

## **Oral History Cover Sheet**

**Name: Estella B. Leopold and Trish Stevenson**

**Date of Interview: May 9, 2011**

**Location of Interview: Aldo Leopold Center, Baraboo Wisconsin**

**Interviewer: Stephen Laubach**

**Most Important Projects:** The Aldo Leopold Foundation

**Brief Summary of Interview:** The following is an interview of Dr. Estella Leopold, youngest child of Aldo and Estella Leopold and noted palynologist at the University of Washington in Seattle. Estella talks about land management on the Shack property, including her father's experiments with controlled burns. She discusses her time on the board of the Leopold Foundation and how it grew from a small family operation to an active nonprofit environmental organization. She briefly discusses some of the challenges of the Foundation in its staffing and relationship with the Sand County Foundation, as well as its vision for the future. [Interviewer note: a heavy rainstorm occurred during this interview and rain pelting the roof affected sound quality.]

Key: I (Interviewer) = Stephen Laubach; R/R1 (Responder) = Estella Leopold; R2 = Trish Stevenson (daughter of Estella's sister Nina Bradley)

I: Today is Monday, May 9 [2011] and this is Steve Laubach and I'm interviewing Estella Leopold about the history of the Leopold Memorial Reserve. Just so I have all the info with the file. So I'll start with a fairly general question and then we can see where that takes us. I have this list of questions but I'll generally just, kind of, go wherever the conversation takes us. Um, so, the research I've done so far, you are a regular visitor, along with your mother and with Susan.

R: From the beginning, you're talking about, to where?

I: I'm talking, so, 1950 through 19-, you know, through, 1975 when Nina and Charlie came to the reserve.

R: Well I've been going to the shack since 1935.

I: Oh yeah, but the period I'm focusing on for my -.

R: And a new read.

I: Yeah, and so I'll have some questions about that, actually.

R: Let's see, Nina and Charlie came, what year did they come out here?

I: 1976.

R: Thank you.

I: But my question is, if you can describe your involvement with the reserve both as a family member, a more personal way, and then, as that transitioned also to a professional role as you became a board member of the Leopold Foundation. So my first questions kind of a broad, rough chronology of, of your involvement with the reserve project, and when you came involved in the board and to what capacity. And then we'll get to more specific and interesting questions after that.

R: Well, the Leopold foundation was started by a Starker in I think it was '83, is that correct?

I: Late '82.

R: Late '82. And, we were written in; us siblings were written in as permanent board members at that time. And we did not expand that board uh, to outside, members outside the family until we invited Gene Likens and [George] Archibald to join us at the same time, which I forgot which year that was. But I think that was '96 or something like that, when I became president. Anyhow, involvement. It was pretty second hand on my part. I would listen to the reports. We met the Leopold group, family, met in the basement of Nina's and Charlie's house once a year. And then we would just get a general report from them on what they were doing. And Starker, for example, was along. For some of those years his health wasn't terribly good but at each meeting we would hear about the relationship with the Head Foundation. We were thrilled that Reed has managed to build the memorial reserve, which is what he's been doing for years. And it was very impressive. And of course, very good protection, regionally really, for the habitat. And I think everything was

going very smoothly. It seemed to me that the rough spots began a little later when the house was up. And Reed wanted to charge rent, and then there was some issue about taxes. And then I guess Nina began to object to paying that rent, or that, I don't know what part of it she didn't want to deal with. But it began to get stressful, just then. It was only about that. And that's where all the stress began and we've been a lot apart since, and it's just been too bad.

I: Right, that's one of the things I touch on. To add some reality and humanity to the story that there were challenges along the way, if you're going to think about cooperative conservation on private lands. So that one, that issue does play a role. Although, I try not to over emphasize it in the draft.

R: Yeah, did you interview Nina?

I: Yes, we did interview Nina.

R: Good, because she's pretty weak now. I think it would be taxing to her.

I: Yeah, we interviewed her coming up on two years ago. Stan Temple was a big -.

R: She would have told you all about it. What about Stan?

I: Stan was the one who initially pushed for this whole project that I'm working on. For someone to interview people and...

R: That's a good idea. There's no reason why we can't be working together now, better. I was all for it but I think it's the communication level, maybe the higher up level. But Reed and I write to each other about once a year, because I'm crazy about his daughter who lives in Seattle.

I: Oh, okay. Stay in touch?

R: She's a special girl. Susan, what's her last name? Bennett.

I: At least it seems like there is some, a beginning of closure with that, with the resolution in '03 where the anonymous donor purchased the land for Nina and Charlie. The land that was the subject of the dispute. My understanding was that...

R: Which land was that?

R2: No, it's the house.

I: Oh, so is that still...

R2: It's not the land.

R: I'm lost. What land?

I: So some of the documents that I have read through indicate that in about '03 an anonymous donor stepped up and said, we'd like to buy this land for the Leopold family and for the Leopold Foundation. Because Reed was leasing it to the Leopolds.

R: Oh, this land.

I: Where the study center is located.

R2: No, the house, Mom [Nina Leopold Bradley] and Charlie's house.

R: The house still belongs to Sand County. Sand County owns the land right now.

R2: It makes it really complicated.

I: So this is where these interviews are helpful because, especially with people who know the deep history of this, some of the documents seem to indicate that the matter had been resolved, somewhat.

R: Oh yeah, that nice donor woman put up money to buy the house from Sand County for and Reed wanted it, then, to belong to ALF [Aldo Leopold Foundation], that it can't just be bought for Nina and the family, it had to be given, bought for ALF, so ALF owns the building. And the land has always belonged to Reed, and I forget what it is, like 5 acres or something, with no stakes around it, and it's just an area. And then Charlie bought the woods, which is an interesting story with Reed and Charlie. And the hill, as I recall, Charlie wanted to buy...am I stepping out of your questions?

I: No, no, this is fine.

R: Charlie wanted to buy the woods and the hill next to where he had built the house. And Reed said, okay, that's alright, why don't you let me buy it for you, and then you can buy it from me? Which was fine, except then Reed put in these first right of refusal which was complicating and there was some other details, legally I can't recall, but Charlie was concerned about. So, here come this document, with, and then Charlie said, okay, let's do it, so he bought it from Reed, with first right of refusal. The first right of refusal probably involved things like, well, thou shall not build on that land if you are looking for a place to build a center. So that was Reed's request, and that's in writing, I'm sure. Let's see. At some point right in there, Charlie and Nina decided to step down as directors of the training unit, which is what they call it, and Reed, let's see, how did they do this. They were having a fellows program. Charlie put up some of the money for the fellows to come in from the university area with their own professors to guide them and to work on the reserve, various types of issues, and as Nina described it, they were learning a lot about every single facet of an ecosystem on a small piece of land, which they of course did. And I don't know how many they've had, but there must have been, maybe, 30 or more fellows.

I: Yeah, yeah I've seen some of their project titles.

R: Some published, like Bill Cates, and some didn't. And some most went on doing something good. Mike Mossman is working on the IBA [International Bird Area] project.

R2: Dick Cates.

R: And Dick Cates, is, Nina sent me some reprints, you know, he's working on soil or something. Great people. Charlie Luthin, who was in, eventually, as a fellow, worked with Nina and Charlie on the establishment of the EBL prairie, which is, as you probably know, where Charlie wanted to dig the pond, he was laying all of this peat and sediment from what was a wetland on to a plowed field or something, next door to then, where they were going to build the building. And they spread this stuff out and Nina got ready the year before, collecting seeds on her own with bushels and bushels of little seeds, to spread on this area, which was, as you know, sterile soil because there weren't any weeds in it. It came from the sub surface, or it was maybe up to 10,000 years old, so there weren't a seeds, viable seeds in it. And of course, here came this instant prairie, and she began counting, I don't know if you want this kind of history but she was -.

I: No, this is great. This is a new angle.

R: She was looking at the, of course Charlie guided her all the way, but it was, she was the engine.

R2: I don't think Charlie guided her all the way. Charlie didn't know about Botany.

R: He wasn't much of a botanist, yeah. She, I said Nina, what you ought to do, the plants were coming up and I said, Nina, what you ought to do is do what the geological survey does and you go out there with a little point counter, which has 10 points and set them down on the ground in 300 places and you've got a count, out of 300 hits, what percent is bare ground, what percent is entopic ground, what percent is Baptisia and what percent is, whatever it is. And you calculate this and as the plants, through three or four years, the bare ground will get covered up with debris or plants, and that's anti-erosion, that's good, you're building a soil. So, she said, what's the point counter? So I was out visiting, of course I was out to visit for once a year at least. And we built a point counter out of wood and drilled little holes and took a wire which we bought in Baraboo, and ran it through there and went out and they started right away, Charlie Luthin and her, taking these readings. So, for each year, they had a number of hits, and then Charlie and Nina set up points which Buddy filled in later with steel posts which have a little red knob on them, I think there were 8 or 10 of them. No, maybe 20. Nina's special plot areas where each one they'd treat a little bit different. Then the, Terbilcox was hired to get in there with his harrow and go through the surface and they have spread one, broadcast one kind of seed mix everywhere. And on top of that they had all these funny little circles. Whole bunch of Baptisia here, whole bunch of prairie smoke over there, you know, that, special treatment.

I: At the 20 sites, mhm.

R: And then they were going in there and getting point counts. And in three or four years, Charlie plotted the data up, and you could see that the bare ground had almost closed and then you had what we might, I call, and instant prairie. It was really very nice. And I was trying so hard last year to help write this up. Calling on Nina's memory and her notes, she has very good notes, with Charlie Luthin, who backed out saying, I'm not a botanist, don't involve me in the write-up. So I called on Swenson, and we're trying to finish writing up the history on the EBL, Nina calls it the

EBL Prairie.

I: Now, is that the prairie right next to the pond or the one over by the prairie nursery.

R: Next to the pond. Yeah, well they did a job, we had Buddy on that other one.

R2: Didn't Konrad Liegel go work on that with her?

R: Hm?

R2: Didn't Konrad also work on that with her?

R: Konrad was around. We don't have pictures of him working with Nina but he probably did help, he was a fellow at that time.

I: He has been very useful for my work. He has these detailed binders. I'm doing a chapter on the history of the land before your father purchased it and he went through every single property deed back to 1849. Recorded, you know, who sold what to who, so, yeah, the land, there, he traced 7 or 9 property owners. Sometimes just for a year or two, it was just land speculation, then they would sell it. And then you had the Baxters who owned the land for about 60 years at least, and then the Alexanders who owned it for about 20 years right up to 1935. So his detail, it was, you know, I had all of these unanswered questions and then I, Stan had found a box of his stuff somewhere just lying around. And it answered all of my questions.

R: Wonderful!

I: I have to meet him, he's out in Seattle by you.

R: Oh yeah, he's a wonderful guy. He's on his own now, he used to work for Gates Law Firm with a very expensive hourly fee.

I: Well, if his, his attention to detail is impressive.

R: Yeah, I guess that's true.

I: One question I have, in the research I've done so far, Nina and Charlie are, you know, there's a lot of paper work, there's a big paper trail on all the work they've been doing. So, but I'd like to hear a little more, and Starker, his name, I have a management plan from 1982, he wrote a management plan. It was a very thin document, it was just some of his ideas. But I don't have as much about you and Carl and Luna and I know you were active in the board. So if I could, if you could describe a little to me in terms of your involvement and Luna's and Carl's in terms of the reserve project and some of the things they cared deeply about in their role as a board member.

R: I think our roles were minimal in terms of the things you were talking about. I think we had plenty of input on dealing with the shack, dad's land, the Baxter property including across the road from the shack. And hunting, Luna liked to hunt every fall, so he would make sure that we had a

board meeting on October 11 or 12 or whatever it is.

I: Susan told me, his birthday? His birthday's the 8.

R: And Starker would always be with us when he could, until his death in '83 or '84, whichever year that was, right after we started the foundation. It sounds to me a very short interval with Starker. But now I keep remembering these basement meetings which Nina and Charlie would go on and on reporting that was going on or that they had done or the fellas had done. We would sit around with Carrie, oh Carrie and Trishy and all the relatives sitting there. Sometimes with their husbands. Oh, I know Gordon was always there when he could. So I don't know how to describe the input. I think the main concern was the management of the shack land. Yes, there was discussions about relationships with Sand County. And some of it was pretty, shall we say, not fiery but, you know, blustery talking about the rent or these particular problems that Nina would describe, which we just mentioned. And then we would just go on and it seems to me that was an issue that just stood there for a long time.

R2: I think one of the differences was Nina and Charlie were just very trusting and thought everyone were good people and they didn't have a lawyer.

R: Oh, that's another issue.

R2: And Sand County's was very much a different attitude. They were collecting and, you know, doing the best they could for their own.

R: That went with the name swipe. I don't know what else you'd call it. We children wanted to break up the investment that dad had left for the family and for mother so that we could each manage our own little portion of our fund. And that meant we dropped the Sand County trust, I think that's the name of the trust we had, it was for dad's money. We called it the Sand County trust. See, by that time, the book was published, and we were using the words Sand County. And as soon as we dropped that name, it seemed to be taken up by Reed in order to [re]name the Head Foundation. And at that time, Ronald Maddox, our lawyer, who had hired Ann Ross to write the bylaws and all for the Leopold Foundation. She wanted, -.

R2: I believe Ronald wasn't a lawyer, I believe he was an accountant. Wasn't Ronald an accountant?

R: Yeah, well he was mother's and dad's, well, he was mother's lawyer.

R2: Oh, he was a lawyer?

R: Yeah. Oh yeah. Oh gosh, he was a great guy. He came to Nina and said, I've just heard that the Head Foundation is changing its name to Sand County Foundation, you have to do something, you have to get that name, that's your name. And Nina said, well these are friends of ours, that's probably alright, and Reed, I should say, Ronald Maddox was very insistent, and Nina always responded, no, that's alright. And of course, we're sorry about that because now the, there was quite a bit of confusion in the public about who was who but I think we're beginning to build our

own name.

I: Yeah, yeah, especially with the Legacy Center.

R: Sorry, I have this deep cough, I don't want to give it to anybody.

I: And, oh, I'll wait.

R: So, that's how it went.

I: And if you have any memories, also, of Carl's interests and, I've seen him in a couple of pictures, he was at the dedication. I guess there was a picture of you, Carl, Susan, and Nina, at the dedication of the Bradley Study Center. It's kind of a faded photo.

R: Oh, I can't remember back that far.

I: Yeah, but what were some of the interests that Carl brought, and some of the, in terms of how he, ideas that he might have advocated for how the family foundation should, what directions it should pursue, or?

R: Carl was originally a very good field ecologist and did a lot of his own work at Harvard on plant ecology, published a couple papers. He was a very good ecologist. He's a terrific guy in the woods. He walked like a panther, just amazing agility. And I think his advice to Nina and Charlie has a lot to do with management of plants ecosystem and I think, he eventually came a president for a while. But the presidency went down from age to age from Starker to Luna to Carl and then hopped over to me because I was getting interested in bringing out small group up to, up a notch as an NGO and we were very disorganized at first. And Nina got the first grant so that -. But I think Carl was advising all the time at the local basis, and I think he felt strongly about Reed's taking the name. He was, I think, bitter about that.

I: Yeah, I came across a letter where Reed was gonna have a board member from Weyerhaeuser on the Sand County board. Carl was not hap-, well Charlie was not happy, cause he remembered in the 1950's -.

R: Charlie wrote a letter about that.

I: Yeah. So I can see, Carl, I can see he was not too pleased about that either.

R: Yeah, I can't remember all of that. That's, that's true, that happened.

I: But I'm interested in pursuing this thing that you mentioned about where you wanted to bring the foundation up a notch. What were some of the ways, how was the foundation operating and what was your vision for where it could go?

R: Well the facts were that we had a little family group and we had a lot of fellows and we had, on the land projects, and we had daddy's land. But as for outreach, yes, we had some friendly visitors



and all, but the thing is that we didn't have a staff and we didn't have policy about visitors, we just, you know, we were just entertaining friends.

R2: Well, we did have policy about visitors. We avoided them.

I: Yeah, Frank handled not a large group but, he would run a fair amount of tours as I could tell.

R: Small groups, yeah.

R2: But we were very careful not to publish maps.

R: Yes, we didn't want people to know where the shack was and, by the way, Susan was always a big help to us in guiding us, generally. She was the one who said, shouldn't publish a map, you know, this was our policy, we were trying to protect the shack.

R2: And also, it was originally set up so that the upcoming generations would be involved and be trained by the, the siblings and there was a specific, it was a family foundation and there, everyone was family. And people learned from their parents.

R: Yeah, that's right. And at the meetings, we would get out in the fields and work together. Trishy was involved as a board member early on and Carrie Nelson -.

R2: Most of the offspring were on the board, had a turn on the board to learn.

R: That's right, yeah. Did John serve, John Collins serve on the bo-, oh there was a, there's another piece we have to record so you know it. John Collins and, this is when Nina and Charlie were running fellows in or around the reserve, they would always have projects going, and their quarterly reports, which were great. And John Collins and Carrie and Susan Freeman, there was a time when Susan Freeman had come and visited as a fellow to do artwork, paint things, get her away from still life and get her in the field, decided to write a letter to Starker.

R2: That's not quite, it was me, John -.

R: John Collins.

R2: Me and John and either Susan or Carrie and I have that letter if you'd like a copy of it.

R: Well I have it too, so we have to look it up. You ought to get a copy of it.

I: Sure, sure.

R: Dear Starker, we don't want you to give this land of dad's to the University of Wisconsin.

I: Okay, that answers a key question, so this was around 1980 or something that you -.

R2: Yes, Susan and I were pregnant, and we took Starker out in the prairie and we were really

nervous and we said, we really don't want our inheritance to go to the university. And he didn't know that there were younger family members that cared that much. Because his family lived on the West coast then.

I: Nina had told me that story but it wasn't clear from what she said whether she was talking about the 1960s or the 1980s so then they said nieces and nephews and I thought, it had to be the '80s.

R2: Yes, I believe it was '83, '82, because that was when we were both -.

R: Yeah because it was before Starker took action.

I: So he wanted to give it to the university, what was the idea there? Research and greater public access?

R: No, just, it would be a place, like an arboretum to do research, I don't know about visitation, but. And I think the whole idea there was instigated by these young people that we ought to have our own family group running it as a foundation. So, he consulted with Ronald Maddox, mother's lawyer. He had already been talking to Ronald Maddox about mother's money, the money, dad left. And said, we need a young person to help us draft bylaws and start up a foundation and this what we would call it would be the Aldo Leopold Shack Foundation, and so, this is what happened, so, that was, by '83, Starker and Anne [Ross] and Ronald Maddox had a draft, and we all went through it at one of the annual meetings and it became our guide post. So, then what happens?

I: Just coming back to an earlier question. So you wanted to move the foundation from a small family operation and I read that Nina got a large grant from the Packard Foundation?

R: That's what did it! Nina sat down herself and wrote to Packard who was a friend of Starker's. Starker, I think it was about the time Starker passed away, because we didn't need his direct help, he remembered Starker and said, yeah, we'll give you this grant for \$100,000 or whatever it was. And Nina was so excited, we all were. And so then, Nina said, let's hire Charlie Luthin and we'll start as a board and a staff, and so that the rest is, and Leopold reports from Charlie and Nina, Charlie wrote all this stuff down. And I think they're all at Nina's house, if you need to look at it.

I: Yeah, so, you mean, correspondents of Charlie's?

R: No, quarterly reports.

I: Oh yes, I have seen a few of those, but -.

R: They're excellent.

I: I would need to spend a long time to really get the full feel of them, there's several volumes. But, so that's what I thought.

R: But reaching out in to the public and how to handle visitors, which were starting to increase, we needed more structure. And, so, we started, Charlie Luthin and I started working on the first thing

we thought we ought to have is an intern to help, that's where Buddy started with us. And then we needed a policy for hires and Ret Nelson helped us draft an employee policy. Which all we did was ask [George] Archibald for a copy of his and we just took it and changed the words around, so it was kind of nice to have that. We established committees immediately to work on this and that. And of course, not knowing very much, we had too many committees, but eventually, we found a way to involve some of the family and work like, education, talk about, Madeline became involved. Visitation, policy issues, committees could draft ideas and then flip them around at the board meeting in the fall each year. So then the next question was sending out for more money. Charlie was drafting some proposals. And then I guess I went to China, or some place, I was gone, and Gordon was the acting president.

R2: We had a few other hires before him.

R: Then we went for a search to look across the United States to look for a new Charlie Luthin. And we found one in California named Keith something. And Keith was a wildlife guy, and he started to serve with us. By this time, the action between Head Foundation and us was a little raw. And we were having an event at the Baraboo campus for our donors, and there were local people, and we had made up a list and everything. And, there was this, so, Keith, not knowing any better, put Reed Coleman and a whole bunch of Sand County people on this list and we were scared to death to have them join us. And so we took those names off, but Keith was something else. He had a hard time serving in the way we had hoped he would.

R2: Wasn't he basically a duck guy?

R: Yeah, he was a waterfowl man.

I: So, personnel issues.

R2: Well, he just didn't have a broad base for the land and issues that were here, I think.

R: That's right, that's exactly right. And so he resigned, and immediately the board said let's, let's see, I was president then, because I can remember that. Let's put Buddy in as acting CEO, or acting Executive Director and that worked out so well that we just kept right on going. I served from 1996, on and off to 2001, something in there.

I: That's right when the big expansion period happened.

R: Yes, we were reaching out for funding and we were doing all kinds of different stuff, including -. And then Buddy hired Steve Swenson and, who else, I can't remember.

R2: Theresa came on.

R: And then we found Theresa, we inherited her from -.

R2: ICF.

R: From ICF. She was, she suddenly walked out. She was tired of working with Archibald and that group and she lives locally. And Buddy heard about that and said, would you work with us? Yes! And she's been on our staff ever since.

I: Another question I have is the role of the place of this land and the developing science of ecological restoration. So you saw your father experimenting here and also at the arboretum. Could you tell me a little bit about how this land fit in his, in his growing schema of, you know, ecological restoration, what it meant to him, it was right as he was formulating ideas about it as a science based on his own personal experiment here and then at other sites. But how did this fit into his ideas about, and contribute to his ideas of restoration.

R: Well, I think he was very much an experimenter. He certainly showed us, by his own examples, just fascinating little tests. He went up on the sand hill and dug a, an area of a meter square, and took everything out and sprinkled some seeds in there, and all of a sudden in three years, we had beautiful little quadratic prairie up there. I mean, that was an experiment and it worked, beautifully. That was one, and then he and Carl, I was a little kid, tagged along, and we went up the road that goes up to the gate from the house and turned toward the elms in the old road, and he established with oak stakes, two little quadrats, where Carl painstakingly was told to map all, each plant.

I: Your father's love of maps.

R: And it's in the journal. It's in the journal. So there's this map, and here's another one.

R2: And Carl was a fabulous map creator. Oh, just beautiful.

I: Oh he was? So it's a genetic trait?

R2: Well learned. But his journals, apparently, are the best.

R: Oh, they are. They're folksy too. Dad never wrote about what we're doing as a family as much as reporting activity as ecologically and what birds and so forth were here. Um, so these little examples were ways in which we got the idea, okay, experiment. You set these up and come back in ten years and let's see, the panic grass has expanded, the moss has retreated. I don't know if we ever followed up because then, in '48 we lost dad. But, Carl and I would talk about going out and retrieving this. And we put some new stakes in, but I know where they were because I was there, but we can't pin it down exactly. But of course the whole cover has changed. But it was dad's model to experiment in that way.

I: And fire, Nina mentioned, at first he burned some strips just as fire break protection, and then he realized he could do more with that. So did you participate in some of those?

R: Yes. Yes.

I: Was it a family thing? Graduate students?

R: Oh yeah, we were, family. Yeah, this was all family weekends. What we would do is dad got

these long pieces of corrugated tin, roofing tin, and punch holes in each end and put some wires on them as a handle. They were full length. And we would pair four of them and we would drag them up and burn in between, that's a fire lane, and we would go up wind, you know, running up wind, and get these all burned out, and pull them out and put the whole thing out. We have grooves.

I: So it was just little, you know, the size of this room, kind of scale, burns he was doing?

R: Well the, from the edge of that table to the edge of this table was the width of the fire lane, lets say.

I: Okay, with the corrugated tin, protecting the fire.

R: Yeah, and eventually dad wanted to just put a furrow down on this edge and that edge to make sure we didn't get the fire off and burn some of his beloved pines. So he had some furrows dug. And then the furrows seemed like such a good idea that he had a whole bunch more of them put in so we could plant on them. But mostly, the, what he saw was coming up on the fire lanes was more perennial native grasses than the other area, the control.

I: Where was this seed coming from? Was it in the soil?

R: It just came up.

I: It was just waiting, waiting for the right stimulus?

R: Well now we know that the charcoal and the carbon and the nutrients from the burn is a fertilizer. So it fertilized the natives, whatever few natives were there were sprouting well and doing very well on the fire lane. Better than on the agricultural field. So he said, sounds like we better burn the whole field and then we used the fire lane and burned up wind to that. To where the triangle was, the pines. So we did and that was a big success. Well meanwhile, the family had visited the Coleman's home and gotten some seedlings and heart maples and things that we would plant as a sugar bush at the shack. Or we would stop at a road cut and take big cuts out of the sod, where there were native plants, and wrap 'em in burlap and stick 'em in the trunk, get 'em out on the prairie and put 'em in place in various spots.

R2: And I believe that's what they did at the arboretum.

R: Yeah. Well that's -.

I: So, just on the drive out here, you'd drive by some road construction projects -.

R2: Well I can show you where the birch came from because momma used to always say, there's where we went and got the birch. It's on highway 12.

R: Oh really? You mentioned the arboretum.

R2: Well that, I believe that's how the arboretum, they would go out and collect clumps of sod

when they were first -.

R: Yeah, they probably do. Well that's where we would, well dad was head of that too, the operation, so we were doing the same thing at the same time. So anyway, then there they were, the native grasses and pot of, you know, *Liatrix* and all this stuff. So they were proliferating and, first on the burns and then on the old corn field which we then burned and the improvement was just wonderful. But what did happen was, we had Bobwhite's, and you'd hear him everyday, they were just lovely, and when you'd go barefoot out there on the corn field, you would get very bad burrs on your feet because we had sand burrs and a lot of bare ground. And that panic grass, those doves just loved. When we began to make it into a solid prairie, we lost the panic grass, much of it, and the doves, and the quail. We don't have any Bobwhites anymore. So that was a terrible loss but we didn't know that.

R2: And those ridges, that you dug, I can remember being there when I was a kid.

I: Ridges for the fire lanes?

R: Yeah.

R2: Yeah, still prevalent.

I: So can you describe, so, I've been out on, oh, I'll wait till you -.

R: Sorry.

I: So I, I, you probably heard, when I was teaching at Lawrenceville, I would bring groups of students here to the reserve and we'd read some of your dad's letters and all of that, come out here and...So that was my first participation in a prescribed burned. We burned a, I don't know, like a three acre unit. And so they had it down to pretty much a science in terms of the wind and what direction you were burning and safety equipment. Can you describe what, so your dad's kept getting bigger and bigger from you know, like a strip to burning larger and larger pieces. What was it like on a burn day? Like, I imagine there were a lot more questions about how it would go then us in our fire suits with our water guns and drip duty.

R: Oh, it was very simple.

I: Was it?

R: We had mops and brooms and pails of water to stick the broom in and even some long burlap sacks that we could put on a stick and put it in the water and then use it to mat out something you wanted to control. It was that simple. And we had just family and we waited until the wind was just so. But you should know, that the biggest burn in the old corn field that went right up to the triangle pines was done after, it was done by Terbilcox. And I have a picture of that burn in my collection, which is as a big fire, it had been years since we had the nerve to burn, so when Terbilcox took over, he burned in that direction from the road up to the whole fire lane.

I: So you had to have the nerve to burn? You mean you were always a little worried about what would happen?

R: Yeah, well, to repeat what dad had done, yeah. So, anyway, I have a picture of that and it was quite a fiery burn because it was probably, Terbilcox said it was the biggest flames he'd seen when he'd been burning from wherever he'd burn. I don't know what he was doing for Reed. Probably some burning because the guy had become very practiced.

I: Yeah he did, you know, on Coleman Prairie there he had to do some brush removal. I have his manager notes from 1968 until 1990 so there's a lot of good info.

R: He was terrific, just terrific.

R2: Where's the triangle pines?

R: Outside of the shack, you start walking down towards the birch row, the triangle is that bunch of pines, that first bunch of pines on your left.

I: Okay, I had the, I had the wrong, I was thinking it was the ones along the road in -.

R2: So its from the Parthenon east?

R: Yeah, right there in the Parthenon.

I: Okay. I have a picture that's going to go in there. Its of Frank and it's called the burn that got away and his car, now he had a Ford Bronco truck, and the burn got a little too big and it went right through his truck, just burned it, you know, got caught in the fire. So the image there was that Frank was largely a one man team and sometimes it was very difficult work and, you know, that was kind of the price of, an example of the price of it.

R: At home I have 2 legal boxes this long, full of, or more, I think it was about two, my notes from my residency, chairman of the boardship, that was the same thing. And I was debating throwing them away because I thought well, you know, the official word, paperwork is in the hands of Teresa. But I'm thinking maybe I should hang on to them and, you know, because it is part of the growing history of the, of the board. The things that Allen Anderson and Gordon and I were worried about.

I: I can show you, about a year and a half ago, I was right in this room. I spent pretty much a week, I stayed across the street in that house and went through all the files there, because they were kind of in disarray, of all the board meeting notes back to 1982 and correspondents and just files for historical purposes. So I'll show them to you after we're done.

R: If they're complete. Yeah. But all the stuff that happened in between, you know, there are a lot of e-mails and a lot of letter copies, and of course phone business but, this paper trail is probably worth saving. It was our real growth period.

I: Yeah, I would recommend it. And then another question I have related to the beginnings and, like we talked about, ecological restoration, is just, one of the big themes in my book is the idea of cooperative conservation on private lands, which is something that your father wrote about a lot. Where would you place the Leopold Reserve in terms of instigating regional or national dialogues about creative approaches to conservation? So this is an example it wasn't declared a, it wasn't public land, it was a group of five land owners, initially. So what are some of your ideas about the contributions of the reserve to conversations about conservation?

R: Well of course the chief outlet for that kind of information was dad's writings himself. On my farm I did this and that. And that book, which was picking up in 1970, was a big sales piece for dad's ideas, the land idea, private lands. And I guess, to a small extent, the talks we would give about what we did there and people's interest, a lot of informal talks. Publications would, perhaps, just include stuff that the fellows did. And, Charlie wrote about, some of which was published, you know. Mostly it was his funny stories that got published.

I: Yeah, the newsletters are a treat. His little articles in the newsletters.

R: Yeah, right. But the role of that land, I would say, as a model, it was mainly popularized by dad himself. And with help from, some help from the students and Nina's small articles. She published a couple of things in restoration and management notes. Or notes in management, whatever it's called by, you know, it's in Madison. And the principle of having a sterile soil on which to put native seeds without, to make a weedless prairie, was very well illustrated by Nina. That's what we were trying to re-write, when I was talking about history of EBL prairie, because that was her demonstration. So I don't know if we'll ever get that done, but we'll try.

I: And you've talked about expansion already, that, how much there was between '96 and 2001. Now, the center here represents a significant investment in the future beyond.

R: Absolutely.

I: So where do you see where the foundation is doing well and needs to do more of or isn't doing and could be doing and should be doing in terms of playing a role in this dialogue about conservation and the ecological conscience.

R: Well, I suppose the, the uh, one important outlet would be dialogues that did a lot of our representatives are making great pronouncements with the, Susan in the great talk circuit all the time and she is a great outreach person. Some of us have done a little, but I've been concentrating on my paleoscience. I haven't done very much. You know, I'm an activist, but that's not the same thing. Um, I think through, through the IBA and some of the work that's going on right now, its going to rain.

I: Yeah, geesh.

R2: Its raining hard. I haven't heard this metal roof in a big rain before. You can hear the metal roof.

I: I want to see the rain garden in action when we're done. See how -.



R: Yeah, we can look at it. Great. That's a good question, Steve.

I: One of the things I do in the book is, I do a lot of parallels between the Riley Preserve as an example of cooperative conservation and the Leopold Memorial Reserve. What were the reasons, for example, that the Riley Preserve didn't really sustain itself once your father died. Why did the, how can people think about cooperative conservation between landowners, think about something that sustains itself beyond a generation?

R: Yeah, I think that dad was a great hunting book and it was important to him, as a hunter, to keep this thing alive and rolling and of course the farmers benefited from their interest in wildlife. And maybe some of them were hunters but his clone of fellow hunters, Tom Coleman, Rourke, I forgot some of the names, I have to think -.

I: Ragats, maybe? Tom Ragats.

R: Don't remember that name, but these guys were all hunters and they really loved what dad was doing out there and they would visit with him and hunt there. And I remember that he took us children out there. But anyway, without sustaining that by the fellows who were enthusiastic hunters, I think it fell into disrepair. Somebody had to get money to buy the eggs for the, I don't know, whatever they were raising. Were they raising pheasants or quail?

I: I think pheasants, I think. Yeah.

R: So I think that was what happened and then the whole idea, which Reed kept alive and built and it was kind of separate and good, kind of good.

R2: Could you speak to the future vision idea?

R: Yeah, very much in our minds is the future vision of the Leopold Memorial Reserve being managed as a whole by staff which is really active in doing reasonable stepwise management tactics and it seems to be, what's happening now, is we have reasonable management tactics going on, on Leopold land. Not all of it, but much of it. And some occasional work, by our staff hired by Reed, burning on the Turner, for example, which is an excellent project, and apparently looks wonderful.

R2: And they work on other neighbors as well. I believe the staff helps other neighbors.

R: Yes, oh yeah. Our staff is on the other -. But anyhow, that kind of losing my thread here, where were we, what was the question here?

R2: Future vision.

R: The vision. Well yeah, the whole vision would be to have us cooperating with the board at Sand County Almanac in deciding that we were gonna manage, god damn it, the whole reserve in a proper way. And of course its getting more difficult, because, for our little staff to manage

Terbilcox's land is gonna be a challenge and he did it so well. And, you know, with his sons and all. Its hard to keep up but, hopefully in the following way, experimental, but with a good management plan and I don't mean just by rote, going out and burning every spring and you burn off all the pasque flowers, or, you know, some of the things that some of our people are doing it and I think they've done it on your land too. But, to have an approach where, lets try it, this kind of burning and this season on this tract and lets keep data on it. And let's try another seasonal burning on this tract and keep data on it. But I think what we're doing now is very general. I don't see much follow up in terms of, yeah it was a good matter different burn, or it was too wet, we didn't get enough brush. You know, that's not experimental, and we are not looking into fall burning which the Indians used to do heavily out west, and I think they may have used it here too, but the opportunity to use really dry circumstances to really hit the brush instead of just saying, oh, just burn in the spring. But you know, oh, experimental approach, we're not doing that, and we all should do it together on the Leopold Memorial Reserve. So participation from them to help us find the people to do the science follow up would be just terrific. And you know, as the chairman of the science stewardship committee, would just love to do that, I'd like to—Reed, draw him a letter to suggest this.

I: Excellent. Well, I think that is a good place to end. Future vision.

R: Good, I hope I didn't wander too much.

I: No, no, it's great. Its, it just helps me fill in some of the details that help a narrative come alive, you know, to have personal perspective of someone who has seen the project all the way through.

R: Well you're wonderful to do this, Steve.

((End of Transcript))