

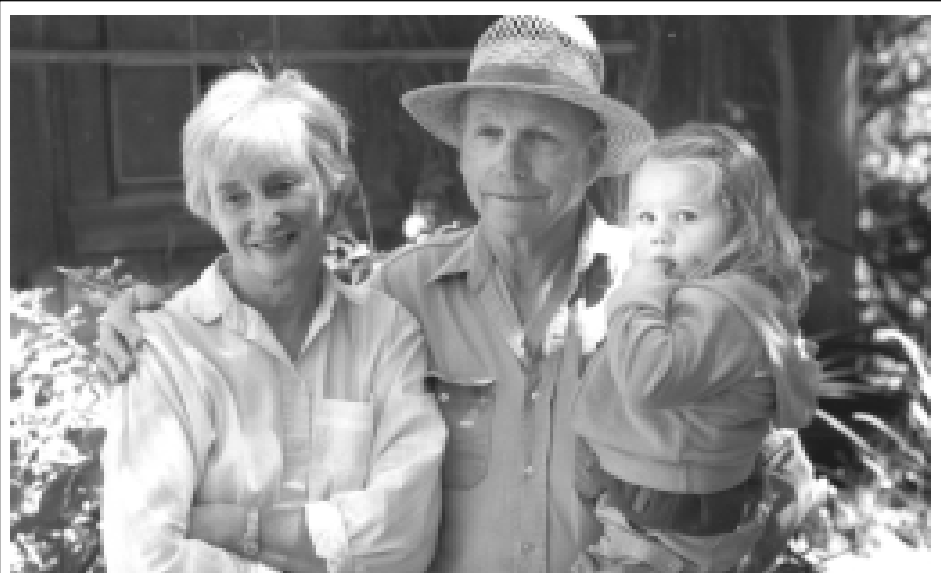
## The French Family: 100 Years in Ettersburg

*(Editor's note- The French family history is the first in a series highlighting Humboldt County's historic ranching families.)*

In 1898 or 1899 Edward and Sara French (ages 24 and 22) decided to leave Ferndale, where Ed was a butcher, for a homestead along the Mattole River. They came here about the same time as the Etter brothers and settled in the area that became known as Ettersburg. One reason for this move was because Sara had such a hard time with her asthma in the Ferndale climate. Sara's brother, Joe Pixton, came with them.

Joe and Ed each took up homesteads. They first lived on the Pixton tract, just North of Ettersburg. We believe this house may have burned. The next house was built on the French property around 1901 or 1902. This house was on the piece of property on which we now live. This first one story home did not last many years before it burned down and a second house was built. It also burned and in the early thirties was replaced by the house we live in today.

Ed and Sara had four children-Sadie (Tosten) in 1896, Florence (Thomas) in 1898, Ralph in 1902, and Lee in 1906. Lee is 95 now and the only one of these children still living. The two homesteads were given to or inherited by the two sons. Ralph got the Pixton place and Lee the French tract.



Sally and Richard French holding granddaughter Daphne- third and fifth generation ranchers.

In the beginning, Sara and Ed's children went horseback to a school built along the river near Grindstone Creek, on what is now part of our ranch property. By the time Lee was old enough to attend school they could walk because the school was under the Council Madrone (Big Madrone) tree, which was about 1/2 mile down the road. Lee attended school there through 8th grade, at which time he quit school to work with his father.

To support themselves, the Frenchs worked on several different enterprises during these early years. One of the most unusual was their involvement in raising and

milking goats for a cheese factory that was located in the Ettersburg Valley on what was then part of the Ericson place. The cheese (Roquefort) factory was in operation for about 3 years, from 1923 to 1926. It was an incorporated business and had stock shares that sold for five dollars. Tosten, Sutterland, Snavelly, and several of the Etters, as well as Ed French, were part of this business. Even though the cheese was judged good, the business was not profitable enough to continue.

For a while the Frenchs raised turkeys and pigs that were herded overland to Shelter

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The French Ranch Homeplace in 1932. The house pictured was brand new- replacing the old home that burned down.

Cove for shipment to San Francisco. Eventually they started raising sheep which proved to be the most profitable and continued until the mid 1980's. They cleared land for grazing, for themselves and others. Probably, the most lucrative work in the early days was the peeling of tanbark from the Tanoak trees. It was hauled by wagons with a team in the beginning years, and later by truck to Briceland to a tannic acid extracting plant that operated from 1901 to 1922. The extract was also shipped to Shelter Cove. After this plant closed, tanbark was hauled by truck to South Fork and shipped by rail to San Francisco and Santa Cruz. This work usually started mid May and ended in mid to late July during the time the sap was up.

Lee married Mary Ziller in 1934. She was a school teacher who was raised in the Healdsburg area and completed teacher training at Humboldt Teachers Normal School in 1931. She came to the Ettersburg area to teach, where she lived with Albert and Catherine Etter and walked to the Wilder School that was on the Etter property. A new school was built around 1935 in its next and permanent location on what is now French property. It is at the mouth of Bear Creek along the Mattole River and the name was later changed to Ettersburg School. Mary was the first

teacher to teach in this new school; she taught from 1931 to 1936 and then again from 1944 to 1950.

Besides working in the tanbark, Lee and his brother Ralph, were the first mail carriers in this area to use a vehicle to deliver mail. He and Ralph were also the first to take care of the county roads with a horse drawn grader. When he started this it was a

seasonal job on a road that didn't have much traffic, but he went to be the county road foreman for all of Southern Humboldt. He worked at this job until he retired 35 years later.

Lee and Mary had one child, Richard, born in 1937. He attended school in Ettersburg, mostly taught by his mother, through 8th grade. Richard graduated from South Fork High School in 1955 and after graduation also worked for the county road department for several years. I came to northern California in 1965 to teach school in Eureka. My parents bought land in Ettersburg bordering the French's ranch and this brought me in contact with the family. After we married in 1968, Richard became self-employed, doing some logging and heavy equipment work as well as ranching. Mary passed away in 1993 and Lee now lives in a care home, leaving Richard and me the present owner-operators of the ranch.

The ranch, as it is today, grew in size by the same method as most other ranches. During the depression and WWII life became so difficult on the homestead tracts that many people sold out and moved away. Lee and Mary were more persevering. They worked hard and had some cash money coming in Mary's teaching and Lee's enterprises, making it possible for them to acquire land as it came up for sale. The present ranch is about 3000 acres, most of which is timbered. Only

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Lee French on his new D2 in 1949.

about one third, or less, is actually open land for grazing.

Most of our land was logged in the 1950s as soon as the timber acquired any value. The standing timber tax was just too heavy a burden on land that had timber and couldn't earn anything else by grazing stock. Until the mid 1980s we raised mostly sheep, but with the ideas prevalent today, pressure to leave the wild animals alone and have little or no predator controls, raising sheep is no longer feasible. Uncontrolled dogs are almost a bigger problem. We now raise more cattle, which only bring in enough money to pay property taxes. The rest of the ranch income is from timber operations. In order to keep this property, ranch income has always had to be supplemented by other work.

We have three children and hope to be able to pass this land to them much as it is today. We feel that this may be possible if at some time we can sell a conservation easement to the right to subdivide. The pressures on ranchers today make it ever harder to earn a living off the land. We would like to see this property that took so much effort



Members of the French, Tosten and Sutherland families at camp in the 1920's.

to put together, be able to remain a large land holding for future generations. Open land tracts are becoming more scarce and

we feel that this would be a great loss to the environment as well as to our family.

-Sally French

## All in the Family - From the Chairman's Desk

The family is a basic building block of any society. In America, "family" can mean anything from the "Bunkers" (Archie and Edith) to "The Brady Bunch" to the "The Joneses" and everything in between. The Buckeye's interest, of course, is in those real world families that farm or ranch. Much of our focus these days is on all the "external" difficulties in keeping the ranch going—regulations, taxes, economics—to name a few. We often overlook the most important ingredient in any family ranching business—the family!

Keeping harmony in a family in today's world is tough enough. Keeping harmony in a family business can be down right disheartening. In many cases, estate taxes, economics or other factors simply overwhelm a family's best intentions to save the ranch. And yet there are those families, who, despite the odds, have successfully passed their land on to the third, fourth and even fifth generations. Their longevity is a testament not only to their business and resource management skills but to their ability to resolve the pressures and disparate personal goals that come with each generation.

The French family from Ettersburg certainly has a proud history. They have so far managed to keep the French Ranch going for over 100 years. When statistics show that half of all small

businesses fail within the first two years, a century is a remarkable achievement. And as Sally French aptly described it to me the other day, "Ranching is a good life... but a hard life". I would add it's not simple and it's not easy.

It seems fitting then that we take a brief "time out" to recognize our families—for their dedication and perseverance and for just being-family. Accordingly, we have decided to honor "the family" at our upcoming annual meeting. And we could think of no one better to be a part of this celebration than Jolene Brown, of West Branch, Iowa, who will be our keynote speaker (she will also hold a workshop the Friday before). In addition to being a farm partner, mom and community supporter, she is one of the premier professional speakers in agriculture. Within the context of ranch family dynamics, Jolene will educate, inspire, and entertain you. We look forward to her visit to The Buckeye January 31st and February 1st, 2003.

In the meantime, try to keep it "all in the family".

-Andy Westfall, Chairman

# Camp Run

CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROJECTS-The Buckeye Conservancy is currently assisting several families wishing to place conservation easements on their ranch land. These easements would be on private land and will protect them from future subdivision and development. The Buckeye Conservancy serves as advocates and in an advisory capacity for landowners in crafting and negotiating the easements. We have been collaborating our efforts with The California Rangeland Trust, as they are the potential holders of the easements.

Ranchers with conservation easements on their land will continue to manage their ranches on their own supporting viable commercial ranching operations while perpetuating ranching traditions, wildlife habitat, open-space and scenic values.

MUCH OBLIGED - Young organizations usually have lots of help to get up and running and to continue their growth. The Buckeye certainly falls into this category. We wanted to take this opportunity to thank the following organizations for their support:

- \* Malpai Borderlands Group
- \* Mel and Grace McLean Foundation
- \* California Department of Fish & Game
- \* National Fish & Wildlife Foundation/U.S.D.A. Forest Service
- \* California Rangeland Trust
- \* Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy

WEB SITE - Be looking for The Buckeye website to be up and running sometime after the first of the year-  
"www.buckeyeconservancy.org"

BAD NEWS/GOOD NEWS - The bad news-we regret to report that we have lost the services of two of our founding directors-Walt Giacomini and Lawrence Dwight. Both Walt and Lawrence cite heavy demands on their time from ranching and other commitments (which we can certainly appreciate). Our sincere thanks for their help in guiding our young organization. The good news-we are pleased to announce the appointment of their successors-Julie Houtby and Ron Samuelson.

Julie grew up on the family dairy in Metropolitan and her family continues in the ranching business. Julie is currently a loan officer with American Ag Credit. Ron is a tree farmer and rancher in Bridgeville as well as a Battalion Chief for CDF. Ron also serves as a state and county director for the Farm Bureau and sits on the board of the Forest Landowners of California. We are pleased to have Julie and Ron join us. They will bring much to the organization.

ANNUAL MEETING - Mark your calendars for Saturday February 1st, 2003, for The Buckeye's 3rd Annual Meeting at River Lodge, Fortuna. This year's theme is "The Family". The business meeting will be followed by a banquet, auction and our keynote speaker, Jolene Brown of West Branch, Iowa, who will educate and entertain you on matters of the farm and ranch family.

COHO RECOVERY WORKSHOP - March 7, 2003, is the date set for a daylong Buckeye Conservancy workshop titled Coho Recovery-Tools for the Landowner. The workshop will address what the listing of Coho Salmon will mean for the private landowner.

BUCKEYE OFFICE - Executive Director Johanna Rodoni is in the process of opening an office for our organization in Ferndale. We look forward to having a central location for Buckeye business as the organization continues to grow.

## Guest Columnist: 2nd District Supervisor Roger Rodoni

"The world is run by the people who show up." I believe it was a comedian that coined that phrase many years ago and it's true, believe me; though not so funny sometimes. As your second district Supervisor here in Humboldt County, California, I deal, on a daily basis, with people who show up to direct, manage, or influence the affairs of local government and that can get a tad bit scary at times; especially when you don't show up to tell us how you think. I know you're busy. I know you pay your taxes and trust people like me to protect your interest. You probably believe that people who love you can read your mind too, but it just isn't so.

You've got to tell the powers that be what's on your mind. Don't take your government for granted. People who truly believe that private property, resource extraction, corporate ownership and the free market are instruments of evil come before the Board of Supervisors with great regularity to make their point and you only need to look at the thickening regulatory pea soup to know how successful they are.

You may have thought the snowy plover issue was a coastal recreation problem, but it has cost the County Public Works Department big bucks in overtime and deferred maintenance to mine gravel within the time periods allowed, not to mention the added recreation pressure on private lands. Compliance with environmental regulations ups the cost of highway projects by 40%. New management of the south spit has already started to take its toll as far as access is concerned.

"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance," another old phrase we've all heard so many times and it's true, believe me. "Don't let George do it."

-Roger Rodoni

# Buckeye Forest Project Well Underway



Some project team members in the field at the Cottrell Ranch during a recent tour.

The Buckeye Forest Project got underway in May when twenty-four people met out at the Cottrell ranch near Bridgeville to begin discussing forest practice regulations and their current impacts on open space and forest stewardship. Participants include non-industrial forest landowners, environmentalists, foresters, and state and federal agency representatives. The participating state agencies are the Dept. of Forestry, Dept. of Fish and Game, Water Quality Control Board and the California Geologic Survey. The federal agencies are the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. Yana Valachovic, U.C. Cooperative Extension Forest Advisor has acted as the facilitator for the group.

The group has had five all-day field meetings, and plans two more field sessions before the end of the year (using the Cottrell ranch as a case study.) The purpose of this “Phase I” is to review the timber harvest plan process in a non-permit setting, to provide an opportunity for sharing experiences and ideas, troubleshooting, and creating a common frame of reference to draw on during Phase

II. Meeting in the field has facilitated “real world” examples and experiences.

Phase II will take place during January through May 2003, with indoor meetings to discuss ideas and develop details for possible solutions. A sampling of some of the topics that have come up for further discussion include:

- A greater-than 2,500 acre NTMP
- A 25-year THP
- Better utilization of pre-consultations
- More efficient and useful biological assessments
- Cleaning-up the Watercourse rules
- Training sessions

Outcomes of the project might range from having a better understanding of each other’s interests, actual consensus on some topics and products that can be vehicles for regulatory change. Participation and commitment to date has been excellent — no small matter given the challenges of setting aside an entire day for a meeting. As a result, already there is a sense of progress: people are talking to and learning from each other; ideas for new initiatives are emerging; and there have

been some ripple effects as Forest Project participants continue the discussions in other forums (such as talking about the pre-consultation process at a California Licensed Foresters Association meeting). The opportunity to look at the potential cumulative impacts of regulatory requirements on open space has provided a unique forum for regulatory review of non-industrial properties.

Group size has been limited to allow for good conversation and continuity, but there has already been talk about how to involve more people in the future, such as via workshops and other activities.

The Forest Project has been made possible in part by a US Forest Service grant facilitated by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. Thanks to Graham and Gloria Cottrell for graciously allowing the project to be accomplished on their property.

Notes from the meetings are available. Contact Mark Anderson, Forest Project Coordinator, at 443-7024 or [markande@northcoast.com](mailto:markande@northcoast.com).

-Nancy Reichard

# It's That Time Again: Annual Membership Drive

Hello members. Fall is here! I am looking forward to some nice rains just after we get the "before it rains list" completed. However, an inch or two or three would be nice in the mean time.

Fall also signals the beginning of our annual membership drive. As Chairman of the Membership Committee, I speak to each of you in an effort to increase membership, involvement in the Buckeye and understanding of our organization's purpose.

Natural resource ownership and management has become very complicated, costly and time consuming. Layers of governmental influence, whether it is through the Clean Water Act, timber

harvest regulations or estate taxes are causing more family landowners than ever to seek outside technical advice and support to keep their operations viable. The impacts from changes in public policy will continue to affect the private, family landscape for the foreseeable future.

My family, along with more than 200 others, has supported The Buckeye Conservancy's mission with time and money in an effort to effectively manage and maintain open space in today's environment. Such involvement gives our members a larger voice in the ongoing debate over how best to keep Humboldt's lands working and wild. As the Buckeye builds its organization, fostering

relationships with people, agencies and other groups, has allowed us to share our philosophy while learning from others.

As your membership packets arrive, please pledge your commitment to Buckeye's mission by rejoining (or joining) and, if possible, by making an additional donation to the organization. With strong membership support, The Buckeye Conservancy can continue to be a powerful voice for its members.

If you have any questions feel free to contact any Buckeye director or myself, Sterling McWhorter - 629-3307.

-Sterling McWhorter

## Biscuit Fire Becomes Largest Fire in Oregon's History

The Biscuit fire of Southern Oregon grew to encompass nearly half-a-million acres, becoming the largest wildfire in Oregon's history. While its immediate effect on Humboldt County this summer was to fill our skies with a rich haze, it appears that longer-term effects may be on the horizon. And the effects, if realized, will ultimately benefit the non-industrial timber owner.

President Bush's recent visit to Oregon to voice his stand on the subject of forest thinning to reduce catastrophic fire danger has brought the debate on Forest Service logging to the national forefront. A recent op-ed piece reprinted in the Times-Standard recounts opinions of a San Diego newspaper, which voices its support for the restoration forestry concepts of Dr. Thomas Bonnicksen-a Texan who advocates returning forests to conditions similar to those first found by European settlers.

To return western forests to a condition that is fireproof involves removing decades of fuel buildup in the form of overcrowded and suppressed trees. These trees need to be removed both individually and in groups in order to replicate conditions originally fostered by lightning and Indian burning.

By returning forests to more open conditions, the remaining trees will grow more speedily into an "old-growth" condition, and the forest overall will be able to withstand inevitable fires.

What this means to Humboldt County's non-industrial timber owner is substantial. Because of the vast volumes of undergrowth that needs to be thinned from Forest Service land, many local sawmills will once again be necessary to process the fire-starter into lumber. Once again will local loggers be enticed to invest in state-of-the-art logging equipment. These same mills become the market for the non-industrial owner; the same loggers with their modern, low-impact equipment and practices will be available to work on non-industrial land.

Lest one think that President Bush's form of forest thinning is a ruse by "Big Timber" to evade environmental laws while pursuing a quick profit, it's hard to imagine in this day and age that any logging project will be anything but entirely protective of the environment. The impressions of Forest Service logging used by anti-logging groups to sway public opinion today are misleading, archaic images of the past. A new forestry ethic that considers

all forest resources governs how logging is done today.

The struggle to bring reasoned decision making to the Forest Service that will result in restored, fire-safe forests and a sustainable economy in timber country will not be an easy one. Those with an interest in seeing the family run non-industrial forest succeed will have to make their voice heard. Perhaps rational thought will prevail, moving California away from its status as a net importer of forest products when in fact it grows all it needs.

The forest fires to the North are now extinguished, but hopefully the flames will continue under the feet of our Washington, D.C. servants causing them to bring positive policy changes that will ultimately benefit family ranchers and forest owners as well as all who care about the Humboldt County environment and economy.

-Steve Horner

***"Leadership is about taking risk"***  
***-Leon Panetta***

# Timber Operations May Need More Gov't Permits

As if it was not already about as expensive, time consuming, frustrating and difficult as it can get to obtain permits to harvest timber in the State of California, legislation adopted in 2000 (SB 390, Alpert) automatically terminates all existing waivers of waste discharge requirements unless these waivers are specifically renewed by the regional water quality control boards prior to January 1, 2003. Timber operations have been permitted and conducted under such waivers for many years, thus not requiring independent review of harvest proposals by the regional water quality control boards.

If the regional water boards do not renew the waivers, landowners proposing to harvest timber will be required to apply to the regional boards for an additional government permit in order to harvest their timber. The regional boards would exercise independent discretion as to the mitigation measures that they would require for issuance of the permits. Thus, landowners that finally get their harvest plan approved

by CDF would then apply to the water board for another permit, and the water board would be free to tack on additional restrictions on the harvest.

Staff of the North Coast regional water board has expressed concerns over the operation of the waivers in the past and would like to have more control over the way timber operations affect water quality. The staff has expressed concern about the way timber harvest proposals can be approved despite their objections. The staff would like more detailed cumulative effects analysis in harvesting proposals, and they want to institute long term physical water monitoring obligations on timberland owners. The concerns of the water board staff may play significantly into the upcoming decisions on these very important waivers.

At the most recent meetings of the North Coast Regional Water Board, the board indicated that it is targeting a decision on

this issue in December. This is a very important issue for timberland owners in our region. For those who are interested in participating in the public process for renewing the waivers, they should check with their regional water board to find out when and how they can be heard.

The water boards have a wide range of options on how to deal with the waivers. They could simply let them expire next year or simply renew the old waivers. More than likely, however, they will be disposed to adopt some type of waiver with new conditions that address the concerns expressed by their staff members.

More information can be obtained from the North Coast water board at [www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb1](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb1).

-Tom Herman

## Donations Help Establish Buckeye Endowment Fund

The Buckeye is establishing a permanent endowment fund through the Humboldt Area Foundation thanks to a \$1,000 gift from a member specifically for that purpose. The purpose of the fund, expected to increase over the years through planned giving and donations, is to serve as a sustainable resource to further The Buckeye's mission.

Additional donations came recently in memory of Frankie Lawrence who passed away July 13, 2002. Frankie was the son of Herkie and Marjorie Lawrence, brother to Billie McWhorter, and uncle to Buckeye director Sterling McWhorter. He was a rancher in the Mattole, living and loving that way of life. We are grateful to Frankie for remembering The Buckeye and its mission in his final days. Frankie leaves many friends and relatives and good memories.



Frankie Lawrence just before a gather at the Peak Ranch, Summer 1997.

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## The Buckeye's Purpose

We are an organization of family farm, ranch, and forest landowners and resource managers in the North Coast Region of California dedicated to the promotion, communication and implementation of those ideals and policies that support the ecologic and economic sustainability of natural resources and open space in family ownership.

*PO Box 5607 Eureka CA 95502*