, inevitably, first of all, you get the most production you get out of the native rangeland by ah, ah, cooperating with it, you know? Not going and trying to [beat?] everything up into the dirt, but allowing each plant, each species to-to ah, do the best they can. Yeah. And so that's, that's, like I say, that's something I always try to tell people. I say I didn't do this just to, I, it di-, it's, I wouldn't do it any other way, but it also, to me, was the fiscally responsible thing to do, too.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Well um, speaking of that then, ah, I think one of the interviews that I read, you said that you're running more cattle than you've ever ran.

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: Do you, do you think that's a result of what you've done or-or, do you know the result cumulative result or-or what factors do you think.

JIM: No, that's a, I think it's a result of what I've done because ah, my granddad, I said the previous two generations didn't overgraze and they had a long-term approach, but they didn't have the, the information that I have at my fingertips on how many pounds per acre ah, big blue stem produces versus buffalo grass. They didn't know and they don't know, they don't have the information I have as to when each different plant species might peak in protein, you know? And ah, that's just things that weren't available to them. They just had, all they just, you know, the idea, that of a master of fact is the calf, that's what they are on, you know, and so I mean, they observed and-and they watch and they did the best they could, but I have a lot of scientific data at my fingertips now because of research and you know.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Talk about going to the dentist. It's sure a lot more pleasant now than it would have been in 1880.

JIM: Yeah. You know, it's kind of, but I guess one way...

DUSTIN: But that, so...

JIM: Ah, yeah. That's things I've done. Management practices I've applied from ah, I don't know. That's what I find anyways to reading research papers and from land grant

universities or USDA field sections or some publications of you know, range people, so...

DUSTIN: Okay. Um, do you, there's a, there's a group, and ah, I'm gonna blank on it now as I sit here in front of you, they're out of Lubbock and it's a conservation group of some sort, and they-they help ranchers ah, ah, test their soils and all that kind of stuff. Do you have anything to do with them?

JIM: No. No. I don't know anything about them. That sounds more like, is that for ranchers or for ah, farming and-and improved grasses, maybe? Intensive, more intensive operations than that.

DUSTIN: They-they did a lot more farming ah, ah, then ranching, but they-they, did say they did some ranching.

JIM: Huh. I mean, ranching, as far as I'm concerned, maybe I need to learn something else here. Ah, the-the plants, if given a chance through proper ma-, grazing management, will ah, the proper plants will grow in the proper places. The soil types will, you know...

DUSTIN: It just kind of takes care of itself.

JIM: Yeah. Yeah. It'll take care of itself if you give it a chance.

DUSTIN: Well yeah. Well, do you mind then explaining, cause I, I don't know anything about ranching. Um, how-how do you determine when to rotate cattle and where, and that kind of thing?

JIM: Well, there's systems. There's rotating systems. Ah, there's structure. Um, the one I like, well I use two different ones. The one I like ah, on this native rangeland, no subirrigated bottoms, no, you know, dry land or anything is um, four pastures, three herd. It's less intensive. You gotta be flexible in this part of the world. You can't, I feel, in

the, and I mean, to me, we, you, we need to cooperate ah, with nature. You can't dominate.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Not, not long. [LAUGH] You know, if you're truly. And to think, for years, I mean, I've truly um, that was our-our living was cattle business. It wasn't an offshoot of ah, somebody with commercial enterprise, you know. You know, some other source of money and that would be it. You know, so you ah, that's another reason to take long-term viewing and you cooperate with nature, you know? Take part of getting leave some [PH], and you know, and do it again next year.

DUSTIN: Okay. Um, I, one of the things that I found really interesting about you is that you ah, you said you liked, you used the term partnering with, partnering with the prairie or stewardship better than conversation. Why is that?

JIM: I don't know. Well I love the terms stewardship to me a great guiding principal in whatever you do. It just is. Um, and I just think you should, you-you need to leave things where you found them and you need to you know, be a good steward of what you have. I mean, ah, this is a kind of re-reformed theology phrase, but if you-you do it decently and in good order and then, I mean, I could, I know over the years, I've watched, I got started, of course I've done it a lot but I really, my dad died when I was pretty young. I was like only 22 or cl- close to it, so ah, you really you begin to focus and watch people who valued it come and go and I always say they're speeding. They come in, you know, and ah, they don't, they're not good stewards and before you know it, they've had a couple good years and they overstock everything and it didn't rain for 10 months and they're gone. You know, I kinda, I got off on a tangent, I know. I don't

know. Stewardship, I don't know. That just sums it up for me. Maybe that's just a personal thing. Um, conservation to me, I guess, I mean, you're the student, but that's just to conserve. I mean, to me, partnering, or stewardship's more of a, an active word.

DUSTIN: Okay. That's a great answer.

JIM: It is. It's more of a... ah, ah, not just active. Help me. What's, it's more of a, there's a lot more to it.

DUSTIN: There is. It-it implies more hands on approach to things.

JIM: Yeah. Yes. It is. I mean, if you want to just conserve, you might not do anything.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: [LAUGH] You know?

DUSTIN: Just inactive. Yeah.

JIM: But if you're a steward, you're, you're actually in charge of something.

DUSTIN: It's, it's kind of a relationship.

JIM: Yeah. Thank you. It's active. It's just more active. It's just more... a relationship.

That sounds good. I've never thought about that. Thank you.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: But I just knew that sounded better. It felt better.

DUSTIN: [LAUGH] Yeah. It-it-it does and like I said, that's what really sparked my interest with you. Ah, do you, do you think that, does that come from any sort of biblical perspective for you?

JIM: No, well, stewards a very biblical word.

DUSTIN: Yeah. [LAUGH] That's true.

JIM: But I don't think so, but you know what? Maybe it does and I don't know it.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Seriously. I mean, all my, I've heard, over the years, you, over and over and over, you hear these things, you get these paradigms and you don't know, if you don't stop and think you're really just, you're not born with that, but you may not be able to pin down where it came from either, it's just... but decently in good order, that is, and that fits your personality, too. It fits, I mean, certain things, that fits my personality. Not that, I don't, I risk adversity or anything. I just like to do it decently, in good order and-and take measured risks and-and that kind of thing. I don't, like I said, conservation is to, to me I always thought, well that just, you can shut the door and go away and be conservative.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Definitely.

JIM: You're not using it, you're not abusing it, you're not doing anything. You're conserving it, so... That's like locking it away.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: I mean, for me, that's, the way I see it. It's just like locking it away instead of having that relationship. You're talking about stewardship. And that's fine. I mean, if you really ah, observe the prairie and all the things that go on all the time, I mean, there's a lot of activity out there. There was wildlife [INAUDIBLE] you know? Um, and you see over a few dry years, you'll see some things, you know, some species will decrease and maybe go down to different areas and-and wet soot, so you get six or eight good years and start creeping out and moving around and I don't know, it's just fun. And different grazing practices make a lot of difference. And fire hills. We don't, we don't do enough fire, I don't do enough fire. 'Cause it's hard where I live to get the subsoil

right to burn. You can't burn on dry subsoil. And so, that's kind of tricky. 'Cause many times our winters are dry, you know?

DUSTIN: But yeah, with the exception of last year, it's...

JIM: Yeah. I mean that's un-, that's unusual. It's usually the winters are dry.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: You know, February, January and February's usually a little dry, so ... But...

DUSTIN: Well, that-that leads me into something else I was gonna talk about. Ah, I know you sit ah, with the Hemphill County Water Commission. Is that right?

JIM: Um-hum. Water district, Hemphill County, Groundwater District.

DUSTIN: Yeah. That's pretty interesting.

JIM: Yeah, it is.

DUSTIN: Um, tell me about that a little bit.

JIM: Well just how much trouble do you want me to get in?

DUSTIN: As much as you want to.

JIM: Ah, no. It, ah, we formed a single county water district because our desires and our needs don't niche, face it, with the high plains. I mean, you know, it's tough. If you've flown on an airplane from Denver to Amarillo, over the Texas panhandle, it's, it's one irrigation circle after another.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: It's and-and Hemphill County is not like that at all and so we didn't want to be ah, in the same water district with people that had totally different ah, needs than we do.

And so we, and we ah, being a single co-, single county district, ah, it, you know, if you follow the money that will do it. You know we, we really could not just sit back and

lawyer up and-and fight somebody forever. I mean you run out of money. That's what it is, so we took the approach of-of science. We knew what we wanted.

DUSTIN: Make sure its still going.

JIM: We knew that, in Hemphill County, I don't know if you've been there or not, has a lot of ah, springs and creeks and river runs. The Canadian river and the Washita River and a lot of live water. It's just totally different. When you leave and Pampa and go about 10 miles and you break off the Caprock, it changes completely and so ah, the-the citizens of Hemphill county ah, they liked their life water. I mean, that's the first thing that goes when you lower the aquifer is the springs. I mean, that's the first thing you lose, and-and-and there's, and personally, my personal opinion is if you sell your water for \$300 an acre, ah, I guess you get money in your pocket. I mean, I guess, you do get money in your pocket, but I think the value of the land is more than what they're offering for the water if you have live creeks and trees and wildlife and, I know it is.

DUSTIN: Definitely.

JIM: If you wanna go and market it and sell the surface, you'd get more for it, you'd get more than \$300 ah, you, I don't, you know what I'm trying to say? The \$300 they pay you for your water would not compensate you for the decrease of value in your land.

DUSTIN: Right.

JIM: If, 'cause the first thing that goes is the springs and the Cottonwood trees got to have a lot of water, because then they die and you just change everything. And so ah, we took a real conservative approach, you know, 80/20. Twenty percent, you know, 80 percent in 50 years and-and ah, I got off on a tangent, we ah, again. We ah, we-we took the approach that we couldn't fight, you know, the saying, stand toe to toe and throw

money at each other, at other interest who might want it, so ah, we've spent a lot of money in science. A lot. Three d-, there's a 3-D model in Hemphill County and I'm, as far as I know, there may be another one or two in the state of Texas now, but at the time, it was, it was the only 3-D model out there that you really... you can take the aquifer in Canadian, in Hemphill County and you can, I've got it on computer. You can turn it, you can split it, you can rotate it, you can flip it over. You know, it's just 3-D stuff and you can see the, where the water's the thickest. Ah, that's the thinnest. You can see, and then you can sit there and take away 20 percent or 30 percent and it'll show you what'll happen.

DUSTIN: And you can see it over a time period.

JIM: Yeah, you can. And so we did all that. A lot of modeling, a lot of [CLEARS THROAT] spent a lot of money on modeling and-and ah, ah, that's how we arrived at our 80/20, which was frustrating some folks, but the heck of it is we might have done a 90/10 but 90/10 won't mesh, you, the state, you've gotta, each water district has to me-, like if here's Hemphill county and here's Roberts County, 90/10 wouldn't work because that was such a small amount coming out of us. Ours would flow back to them, so you gotta have a, you've gotta fit into the overall picture and so 80/20 does.

DUSTIN: Okay.

JIM: And it's you, probably, I don't know if you know or not, but they, the Mesa Water took it to the state water and they lost and they took it to the next level. I've sued 'em. They lost that. The judge threw it out and I don't know if you followed that or not.

DUSTIN: I-I didn't follow that, but I did read, I read about it.

JIM: Okay. So the thing is ...

DUSTIN: So I know what you're talking about.

JIM: Our science was good and it's, it saved the day for us up till now.

DUSTIN: I got'cha.

JIM: 'Cause if, we couldn't have stood there and said no, you can't have this 'cause we want it. We had to show the impact. So I'm proud of that thing 'cause I was one of the ones that really said look, our only defense is gonna be knowledge and-and you know, good science. Science that can't be debunked and-and so forth. It's, it held up. That's what scary. I don't care what the hydrologists tell you after you pay them. Until somebody challenges you, it's you know.

DUSTIN: Essentially, it's somebody like-like [Boone?]

JIM: Yeah. Yeah. [LAUGH] Speak of the elephant in the room.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Yeah, look out, 'cause they've got, they've got hydrologists on their team that can sit there and argue against everything we said, but we've got the actual water measurements. We've got all, we've done it all and so... that's good. So hopefully that'll hold up. Um, this water thing's not over.

DUSTIN: No. No.

JIM: It's just starting. But that's ah, that's Hemphill County. I don't know if you've been there or not. It's ah... Canadians is different. There's a lot of city pride. There's a lot of pride in the county. There's, I mean, I, I've received these awards, but I've got neighbors who are just as conservation minded about it. You know? Nearly all of them, probably. I may have done some things first, just 'cause I live and breathe it, you know?

As far as management, types of management on the land and things, but ah, I'm sure I'm not the only one.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Well, that's, that's good though.

JIM: Yeah. And that's kind of place that is over there. It really is. I don't know why it's a, you know, the school, I mean, education's very important in that part of, I mean, where we are.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Very important. We-we could, there's two kids out of the class out of what, 37 in Harvard.

DUSTIN: Wow.

JIM: I mean, it, anything that a-a kid wants to take through his school, if it's not offered, the school will pay for it to you know, you get it off satellite. Come up. Any course you want. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if it's one of you or two of you. You know, just so it's very, they have high standards.

DUSTIN: It's good.

JIM: They do. Yeah. It is good. That's not about me, but anyway, they do.

DUSTIN: But it speaks to, it speaks to...

JIM: There's an attitude.

DUSTIN: The attitude.

JIM: There is.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: And you drive into that little down, there's an attitude. You can see it.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: I mean, you ah-, yes, you're going to town and there's a, a yard or two. You go off and search people that are a little junky, but most of the town is really neat and clean and progressive. It's being refurbished all the time. It's just a neat place.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. I was, I was hoping we'd get to go up there. I really wanted to see your ranch.

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: Ah, [OVERLAP]

JIM: I'm afraid that one's on work.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: The way things are going.

DUSTIN: Yeah, I know. I know. But...

JIM: And you can still come.

DUSTIN: Oh, thank you.

JIM: I didn't mean to exclude you. I just thought if you needed to get this done in some timely manner, we'll, we can sit down and talk and then you can come up anytime.

DUSTIN: Okay. Yeah.

JIM: Oh, glad for it. You can bring your professor or whatever.

DUSTIN: Yeah. He would, he was really excited to go up there. He-he knows um, I think his name is Doug Ricketts.

JIM: Yeah. Yeah.

DUSTIN: He's friends with him and so he was wanting to go see him, to see you, and- and make a day of it.

JIM: We can still do it.

DUSTIN: Yeah, so, yeah, we were, we were not very happy that it snowed that day.

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: That's how it goes.

JIM: No, come do it. Doug's a neat guy.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Good.

JIM: We work cattle. Ah, a friend of mine leases a land where he lives that was his father-in-law's and ah, we ah, I helped him work his cattle and brand and stuff. And I see Doug occasionally. I like that.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Great guy.

DUSTIN: Good. Ah, speaking of working cattle, do you, do you work, I know a lot of people who work with four wheelers nowadays, do you deal with horses? [LAUGH]
Why?

JIM: Because of a, well now, on that lan-, some of that leased country go where they're still ah, there's a-a couple three sectioned pastures that are rough. That would be a little difficult to run a four-wheeler.

DUSTIN: Okay.

JIM: You feel like you've been on tumble-dryer for that, though. And, I don't know. I actually, I like driving across the-the-the pastures horseback 'cause, and I still, you know, I mean, still, every time we do something, I'm there helping them I guess, but one big advantage to me is I help around the different pastures every time. I don't go to the same one every time. You can really look at the rangeland on a horse. Looking down on it at 5 miles an hour.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: I mean, you can, and you can't get that perspective on a machine.

DUSTIN: Yeah. That makes sense.

JIM: Plus the, the-the back, the outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man.

You've heard that? It's a, it's a calming, if you ride out across... I mean, I don't mean riding around and around an arena, but I mean if you go out and ride for, you know, three or four hours or four or five hours looking at stuff, it's a, it's a good feeling. Very therapeutic.

DUSTIN: It sounds like it.

JIM: It is.

DUSTIN: Sounds like it.

JIM: That's a, I have heard different times, the back of a horse, the outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man. And I like it. I grew up, I've actually, actually, when I came from the school, I worked on a team of mules one winter. Um, so I mean, I'm not that old but I guess I was old enough to do that. Well, well, there was a little bit of an incentive. It was a, I was a junior in college and I just ah, yeah, I don't know. This business major, it's fine, but I don't, I didn't like it anymore and I just didn't know wanted to do next and so I got, I sat it out, a semester, when a semester... well, my dad, he didn't ever say anything, but the other two employees had you know, four wheel drive pickups and stuff and he went and found me a team of mules and-and a 16 foot travel trailer to live in, so you know, the kind where you lower the kitchen table down and that, and that's your bed. Okay, that was, I think that was an incentive program.

DUSTIN: Oh yeah. Yeah. [LAUGH]

JIM: 'Cause it was cold that winter and I had a sack over my head with the eyeholes cut out and it dry on, you know, those mules would actually barn in, and he'd drive by in his car, roll down the window 'bout that far and he said boy, I bet that classroom is warm today.

DUSTIN: [LAUGH]

JIM: Then take off. He wouldn't offer to let me get in and warmed up. He'd leave. So anyway, but then before I went back, he died. I probably was gonna transfer, though, you know. I don't know, Oklahoma State. Ah, WT, Tech, something like that.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: I was in Nacogdoches, and ah, I liked it for a couple years. It was a good school [INAUDIBLE] but it, I don't know, it just, it's culturally different.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: All the kids, they're all from Dallas, Houston... you know, I had a good time. Had a good fraternity. Had good friends. I don't know, I just missing home a little bit, missing my world. Not necessarily home.

DUSTIN: But I-I can understand that. Makes sense.

JIM: So anyway, who knows what I'd done, 'cause I didn't, after he died, I didn't have a choice.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Well, I guess I did, but I didn't.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: You know?

DUSTIN: For you, you didn't.

JIM: Well, for me. And my mother, you know, didn't know what to do and then I have a brother who's 7 years younger and so it was either me or nobody.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: So... anyway. I didn't mind.

DUSTIN: Well, that's good.

JIM: But ah, where were we? [OVERLAP] I haven't talked about some of those things for a long time. You got me daydreaming.

DUSTIN: That's all right. That's okay. I was, I was hoping that this would turn more into a conversation.

JIM: Oh yeah. It will. It's easy.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, I was, I was kinda nervous. Um, you were talking about working the cattle with horses.

JIM: Oh yeah, yeah. We still do on that, at least country ma-, also, we do a lot of things. I mean, we still have a crew where you drag your calves to the fire and flank them and brand them. You know what that is?

DUSTIN: I've seen it.

JIM: Okay.

DUSTIN: I've seen it. Yeah.

JIM: We still do that. Mainly because, ah, if you still got guys that know what they're doing, it's efficient. I mean, if you got two, if you're branding two at once or working two at once, I mean, you know, you can do 150-200 hit before lunch, easy. And so that's... Now where the place that I live, the place I own, it's just the opposite. I have, you know, scales. I tag everything individually. I have scales underneath the chute.

When I work the calves, I want everybody individually, record it, compare it back to the mother's production and... because I use that, I use that place as a place to develop ah, heifers for breeding and so I want, and then, use them on the bigger open country, you know, it's just more commercially fit. That is not progressive but I mean I'm very, I've ah, I use it to try to come up with the best replacement cattle and stuff cattle can come in with.

DUSTIN: Okay.

JIM: And so, and it's fun.

DUSTIN: It sounds like it.

JIM: It's interesting.

DUSTIN: It is.

JIM: It's more, it's more of that stewardship stuff. If we were gonna conserve 'em we'd just turn 'em out to not mess with it.

DUSTIN: [LAUGH] Yeah.

JIM: But ah, and I enjoyed that, and it's profitable and there's a, there's a, a developing market. It's been around for a lot of it's, it's developing even more now for people that are demanding source and age verified cattle and even the all-natural thing, which I personally don't think there's any harm in eating cattle and implanted properly. I really don't, but if people think there is, again, I mean, that's the thing. Agriculture is so bad about for so many years, especially the beef, cattle people is ah, well here it is. Take it or leave it. Well, some of them are actually leaving it. [LAUGH] That was a few years ago. I mean, the man got mad and so they are more responsive to the come-, the consumer now. As it should be.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: That's good. And if you raise the right kind of cattle and you have the right kind of genetics, the performance didn't hurt that by all natural production. Really didn't, but anyway, that's gonna be interesting however that all ends up. I really think there's gonna be ah, ah, two tiered production system where there'll be people who are doing it all natural and the other animals tracked individually and use a high-performing animal and then you'll have the commodity beef, but it will be sold for premium, but then you'll have the old plainer cattle or done the traditional way. It'll cost less for that market that can't afford it and won't pay it. But I don't, I don't know where the demand's gonna stop for the all-natural source age verified, 'cause it hasn't stopped yet. It's growing.

DUSTIN: Well, that's good.

JIM: Yeah, it is. It's good. You wanna get paid for good. Well, the way I look at it, do you wanna work for you know, \$2 an hour or do you want to put some more effort into all your record keeping and get paid, you know, \$10 an hour, is kind of what you want to...

DUSTIN: Yeah. I think that's good. Yeah.

JIM: Already knows it. All those numbers are just for example, but you know. But anyway.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Let's see. I'm trying to figure out... okay.

JIM: I may be leading you down bad pasture.

DUSTIN: No, no. you're doing fine. Ah, let's see. We talked a little bit about water.

Well, since you, you know, handled that pretty well, maybe you can tell me this. Mesa

Water said it would take 125 years to get to the 50 percent mark when they started pumping water. Ah, is that true?

JIM: I don't know. I don't know if it's true or not. I know in Hemphill county, some of the things that I read ah, about how much water there were, how-how thick the sensory thickness was, which translates in, that's your water sample.

DUSTIN: Okay.

JIM: And they were saying, and then some of the original measurements were okay, look. We drill this well, we hit water here and it sits th-... so all our studies in modeling, some of those things might look like it's got 100 foot of saturated thickness, but then we find some of those areas there's a 30 foot clay lay- layer through there. So the net is not 100 foot. It's 70 feet. And then, the thing about that deal is the bottom 20 percent to 25 percent is almost unusable, 'cause it's like the bottom of a coffee cup. It's-it's high in chlorides. It's silt. It's, it's just, it's an ancient lake bed, and that's the, that's the bottom of the pond. You know? And so it's not, so if they say there's 50 percent left in 50 years, which is another point to that, that the bottom 20, 25 percent may not be usable almost unless it's treated, so first, so then, that does away with your 50 percent pretty quick. Plus, they like to quote... they. Water markers like to quote, when they're saying 50 percent, they mean 50 percent from today. Well, if you're in Dimmit, Texas, and you're already down 70 percent, and you're gonna say 50 or 30, in 20 is not, I mean, it's not good.

DUSTIN: No.

JIM: Not good. Not good. Now Hemphill County, the thing that we get hammered by they say oh, we're holding back. It's holding back or something, but 20 percent of our water where it has...

[Recording stopped...]

DUSTIN: Okay. It's recording again. I'm sorry.

JIM: I think we've got a good volume of water to sale and-and if somebody comes in like CRMWA – you know Canadian River Municipal Water Authority? Then CRMWA comes in and buys it, they'd get a permit immediately because they've got an end user. See, Mesa won't identify the end user.

DUSTIN: No.

JIM: Well, the statutes say that you can require them to identify the end user to stop there from being waste. Wha-, ah, what keeps them, you know, well, an ultra, hyper-wealthy guy from deciding he wants to build a, a track farm that can, so he just sits here with this huge pumps and pumps it down the river? I mean, you don't know. So they've gotta identify the end user. They can't be wasteful. But Mason won't identify the end user. Well Cremlaw, if they came in, they would 'cause they are the end user, and they'd get their permit. It would be no problem.

DUSTIN: Really?

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: That easy.

JIM: So, yeah, 'cause well, we keep getting hammered in the press on these articles about you know, we're holding them up. We won't let 'em have it. Well, just follow the rules. I mean, you know.

DUSTIN: Yeah. [OVERLAP] I don't think they know it's that easy.

JIM: Well, they don't have, it's, you know, they don't have an end user, 'cause they haven't had anybody buy from them.

DUSTIN: So that's...

JIM: And they're big deal was gonna be Dallas-Fort Worth and all that stuff. Dallas-Fort Worth's region just signed a, they're just, well not just. Few months ago, three or four, um, they're building an enormous pipeline ah, way back in east Texas, up towards southeastern Oklahoma. Where water is just, you know, everywhere.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: And so they would get, they're gonna start dealing with that. Add some lakes and reservoirs, and so...

DUSTIN: Well that started, ah, next let's talk about building a pipeline to El Paso.

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: It's, it makes no sense.

JIM: Well, and I think when you get to looking at that, I actually have a friend who is a consultant in New Mexico and Arizona and I didn't know it. I buy cattle from him, and I didn't know it until we got to visit. He's a, an independent consultant, and he was at a meeting in El Paso and the price, the water was gonna be for Mesa, less than a week ago. They're sitting on a huge underground su-, saline water formation in El Paso. They say well we can desalinate cheaper than that, so... And then you get into all this, the enormous costs to build a pipeline and-and the right ways and the imminent domain, and it's a big deal.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: I don't know what to do. I-I re-, I didn't, I wouldn't be surprised if they don't end up selling to CRMWA.

DUSTIN: Really.

JIM: But that's just me. I don't, nobody's told me that. I have no reason for that. It just makes sense to me. You know? 'Cause CRMWA's gonna need it [INAUDIBLE] and Mesa's got it and ...

DUSTIN: And he can't get water out to there.

JIM: That's right. That's right. It's scary.

DUSTIN: It is. And-and that's what, that's what really blows my mind about the whole thing is we don't have water here as it is, and they want to pump it out?

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: Somewhere else? I mean...

JIM: I know, no. No. Well, that's the thing that really bothered a lot of the citizens in Hemphill County. If it would have been coming to Amarillo, you probably wouldn't have a big resistance.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Ah, 'cause it's going to people to drink and use, but to sell it to Dallas-Fort Worth? I mean, you know, swimming pools and golf courses? I don't know. But I don't know. It'll be interesting. I mean, I don't even know if it'll be solved in my lifetime. I really don't.

DUSTIN: That's-that's one of the things that I want, you know, when I get done with school, will try to get involved with. It's interesting.

JIM: The water deal.

DUSTIN: Water um, really any kind of land rights, water rights, mineral rights. I-I think all that stuff's so important to us and I don't think that people you know, ah, general public, pays a lot of attention to it.

JIM: No. If they turned the, open the faucet and it's there, they're happy.

DUSTIN: Yeah. And-and so it's...

JIM: They don't.

DUSTIN: They just don't, they don't pay attention and they don't realize how you know, I mean, we're, we're literally getting close to being on the edge of being done.

JIM: Well, it's a finite resource and some of these northwestern counties could be 12, 14 years away from it. In current practices.

DUSTIN: That's just mind...

JIM: I mean, if you really wanna get nuts, think about the ethanol program that gives all these corn supports that takes food away from people and also raises corn in semi-arid areas. I mean, it's, and the ethanol, now they find out it takes more energy to produce it than it saves and now they find some pollutants in it that might be worse than gasoline. I mean, it's just, but once the government starts something like that, it's hard to stop. It's amazing. So I don't know. That's a nutty thing. Al Gore even came out about a month ago and had an article about he was wrong about ethanol.

DUSTIN: Really?

JIM: He was in the Wall Street Journal.

DUSTIN: I need to look that up.

JIM: You need to find that. He said there was a mistake. He said one reason, ah, this goes to somebody's character. He says one reason I really got behind it is he was gonna run for president and he wanted to farm out the Midwest vote.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: So he, he now, now he's saying he has a bad idea. [LAUGH] God.

DUSTIN: He didn't know what he was doing.

JIM: Oh yeah.

DUSTIN: But that's, I think that's par for politicians.

JIM: It is. Yeah. It is.

DUSTIN: Okay. Well, let's talk about something else.

JIM: Okay. Yeah, you're getting me off on the...

DUSTIN: No. That's all right. Do you, are you in like a time restraint?

JIM: Nope.

DUSTIN: Okay.

JIM: Well, I gotta go home tonight.

DUSTIN: Yeah, right. Ah, can-can you talk a little bit about the ah, the perpetual easement, the Conservation easement.

JIM: Yeah, sure. Well, for me, it's, it's just a well, and philosophically it fits. Ah, and that's the thing I just keep, kinda harping on it, trying to, is these things also, I'm a business man, too. To me, I mean, for estate planning purposes and tax purposes, it makes a lot of sense if you want to keep it together, and I do, and that's my life's work, you know? And you can't, even a King Ranch has to stop dividing up every generation. You know? They may have a lot of land to get them there. You just can't do that and

you end up with it being cared for or-or you end up with economic unity. And so I wanted, I did it because you know, probably philosophically, the phil-, phi-, philosophical reasons were number one. The driving thing. I wanted it kept together as one unit and I didn't want to ever se-, I can't, it-it would be horrible for me for, to see something like that cut up into a 200 acre tracks long. See, the Canadian river's our northern boundary. We actually go across the river. So it-it would have a lot of potential to be sliced up in ah, 300 acre deals or six hundred acre deals. You know, it really would, and so I didn't want that to happen. [NON-INTERVIEW]

JIM: Oh well. Okay. So philosophically, I wanted... well because I ah, bought out, I actually bought out my mom and her two sisters. It took a long time but I finally got it done about three years ago and ah, so you know, I didn't want it carved back up and so that's one reason, and then I had three grandkids and you couldn't, it wouldn't, and that's the worst thing I see people doing is, in my mind, people do what they want, is leaving a little chunk here and a little chunk there and then, and then so you're thinking about units, so if somebody tries to squeeze more production out of it than it's capable of doing, and abusing, or, ah, it just gets sold off and the money's gone. So, and money has a way of doing that. Just disappearing over years and so um, so this way, at least like those three kids and-and there, and I guess, if they have a family, they'll have someplace to go and then and enjoy, you know. Or if somebody wants to lease it and operate it, it's, they can do that. They can lease it from... the way it's structured, they can, if one of them wants to lease it to the other two, they can lease it and ah, run it as a ranch or they can lease it out and get the income off of it. Um, I do have some pretty good um, pretty rigid standards in their grazing standards and there's sure no-no preference pay. I mean, if one

of my grandchildren I'm crazy about happens to be overgrazing, they're out of there. I mean, it's because I have it also in a trust and it'll be reviewed annually and if they haven't met some of these standards, well, I'll have to find somebody else that wants to. I mean, that's the way I feel about it. You either do it right or don't do it. Somebody said well what if they wanted to cut it up? I said well, go buy their own place and cut it up. I don't care. They're not gonna cut this one. [LAUGH] You know? So and-and also I think it'll also help with harmony ah, family harmony. You see a lot of pretty vicious fights over money and land and...

DUSTIN: It gets a little fierce.

JIM: Yeah. Yeah. And there won't be that. You know, I've just seen so much in places we've leased from people and families and there's a deal up by Higgins where it was two sections and one pasture with the windows right across the Texas line in the middle of it, needed more water anyway. Ah, and one brother got mad at the other brother, so he made him put a fence where they fenced out the water where you couldn't use the other half without him drilling the water well. I mean, it's petty, just for meanness and stuff like that. And so anyway, I just, and I-I worry about Texas being chopped up.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: I do. And it is. We're losing more land, productive ag land every year in the state of the union. That's what we got more than a lot of it. Still, we are.

DUSTIN: We, you brought up the Kingsville Ranch, I went to school down there.

JIM: What, Kingsville? Yeah?

DUSTIN: And ah, the-the Kleburgs' I guess they're, they're part of that family. They made a lot of money and they were just interesting people. He kinda, I-I didn't get to talk

to him very long. Maybe a couple of minutes. Um, but he gave a talk one time about cutting land up and I think he kind of holds the-the same values as you do ...

JIM: Well there again, it goes back to business. It's not good business if it takes it down to such a small scale that's not an economic unit. It's just not.

DUSTIN: That's cool. That's interesting. Let's see. Thirty minutes.

JIM: Well, I could do longer than that if you want to.

DUSTIN: Well, I don't, I don't wanna take up your time. I really appreciate you meeting with me.

JIM: Well, my ah, my deal's pretty simple. It's just all about stewardship.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: And I think stewardship is good business. I mean, that's my philosophy on the whole thing. That's not, that's not very deep, I guess, but that's what I think, you know?

DUSTIN: Well, the-, let me ask you this then. You know, you-you said Canadian, the people of Canadian kind of have the attitude of...

JIM: A lot of them do, yeah.

DUSTIN: What-what about if you, if you were able to address people from other places, I mean, anyone that to persuade them and sway them, how would you, how would you do that?

JIM: I tried that ah, when we did the, I was one of the founders of that, ah, prairie rivers region. Have you heard that? Ah, well, as the deal was put together, ah, our goal was to make the northeastern part of the panhandle, at Libscomb, Hemphill, Roberts and those counties, ah, region for-for nature trip, birds and wildlife, that kind of thing. And so, ah, we went to some other counties for money to put this thing together and promote it

property and Hemphill County was gonna do that and the others were like well, you know, why? So I guess I'm not very good at persuading people. That is in, that's, I guess a unique ah, way of approaching things is what we're doing in Hemphill county, because others just didn't want to go along. They just didn't see the value in it, you know? So that's kind of discouraging.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: [LAUGH] It really is.

DUSTIN: Definitely.

JIM: Ah, but we met with them and we had, and we got a lot done. I mean, we got that ah, "Texas Trails" thing with the signs, you know, you always see on the side of the road. Ah, with the wildlife [match?] and all that. We got Hemphill County on that and all the way up through the panhandle. Maybe through... The Texas region, ah, got quite a bit done for promotion nature tr-... You can look at Texas Trails. It's got a webpage. I haven't looked at it in forever. But it was ah, it was more of a nature trails and region, not just, 'cause at that time, you were limited by resources such as motel rooms and restaurants in these parts. They need to band together and, but anyway, it happened, so...

DUSTIN: Um, I read somewhere that you were, you were planning on building ah...

JIM: Yep. The interpretive center

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Yeah. I still am. Oh, yeah. I am.

DUSTIN: Okay.

JIM: I just had to, I mean, there's just other priorities and I've spen-, spent enough money in the last year or two, was estate planning and lawyers to build one. But I wanted

to get that done in conjunction. After I got the ah, ah, conservation movement in place, and that's not cheap, getting that done, but I got it done. Um, and then followed up with some other things, which I'm through with now, so yeah. Just a matter of priorities.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: No, I, it's been a really long-term goal of mine. Really long, because it really surprised me when I found out those kids in Canadian Hemphill county high school who don't really realize ah, the prairie or what a living thing it is, you know? They don't know about it. You know? Just wanted to ah, be able to educate them and have a place to go with-with good exhibits and entertain them a little bit. You know, get their attention.

DUSTIN: Boy, I-I was 24 before I had even thought of that.

JIM: Okay. Well, I thought it would be...

DUSTIN: I understand what you're saying.

JIM: Yeah. Sure, well, it's not something that... I sure didn't think of it when I was 16 either probably, and I lived out there, but anyway, I and I have a good friend wh-, we went, we went to college together and he does ah, he's a biology major and a math-math major, but anyway, he puts on a program in Dallas. He said, it's kind of sideline for fun, but ah, ah, those kids there that actually hadn't played in grass almost. It's either asphalt or cement. You know, it's amazing. The disconnect between the land and these people and I just want to do my little part. You know, and we had, we had the Christmas Bird Count out twice and we couldn't, we skipped it one year and it never did get back out to us, that's with the Audubon Society and it was like 130 different species there in the

winter. Isn't that amazing. You wouldn't think so. There is. But it just brings those kind of things down, you know?

DUSTIN: Yeah, those things...

JIM: And [navy?] grasses... I love native grasses. I want to do, education people on that. Some of them have 15, 18 foot root systems so I mean, people don't realize. Yeah.

DUSTIN: That's wild.

JIM: It is, I know.

DUSTIN: That is wild.

JIM: Yeah. But that's why you want a good, you know, species composition – native grasses.

DUSTIN: One of the other things I wanted to ask you about ah, we talked about it a little bit already, the green movement. Ah, you know, the movement towards clean energy and stuff like that. Do you feel like that's an effective argument towards steward-, towards what you feel is stewardship?

JIM: Well - Yeah, well, if, there's a lot of well-intentioned people but maybe some of their outcomes aren't so good. Ah, I don't question their intentions. Ah, I personally think that-that responsible private land owners will take better care of-of ah, resources than-than state or federal people. I've been on too many deals, I mean, the federal government will take up I don't know how much land and then they don't manage it. They don't take care of it. And they've had some really bad practices over the years. You know? But they get, if it gets sent to the hands of people who have different agendas and you know, I don't know. But yeah, we've gotta do something about it. I mean, I don't, to me, it's inevitable that there's gonna be nuclear energy. What else can

you do? I mean, you can't burn a coal. I think natural gas is a great stepping-stone, 'cause it's cleaner than some of the others. We've got it. We can get it off this, our economy can get off this foreign oil thing. I don't know what the holdup is on that, but it won't be, it ultimately, it's finite. I mean, I don't know how you get away from the fact that it's gonna have to be electrical generation with nuclear energy at some point.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Um...

JIM: I don't, that scares people, I know. But it's just inevitable.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Unless you can come in, it doesn't seem that these other, I don't know. Unless there's something else out there that I don't know about and there probably is, but...

DUSTIN: I-I don't think so. Um, my-my col-, my roommate in college, his dad is vice president of the South Texas Project. That's the nuclear plant in Texas.

JIM: Okay.

DUSTIN: And ah, you know, he's, my roommate's an engineering major, so he, he's studied all that (the different technologies) and he-he's convinced that that's all that's left to go to.

JIM: It is. Of any on a large scale.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: You can have wind supplement.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: But it's not, it's got its own problems. Ah, ah, there, you know, we can do different things to supplement it, but for large-scale cities and large-scale users, it's gon-... But you know, the nuclear technology, I mean, GE and some of these people are building

reactors that are safe and small and send them to Europe. You can't use them here. But we've had them for years. France, of all people. You know? They got 'em everywhere. Japan. I mean, it's, they're not "three-mile island" structures anymore.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: They're just not.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: So, I-I was reading about some company that's gonna have hell getting licensed, but they've got ah these little reactors that are so small it would be like for a city of 1500 people. And-and they're a lot safer and they don't have, and they reuse you know, that's the thing they're working on and they're making progress where you reuse the-the, until the byproduct is almost negligible. It's not as hot as it used to be. That's something they're working on. I don't know what else gonna come here. So [LAUGHS] you know.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Um, well how do you feel about the wind turbines then?

JIM: Oh, I don't like things that won't stand on their own and if you took away the tax credits and things, they would stand on their own.

DUSTIN: Okay. See I didn't know that about that [continuity?].

JIM: No, no. They're highly subsidized.

DUSTIN: Really?

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: I didn't know that.

JIM: Yeah. By tax, tax breaks and-and-and investment ah, depreciation ah, accelerated depreciation. Yeah. They're kilowatt per hour cost, now I will say, they're-they're

creeping up on coal. Yeah. And I'm not against it. I just wish they were a little more market based. You know? I don't want them on me.

DUSTIN: [LAUGH] Yeah.

JIM: I'm kinda like the Kennedys. Yeah, everyone get one but me, you know? On the coast of Nantucket or wherever the hell, you know? They don't want them up there. So that's the only thing in common, but that, I just don't and there's some real environmental problems, could be, with those. I mean there's a lot, the jury's still out on the effects they have on migrating birds and...

DUSTIN: Oh yeah.

JIM: You know, and not just prairie chickens, but bats. There's some, it's not, it's not, nothing's free.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: There's a cost to everything, and I don't know if that's been properly ah, evaluated 'cause the government got behind and pushed them so hard with tax breaks and things I don't know.

DUSTIN: Let's see. Well, some of the things that you are talking about I've never heard of. I never thought about that.

JIM: Now, if I had a cotton farm in the south plains and the water was depleted and the soil was depleted, and all you can see is fields for miles and miles and miles, I might feel a little different about it to be fair. You know? It sure don't hurt the aesthetics. You know?

DUSTIN: Yeah. It's true. Yeah.

JIM: And ah, and I don't know how much, what kind of life you have, you know? I don't know. But I can understand why there's places like that where they're sure all for it. 'Cause their tax base is gone and their income's depleted. So I wouldn't, I wouldn't want to say no, you shouldn't have it anywhere anytime. I just do, I just hope that people do some ah, their due diligence on it and don't just rush into it. But we'll see.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Well, I don't know. I was thinking about it the other day.

JIM: I don't, I don't mind...

DUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. That's fine.

JIM: I can talk about that stuff forever. I love it.

DUSTIN: Good. Well...

JIM: And I don't know how much I tell you, 'cause like say in five minutes, I can sum up my philosophies about land ethics, you know? It's just...

DUSTIN: Well.

JIM: ...stewardship and then like I said, you know, long term thinking and then ah, decently and in good order.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Did-did you ever read A Sand County Almanac

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: Yeah?

JIM: I did.

DUSTIN: You, can you tell me about that?

JIM: Well, I mean, well honestly, some of it got a little wordy. I had to flip through it. Getting bored. But I mean, I get the philosophy, 'cause I agree with it. You know.

DUSTIN: That's, see, and that's kind of how I did, too. I haven't read the whole thing. I've read, good lord, some chapter, you know? So I'm, I'm out there with you and-and I'm an English major.

JIM: [LAUGHS] Okay. I mean, people, I've been asked that before and I actually, I did and before I got the award. I mean, I just, and then I saw something on PBS about ah, who did you mention before? Um, good lord.

DUSTIN: Wallace Stegner?

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Which was really good. Wally Stegner. That was a good show. Did you see that on PBS?

DUSTIN: I-I didn't.

JIM: Man, it was good.

DUSTIN: Good, I'll look at it.

JIM: Oh yeah. I bet you you can get somewhere and get it ah, DVD of it or a CD. A lot of this stuff you can.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: But it gave a good account of him, what's his daughter I think it talks about? Anyway, it was good.

DUSTIN: Yeah, he's a, he's an interesting guy.

JIM: Yeah.

DUSTIN: And I, and really...

JIM: I can relate to him better than I can Aldo...

DUSTIN: Well, see his stuff is what really got me interested...

JIM: Oh, okay.

DUSTIN: ...in all this. Um, his, essay's and, he ah, he wrote the Wilderness Letter um, and that's, that's the letter that ah, that's where I was like, ah I want to look more into that, that's how I kinda got rolling on all this. And I got to talking to my advisor and he was like well you really need to go back and start with Leopold and so that's how I ... that's how I came across Leopold, but that's...

JIM: That, that Almanac is-is a good deal and that foundation does good work, but like I said, that book, there's a lot of, it gets wordy.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Yes, I read it. I have, Wally Stegner's as much. I saw that show, but I mean, I've read things about him, but not a lot of stuff, but I-I really related to him. I think that's pretty cool now.

DUSTIN: I recommend if you're gonna look him up, to read his essays.

JIM: Okay.

DUSTIN: 'Cause he has some fiction. He has ah, Big Rock Candy Mountain and ah, a couple other novels.

JIM: Were they compiled?

DUSTIN: No.

JIM: His essays aren't?

DUSTIN: Oh, his essays, yeah. His essays are.

JIM: Okay.

DUSTIN: Um, I thought you were talking about his books. His novels are ah, not very good.

JIM: Okay.

DUSTIN: But ah, but his essays are-are great.

JIM: Uh-hum. Well he made a big impact.

DUSTIN: A huge impact.

JIM: Yeah. You know honestly, and this is, I don't wanna sound arrogant, because I live out on a ranch and all this stuff, at some point, we're gonna start building up instead of out. We just aren't. Can't everybody have 20 acres. I mean, you're gonna ruin your water. I mean, it just, you can't keep going. I guess it'll take care of itself, but eventually Japan quit. I mean, that's it, I'm sorry. I just, that doesn't sound nice, 'cause everybody ought to have a right to do what they can afford, but...

DUSTIN: Well...

JIM: ...reality. Well, it runs out, yeah. I wish we could do more before we got to the point it was ugly, you know? But we'll see.

DUSTIN: That's, long-term, that's, that's my goals. Um, 'cause I'm, I'm trying to get into law school right now. You know, I want to come back into this area and work with environmental law because of land management or land rights. Land usage, water usage. That's-that's what I'm really getting passionate about.

JIM: That's good.

DUSTIN: Yeah. So ...

JIM: That's good.

DUSTIN: Maybe, maybe we can make a difference somewhere down the line.

JIM: Yeah. Yeah.

DUSTIN: So...

JIM: And where are you from?

DUSTIN: I'm from here. I'm from Amarillo.

JIM: That'd help. Oh, that'd be good.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. But-but I'm, but I'm [OVERLAP]

JIM: I mean, I don't think [OVERLAP] if you, if you came back and worked in a place where you were from, I think it would have more, it would be more rewarding and, I mean, I would think. Maybe not.

DUSTIN: Yeah. I-I think it...

JIM: That's why I said that'd be good.

DUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. I think it's more rewarding. And-and for me, I-I grew up in the city ah, the south part of town and ah, didn't venture out anywhere, you know, really and kinda, kinda got out on my own and when I came back is when I started kinda venturing around to these other little places and-and they're just so much out in the grass, it's just fascinating.

JIM: It is.

DUSTIN: And you realize some, someone needs to hear this stuff, you know?

JIM: Yep. And that's the advantage of riding a horse over a four-wheeler.

DUSTIN: Yeah.

JIM: Seriously.

DUSTIN: I've ridden a horse once in my life and I got [OVERLAP].

JIM: Well, not everybody needs to go riding a horse but I mean, ah, if you are a steward, a land steward, in my mind, you can't see it through a windshield. Not-not the little fine points. Yeah, you can, but not, 'cause if you drive by and you're 20 miles an hour, and you're looking out at things horizontally, you don't see what's going on as you do looking down on it from back of a horse.

DUSTIN: Yeah. That-that makes sense.

JIM: Yeah, it does.

DUSTIN: It's kinda...

JIM: As a matter of fact, I had some cattle I had to deal with that a range scientist from another part of the world where they had about 45 inches of annual rainfall and he was a new guy and he wanted to raise his stocking rate, and we'd been doing that cattle deal since I was a baby. And I said you know, I told the range management that, manager, he's telling the new scientist of, and he came out in his pasture and he said well, he's fiddling around. I said you need to get him on that, that John Deere Gator or whatever it is, and drive him out across and let him look down on it, 'cause if you're looking out there horizontally and it looks like there's a lot of grass, but the plants are this far apart, you know, and some of them are in the sand hills. There's no turf. You gotta be careful. It'll bite you right there. Anyway, you gotta really baby that sucker [the grass]. It will educate you. [LAUGH] But what... I'm sitting here saying stuff like that, I'm getting ready to

DUSTIN: Well, good. Um, well here. I'll give you one [OVERLAP]

JIM: I'll start asking you if you...

DUSTIN: That's kind of just a sample of my writing.

JIM: Oh good.

DUSTIN: It-it's kind of in, I think...

JIM: You know, to be successful on the environmental side of things it needs to also have a, a, it needs to be, have a good balance. It could be, ah you know, financially rewarding as well.

DUSTIN: Yeah. [INAUDIBLE]

JIM: Well, before long, the species composition changed and the soil became degraded and...[INAUDIBLE]

[LONG PAUSE]

JIM: Well, I don't know, I hope I did you some good?

DUSTIN: You did, you did, thank you. I'll probably try to take you up on your offer to come out there.

JIM: That'd be good, I'd like to – I like to show people around. I do.

DUSTIN: Yeah, well do that, and if I do need some more I've got your number.

JIM: Oh, you feel free, seriously, I like what your doing.

[END OF TAPE]