



BOOKEND I

Saturday Morning, July 15, 1967
999 Zelkova Street, Apt. 203
San Francisco, California

- Where’s your tape recorder, Duane? I thought you were bringing a recorder.
- *That’s it right there, ma’am.*
- That thing there?
- *Yes, ma’am. It uses cassettes like this.*
- Wherever did you get that?
- *From the lady organizing the project. It’s a Norelco Carry-Corder.*
- Remind me what all this is about.
- *Didn’t my aunt tell you about the big John Deere agricultural history project, Missus McLoughlin?*
- I suppose she did, she probably did, but you tell me again, Duane. Who wants to know about the McLoughlin dairy farm anyway?
- *John Deere dealers are giving scholarships to freshmen Ag majors who interview someone about California agriculture around 1900. After that it gets typed up.*
- Can you type, Duane?
- *Not really, ma’am. But my Aunt Suzanne can.*
- So your aunt’s going to type up whatever I say into that thing?
- *Yes, ma’am.*
- Then what?

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– *Then I write a summary and hand it in and three hundred dollars gets deducted from my college expenses.*

– Three hundred dollars? Well, that’s something. Where will you be going to college, Duane?

– *The University of California at Davis, ma’am. It’s the best Department of Animal Science there is for the study of modern methods of dairy farming and cattle raising.*

– Well, my lan’! If you say so it must be so.

– *Well, err ... Missus McLoughlin—*

– it’s pronounced Mac–lock–lin, Duane. Mac–lock–lin with an “a” sound not Mick–lock–lin.

– *I’m sorry, ma’am. I didn’t know—*

– oh don’t worry about it. And just so you know, we were no relation whatsoever to that mad Major McLaughlin who put a bullet through his child’s head then swallowed cyanide.

– *What? When did that happen?*

– When I was seventeen. Right there in the man’s famous Golden Gate Villa on Beach Hill. OK then. So let’s start, let’s start. What would you like to know?

– *Ahh ... let’s see. What were the origins of the McLoughlin Dairy Farm?*

– What, from the beginning? I can’t do all that. What does that blinking light mean?

– *It means it’s running, ma’am. I turned it on. Would you like to hear your voice played back?*

– Oh no heavens no let’s not do that! Where did you say you came in from this morning?

– *Willits, ma’am.*

– Oh yes, Willits. Well, so long as you made the trip. But what puzzles me is why anybody’d want to know about the old dairy farm in the first place. Couldn’t you scare up somebody from one of the big operations? What about the Swiss? They took over the dairy business on the North Coast of Santa Cruz County. They became the big operators all down through there. Or how about out on Point Reyes? That’s where the first

real California dairy empires came out of.

– *Point Reyes was already taken, ma'am. So Missus Travis assigned me to a typical small Central Coast dairy. And my Uncle Mike said that—*

—oh all right, Mister Duane, all right. I guess I understand enough. Old Cliffport was last on the list, is that it? Well, I see you've written up your questions. Go ahead, shoot!

– *If it's all right...*

– Go on go ... no wait ... wait a minute.... Pass me that box of Kleenex would you? Thank you. There, that's better. I can't seem to get rid of this morning cough. OK, fire away.

– *How'd the dairy start, ma'am?*

– Here we go then. The McLoughlin branch I sprouted from came down to the States after some dispute about timber rights on Vancouver Island—

—*you mean in British Columbia?*

– Yes I mean British Columbia. If there's another Vancouver Island I've never heard of it. Now don't stop me just when I get going, Duane, if you want to get your big report done.

– *Yes, ma'am. Excuse me.*

– My grandparents—that'd be Neil and Jeannine-Louise McLoughlin. But do you see? McLoughlin with an "o"—say, don't you have to make notes or something?

– *No, Missus McLoughlin. Everything'll be on the cassette.*

– Oh that's right. So where was I?

– *On Vancouver Island.*

– So, as I was saying, in some family reckoning up in BC my grandparents drew the short straw. Now my granddad had heard rumors of some big tunnel work down in the Santa Cruz Mountains south of San Francisco. Some connection between Santa Cruz and Pescadero Creek via the San Lorenzo Valley. Did you get that part, Duane?

– *What part?*

– About the overland connection. That must've been a big deal back then. There was some corporation to push the enterprise through and

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they weren't going to turn aside for mountains or forests or anything else in their way, no siree bob. The story goes—say, be a dear and pass me that lighter. Thank you. There now. The way it came down, after Neil lost out on the timber tracts, he thought he'd do best to get his family out of Canada altogether. That's when he and my grandmother and my father John and his new wife—her name was Dorothea... that'd be my mother.... You sure you're following this?

– *Yes, ma'am, I think I am.*

– Well then OK. So they relocated to the Golden State sometime in the 1880's. Granddad thought to hire on with those tunnel contractors, in some advisory capacity I'd imagine, considering his advanced age. It was going to be a huge deal, lots of work for him and lots of room for advancement for his son, John ... I mean my father...

– *Your father...*

– But it never happened.

– *What never happened, Missus McLoughlin?*

– What do you mean, What never happened? The tunnel never happened.

– *Why not?*

– Don't ask me why not. Don't ask me why anything in this crazy world ever happens or why not. Anyway, that's what got my people down to the North Coast. What's the matter? Is something wrong?

– *No, but ... well, ma'am.... Is this about the dairy farm?*

– I'm getting there, Duane. I'm getting to the cows.

– *Yes, ma'am.*

– Wait ... wait a second....

– *Shall I get you a glass of water, Missus McLoughlin?*

– Och, I don't drink water, Duane. There. That's better now. So I guess those first McLoughlins saw a notice about the Timber and Stone Act in effect in pockets of the Santa Cruz Mountains. How anyone wishing to homestead certain no-good US land would do well to communicate with the General Land Office, that sort of thing. Hell's bells! Neil McLoughlin was an old hand at visiting such offices to inquire about

timber claims for sale and whatnot. And that was how Granddad first met Mister John Mackenzie. John Mackenzie Senior that is. And those Mackenzies, they were old timber people from Canada too. Do you get it so far?

– *Not really, ma'am.*

– Didn't I tell you about the Mackenzies yet?

– *No, ma'am. Not yet.*

– Then I will now. As our bad luck would have it, that John Mackenzie Senior had arrived half-a-generation ahead of us. So here's where it gets funny or tragic, depending on your point of view.... What are you staring at now?

– *Nothing.*

– Is it broken?

– *No, ma'am. Go ahead, please. I'm ... listening.*

– Good. So those two old Scots went in to working side by side, clearing the timber off the downhill portions of that section of land Mackenzie had already proved up on. Next I guess they fashioned the flumes running off Upper Steep Creek and went after the upper portions. I can still remember hear tell how the men would float the logs down to a certain spot then yank 'em out onto the ground. They'd pull those logs out of the water and let 'em roll wild as all hell downhill where men at the bottom'd collect 'em and drag 'em to the inlet. So much per log foot, see? Oh, there were plenty of Jack Irish with bad backs and worse habits to do that dangerous work. Some of those same bad backs got broke digging out the millpond and Cummings' quarry after that. But by the time I was growing up, all that was over.

– *Missus McLoughlin?*

– What's the matter? Did I say something wrong? Don't tell me you're Irish, Duane. I didn't mean that.

– *No, ma'am. I mean yes, ma'am, my people are Irish but it's not that. It's just ... well, I'm supposed to be making a report about a dairy farm.*

– But this is about the dairy, Duane. Och, there wouldn't've been any dairy farm if all this hadn't happened first, don't you see? But I still

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think there's some misunderstanding about the importance of the McLoughlin Dairy operation in the greater scheme of things.

– *Ma'am?*

– Listen to me. You've heard of the "lower forty"—or haven't you?

– *Yes, ma'am, I have.*

– So Old Man Mackenzie led my granddad to believe that teaming up together they could make a go of it. I guess they did work side by side for a time. Clearing off the trees. Building fences and roads and a sawmill on Mackenzie's upland and then that millpond. The way I understand it, Mackenzie led Granddad to believe that all the sweat equity he and Grandma were putting in was earning them title to those lower forty acres. Well, once Mackenzie Senior died, all bets were off. After that's when the McLoughlins found themselves tenants on a wee bit of bottomland next to Cliffport Beach.

– *Why?*

– Why? Because Mackenzie Junior worked it so the whole place still belonged to him, all the saw timberland belonged to him. I guess my granddad got tripped up when he went after a section of his own because he wasn't an American citizen. His son, my dad John Junior, he sure put his application in in a hurry after that, you bet. I guess Mackenzie Junior offered my dad employment in his mill but Dad declined and chose to rent that lower forty. Anyway, that meant no trees at all for the McLoughlins. Meanwhile, that younger John Mackenzie had his whole section running from the ocean shore to the first ridge, with a long, narrow strip extending along the ridge, sort of like a corridor out to the common skid road. Shaped like the map of Florida, you see? So Mackenzie cheated us is what he did, the son of a bitch. Pass me that pitcher, Duane, and excuse my French. Go ahead and pour it for me would you? I should probably say "please" too.

– *How much, ma'am?*

– All the way to the top, Duane, all the way.... OK, thank you. There. That's better. Say, have you ever seen one of these before?

– *No, ma'am.*

– No? Well it's what they call a Tiffany tartan. It's hard-cut lead crystal. I had a set of six once but this's the only one left. Well, I might as well break it while drinking my Bloody Mary's, don't you think?

– *Err ... I guess so, ma'am.*

– Ahh, that's better now. Where was I?

– *About the dairy land.*

– So do you see how it went or don't you? John Mackenzie Junior inherited the whole shebang and treated my people as some sort of bastard Scots, when you get down to it. The McLoughlins didn't fit into some neat scheme of heraldry and all that malarkey. Too many roundtrips to and from Ireland over the centuries for his purer Mackenzie blood. And his father born in Canada just like my Dad, ha! Not every Scotsman has a clan. Did you know that?

– *No I didn't, ma'am.*

– And not every man with a clan tacked onto his surname is really and truly descended from the appropriate clan chief. You didn't know that either I suppose. Och, real history's a mess as far as I can make things out. Anyhow, let's get back to Cliffport Township: sea to summit, or summit to sea, however the drummers used to put it in their poop sheets. That damn John Mackenzie Senior. He'd been working the school land warrant system to his advantage too you know. Buying up parcels from proxies who turned the titles over to him for a song. They were like some of those smart Western bandits you can read about in your history books at university. Nothing like the Benson gang of thieves but pretty bad, pretty bad. So, after that promise of some productive property of their own fell through, that was when my family found itself boxed in by the Mackenzies for the first time but it wasn't the last. Imagine poor Granddad Neil in his old age, still investigating prospects for homesteading over in Saratoga, Los Gatos, places like that. Just pitiful. But the more he looked into the wheeling-and-dealing in Santa Clara County I guess he got fed up with it. The prospect of digging your stakes in somewhere then having some obscure title dispute in some distant courthouse throw your descendents off

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the land? I believe there were lots of honest settlers who got tired of that monkey business on the east side of the Santa Cruz Mountains. So my granddad's family settled in on the coast. And that dairy you're so interested in was built right there. On the inland side of the old Pescadero-Santa Cruz Stage Road cut between the salty meadows and the beach. There. There's your dairy for you and that's how it went. I can still keep it straight. Have you been down to Cliffport?

– *No, ma'am. Not yet.*

– What? You haven't been down there? Then what do you know about it anyway?

– *Not much. All I know is what Missus Travis gave me here.*

– And what's that card say? Read it to me.

– *It says, "Cliffport was an unincorporated community and census-designated place in Santa Cruz County located along Route One between Davenport and Waddell at an elevation of eighty feet above sea level. In the early—"*

—oh that's enough. Does it tell you the current population designated by that census?

– *Ma'am?*

– Three. A population of three nowadays. How about that?

– *Three?*

– Oh there were more than that once upon a time but it's all changed since back then. It's all changed. Lower Steep Creek used to come spilling down out of the willows then run right through our farm and fan out onto the beach. Then the Governor and his old buddy Eminent Domain came along so the big railway companies could lay their tracks. The railroad company and the State, they took all the land from old Coast Road down to the beach, including the beach. They built their big timber trestle there, dumping the soil to bury it.

– *Why'd they bury it?*

– That's how embankments were made in those days. I watched them do it, day by day blocking off more and more of our view of the sea. After that the farmyard would flood every winter.

– *It would flood every winter?*

– That’s what I just said, didn’t I? The creek water backed up trying to get through this itty-bitty hole they had bored through the embankment, as if that could handle the winter rain. When’d you say you’re going to go down to Cliffport, Duane?

– *I didn’t say but I’m planning to go down there with Aunt Suzanne and Uncle Mike some day. Not this trip though.*

– Davenport Landing was a few coves to the south of Cliffport. I guess that place saw a mess of whaling action before it was over. They say Davenport Landing was the biggest spot for that between Santa Cruz and Spanishtown.

– *Missus McLoughlin. I have to stop the recording now.*

– What, am I doing it wrong?

– *No, but I have to turn the cassette to the other side.*

– Well do it then....

– *You can go on now.*

– What, already? That was quick. Where was I?

– *You were talking about where the dairy was built.*

– It was built in from where Lower Steep Creek used to flow up over the old wagon road. In the wet season that is.

– *How big was the McLoughlin dairy?*

– How “big?” What do you mean “how big?” How many cows?

– *I’m sorry, Missus McLoughlin. Not herd size. I mean the buildings and the extent of the pasture.*

– Forty acres. That’s all there ever was. I already told you that.

– *A quarter of a quarter-section?*

– If that’s what it comes to. Not much, see? And Mackenzie had all the advantages in the way of fresh springs on his sawmill land. And that trail out to the skid road that eventually everyone started calling Everson Road. I guess the first logging tapered off when the big ones were cut down after the Gold Rush. They took the easy ones to get to and get out of course. Then after the Big Fire they took down the rest and some of the trees that’d grown back. Hell’s bells, those redwoods were cut down faster than they could grow back up. Why, people were always building this or that city with those trees. There

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were dozens of little impromptu mills humming along up in those mountains for years, Duane, for years. Almost as many sawmills as stills during the Prohibition, ha! Anyway, Dad did manage to secure freshwater rights from the creek and all, and the two families cut a deal so that there never was a toll collected on any McLoughlin or anyone legitimately associated with the McLoughlin dairy operation.

– *A toll on what, ma'am? On the dairy?*

– Just hold on now, hold on. I'm getting back to the dairy right now.

– *I apologize.*

– OK then. In the beginning we all lived crowded into one little farmstead built on blocks. I don't really remember it much myself but I was born there, my twin brother and me. Or brought home there I should say. We were delivered up in the old Whaler's Inn with a doctor in attendance. As a hedge against difficulties, you see? Poor Mother survived the birth of twins without anesthesia. Can you beat that? My word....

– *Missus McLoughlin? Are you ... ahh ... are you all right?*

– Let me think a minute will you? I was thinking about something ...

– *Ma'am?*

– Are you going to interrupt me every other second? Oh go ahead, go ahead. I can't put my finger on it. What's next on your list of twenty questions?

– *Ahh, let me see. Here it is. What was the barn for the dairy cows like?*

– What in the world do you want to know about that for? The cow barn? Is that what you're asking me about now? How should I know? I never worked there. All I know is, it wasn't meant to be a barn in the first place. It was Dad's own half-finished sawmill converted into a cow barn. It was meant to be a sawmill with a waterwheel on a diversion. Anyway, after the split with Mackenzie, Dad shortened the building into a cow barn with a parlor where the cows milked twice a day. There was a separate horse barn and a hay barn, some other coops or what-have-you for the other animals. Tool sheds. But back then

timber families were always throwing planks up or tearing ‘em down.
– *Missus McLoughlin? Can I ask you another question about the dairy?*

– Oh damnitall, Duane! That dairy business was dead in the water before I was ten years old. The McLoughlin Dairy played out in the nineties. If it wasn’t for the egg farm Dad took up after that, I don’t know what would have tided my folks over through the coming years. Criminy, Duane, it was about trees and eggs not cows. When the second redwoods could be profitably milled, Mackenzie Junior built an even bigger sawmill with a green chain and a log deck on the mill-pond, the whole shooting match. You see, the way they worked the water, there was power for churning even before electricity became widely available elsewhere in the region. Eventually whatstheirnames built an even bigger mill north of Swanton that put Mackenzie out of business during the Great Depression. I believe those people are still in business at Big Creek.

– *Why did your grandfather and your father go into dairy farming?*

– Why? Don’t you get it? What else could they do? The little land they were on was too wet for farming crops, too salty. Or else it wasn’t level. Too rocky, too sandy. But it was good enough for dairying. After the first November rains the green grass sprang up and hung on into the next summer. You could always find some place to pasture a herd out of the ocean wind. Or just let ‘em loose in Mackenzie’s big stump field. If those dumb cows stayed away from brackish water, why they could wander the dunes and find their way up into whatever little gulches and gullies they pleased. I mean just so long as they stayed out of salt-water and out of the way of those wild lime wagons careening down Mackenzie’s Toll Road! And the tanbark wagons, weren’t those a hazard! But if you managed to keep your cows—and yourself—out of the way of some half-crazed teamster making a run for the port or the tannery, you’d be all right.

– *What did the McLoughlin Dairy do with the milk?*

– That milk was made into butter. I remember Dad taking the milk up to the dairy hut on Upper Steep Creek. Twice a day in spring and