

TRANSCRIPT:

INTERVIEWEE: Pam Harte

INTERVIEWER: David Todd

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David Todd [00:00:02] With your permission, Mrs. Harte, we plan on recording this interview for research and educational work on behalf of the Conservation History Association of Texas, and for a book and a web site for Texas A&M University Press, and finally, for an archive at the Briscoe Center for American History, which is at the University of Texas at Austin.

David Todd [00:00:25] And, I'd just like to emphasize that those are our plans, but that you would have all rights to use the recording as you see fit.

David Todd [00:00:34] And I wanted to make sure that's okay with you before we go any further.

Pam Harte [00:00:38] That's good with me, David.

David Todd [00:00:39] Okay, super.

David Todd [00:00:41] Well, let's get started. It is Tuesday, October 11th, 2022. It's about 11:15 a.m. Central Time. My name is David Todd, and I am representing the Conservation History Association of Texas, which is a small non-profit based in Austin. We are conducting an on-site interview with Pam Harte at her ranch and home outside of Fort Davis, Texas.

David Todd [00:01:13] And, just as a very short introduction, Mrs. Harte is a wildlife advocate, a documentary film producer, and a rancher. She is especially known for her pressure against wildlife killing contests and her lobbying on behalf of mountain lions. She is an advisor to volunteer groups such as Texans for Mountain Lions and the Project Coyote. That's just a very brief summary of the many things she does.

David Todd [00:01:43] But today we'll be talking about her life and career to-date, and then focus on her work in wildlife protection and particularly predator conservation.

David Todd [00:01:53] So, with that little introduction, let me ask you a question about your childhood. I understood that you grew up in San Antonio and you spent holidays in Hunt, Texas. And I was hoping that you might be able to tell us about any formative, early experiences as a child that might have led you into this lifelong interest in wildlife and conservation?

Pam Harte [00:02:22] Well, I was born in San Antonio and we were in Hunt, Texas every, almost every weekend, summers, holidays.

Pam Harte [00:02:32] I grew up with my mom's parents, Buck and Ruby Lee Schiwetz, and they were naturalists. And my grandfather and my grandmother both painted and sculpted. So

we were constantly studying nature, whether it was flora or fauna, and talking about the respect of nature. And then we documented in art. I was taught that every creature was special, whether it was an insect, or a reptile, or a snake, or a mammal. And that influenced me. We, we just studied nature and we studied books about nature.

Pam Harte [00:03:17] And my mother said when I was two or three years old, I was already starting to put the tails back on, trying to put the tails back on the lizards, when they had lost their tails. So I've just been thinking about wildlife, thinking about how to heal wildlife.

Pam Harte [00:03:34] I remember once when my mother and I found a squirrel in the backyard. I think the neighbor's son, grandson, had shot it with a BB gun, and so it was injured. And we took it in and rehabbed it for weeks and brought it back.

Pam Harte [00:03:49] So I've just always learned how to protect wildlife and it probably is what led me to end up being in the healing fields later in life, just how to take care of things.

David Todd [00:04:03] Okay. But let's just stop for a moment, if you don't mind.

David Todd [00:04:09] Okay. So we took a little break there, but we're back on our little recording venture here. And Mrs. Harte was telling me a little bit about her, some childhood experiences, and maybe you can fill us in on some of these visits with your grandfather, but also with his circle of friends.

Pam Harte [00:04:31] The summers were wonderful there. It was, it was, first of all, my grandmother, my grandfather, taught art at the Hill Country Arts Foundation in Ingram. So every once in a while they'd have classes on the river. We were on the Guadalupe River. And they'd have classes with nudes. And I remember sneaking down there and peeking and watching. And I would get in so much trouble.

Pam Harte [00:04:57] But they were really wonderful. They loved nature, they loved art, they loved history, and they loved literature. And some nights I'd find myself on the back porch and we would have J. Frank Dobie and Bertha Dobie, and Mr. Webb and Mr. Bedichek and Bill Brett, and Floyd Tillman would be playing his guitar. And it would just be these wonderful experiences of culture.

Pam Harte [00:05:27] And, I, it all kind of floods back and I can't really remember it well, but I remember sitting out there with different people.

David Todd [00:05:38] Yeah. Yeah. It sounds very evocative. Just those, those folks are just iconic in Texas history. So, well, thanks for sharing that.

David Todd [00:05:48] So, you talked a little bit about your grandparents. Were your mother or father interested in some of these same things about nature and protecting nature or restoring nature?

Pam Harte [00:05:58] They were. When I was born, my mother was a teacher of biology and geology in high school. And my father was a teacher of biology, and I think geology as well. They both taught sciences in high schools in San Antonio. So we did, we had a chem lab in our utility room and blew up a few things. But we always talked about science and math. It was like having a STEM education at home.

Pam Harte [00:06:29] And, but then again, we had lots of books and we had lots of art and we talked about culture. We went to museums. So I had a really good, diverse childhood.

David Todd [00:06:44] You know, you mentioned books and art, and I was curious if there are any kind of cultural pieces from, you know, the general world, outside of your parents and your grandparents, that might have been influential - a particular set of books or maybe some TV shows or movies that you might have seen that that have stuck with you and were really influential, you think?

Pam Harte [00:07:12] I think so. I think, I can think of an example of each one of those. When I was growing up, "The Jungle Book" was a really important film.

Pam Harte [00:07:24] And then, for TV shows, the show I remember most was "Touched by an Angel", which was a series. Every week, they would come in and there would be an issue with a family or a community, and they would come in and solve the problem and move on to the next one. So I always loved that about problem-solving and resolution. I was raised Presbyterian and very Christian and talked to God still every day. So I liked the influence of angels and being able to come on the planet and help.

Pam Harte [00:08:00] And, for books, I think I really remember Wyeth. My grandfather loved Andrew Wyeth. And so, and N.C. Wyeth, too. So I read a lot of books on Wyeth, but the most impressionable would be the impressionists. We had books on Monet and Manet and Sisley and Degas. And my grandfather had spent time in Paris in 1920 and 1921 after he graduated. So we talked a lot about French art and French history, and I ended up getting my masters in French literature years later. So I think that had a high influence on me.

David Todd [00:08:49] Well, you know, it's interesting that some people come to an appreciation of nature because they love the clock-like mechanics of nature, the sort of scientific avenue. But then other people seem to come to it because it's a, you know, nature is such a beautiful thing. And it seems like you have a little bit of both. I mean, the Monet and Monet and, you know, the appreciation for Sisley, and, you know, Degas. But then also, you know, your parents' grounding in geology and biology, and talking about science at the table. You know, is that, am I reading something into this, or do you think that that's relevant for you?

Pam Harte [00:09:39] I definitely think that's true. I did, I had the artistic, aesthetic side and I appreciate nature. And of course, I was always in it, too. So it wasn't just from afar, from a book. I was in nature. I was muddy and I was climbing trees and swimming in the river and catching minnows and letting them go. So, yes, it was that.

Pam Harte [00:10:01] And then also I started studying science at a very young age, so I was studying the Krebs cycle by the time I was in first or second grade and understanding how energy was formed and metabolism. And then as I got older, my parents really taught me that the whole web, they wanted me to understand my place in the world, but also how all the animals work together. Life cycles work together - predators, prey. How nature can take care of herself, if we just stand back and stop trying to over-manage nature, she, she would take care of herself by drought or flood or overpopulation or she would, she was in charge.

Pam Harte [00:10:53] So, I did get both. I got, I mean, and scientifically I loved organic chemistry. So I loved how to put all these things together and, and watch how they played out.

David Todd [00:11:05] That's great. So and my understanding is, not only were you somebody who enjoyed reading and books and studying and learning, but that you were also, later in your career, studying this in college. And so maybe you can take us to that next step where you go to Texas A&M. Right? And as I understand it, you got a B.A. in biology and biochemistry. And I was wondering if there were any folks there, either teachers or students, or maybe staff in the lab, that might have been influential for you?

Pam Harte [00:11:47] I think, I think the biggest influence for me was a gentleman named Wayne Stark, who was a friend of my grandfather's and but also a mentor for me. And I, when I went to A&M, I was only 17. I was really young and I was ahead in school. So, Mr. Stark took me under his wing. I was I, I was, I just, I was very young at 17. And he helped me find my coursework and helped me get to know people. He elevated me from just going to school, to being a professional student and teaching me about museums and culture and the memorial student center and different organizations on campus that I could get involved in. So I would say he was more of an influence than any of my teachers.

Pam Harte [00:12:42] I did take a lot of honors classes, so they were smaller classes. I think that was really helpful and always suggest that to students to try to take a few of those classes because you're forced into speaking more, engaging more, in those small classes, having more thoughts, having your thoughts tested. Which I had to do. It helped me learn. Teach me how to learn, how to speak.

David Todd [00:13:10] And were you doing work in classes, in labs or some in the field? Where did your education there take you?

Pam Harte [00:13:22] I don't remember much of being in the field, I loved histology and a lot of classes where we were under a microscope, using microscopes. And I loved parasitology and immunology. I think I studied quite a bit of immunology.

Pam Harte [00:13:40] I ended up getting married my junior year to a wonderful man named Austin Fitch. And we only stayed married for a few years. But he kind of took me off into a whole other world of banking. And his father was developing College Station at the time, so we were doing a lot of architectural projects. So I kind of got veered out of school a little bit. Went ahead and graduated my senior year. And I had planned on going to medical school. That was the plan. And at that point then I wasn't going to medical school. I was more interested in art and architecture and humanities.

David Todd [00:14:22] Okay. And my understanding you said that, after college, you got into the book world. Is that right? And that you were an editor at Putnam and also at Scholastic Children's Books. And I was curious if that is sort of a phase in your life that you might like to talk about, you know, as far as education goes or maybe about how you share your enthusiasm for the environment or nature, if those two overlap.

Pam Harte [00:14:58] Just to go back a little bit, David, I, when I left College Station, I went to Dallas and I worked for Baylor Research Foundation, and I got a job there. I was making \$8 an hour and working hard, and I became their publications coordinator. So I was putting together newsletters for them. I was learning how to research, I was learning how to write papers, learning how to interview doctors. So I became fascinated with publishing and science. Back then, they were working on a cure for the AIDS virus and kidney transplant, heart transplant information. So it was fascinating. I was using my science, but also learning about publishing.

Pam Harte [00:15:44] And, at that point too, I decided to learn more about publishing and literature. So I moved to France. And for two years I was there. I got my degree and like I said, in French literature and just French history, learning more about the humanities.

Pam Harte [00:16:03] And, after that, I moved to New York City and I did get a job at Putnam Publishing as assistant managing editor. And about six months later, I was promoted to managing editor. So I was 25 years old, or about 25, and I was doing all these things. And I have to say that was really wonderful because Putnam Publishing published everything. They published hardcover books. Perigee was their softcover books. And they did art and culture and celebrities and literature and Amy Tan and all these different wonderful writers. So that was an incredible experience.

Pam Harte [00:16:45] And, I think I stayed there for three years and then I went to Scholastic Children's Books and became managing editor for them. And that was wonderful too, because a lot of children's books include nature and stories and animals, and I had a wonderful time doing that.

David Todd [00:17:08] So, I'm curious about, you know, all these phases, but particularly the ones where there's kind of a clear link to nature and conservation. And I, and I guess the real candidate there would be the Scholastic chapter in your life. And, and if you might have any thoughts about how you might work with an author or a story to, to convey interest in, you know, animals and the natural world to kids. Do any of those memories come to mind?

Pam Harte [00:17:48] No, I don't think so. I was managing editor, so I was more, it was more about forecasting and scheduling and production and legal situations and things like that. It wasn't truly editing, working with authors directly.

Pam Harte [00:18:04] And, meanwhile, when I lived in New York City, I had a terrace in my backyard. So I had a full garden on the fifth floor, and I lived just down the street from Central Park. So I was in the Park every day. And I was riding a bicycle. So I was in nature all the time. And of course, going out to the Hamptons and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean every weekend. So I don't think it was my profession so much as just seeking nature, living in New York City, having to actually physically find nature and be in it.

David Todd [00:18:43] Well, that's really interesting because it sounds like you have lived in some very urban places. You know, you mentioned Paris and New York. And yet you've also had exposure to small towns. I think of Hunt, Texas or, you know, this lovely ranch where you are now, outside of Fort Davis. And it'd be interesting to know if you think the places you have lived, whether cities or small towns or country spots, have been teachers for you. You know, have you learned from the place you've been.

Pam Harte [00:19:20] Yes. The answer, the short answer, is yes.

David Todd [00:19:23] Okay.

Pam Harte [00:19:23] And I'm not, and I don't even know how to explain that, except in some places nature is right in your face, and some places you have to seek it out. And I think it's an attitude that, you know, every day when you wake up, you need to see something beautiful and see an animal, even if it's a squirrel or a cardinal in your path. And just appreciate it, no matter where you are.

David Todd [00:19:55] Yeah. I mean, I guess we live on a planet that's alive and there's squirrels and cardinals even in the most urban place.

David Todd [00:20:11] Well, so it's, it's interesting to me that you've, you've been in the ink-on-paper world as a way to convey ideas, but that you've also of, you know, been, been involved with a number of filmmaking ventures. And I thought maybe you can talk a little bit about your experiences there. I understand that you were a producer for "The River and the Wall", "Deep in the Heart", "Lions of West Texas", "Wildlife Killing Contests". Could you talk about just the art and craft of filmmaking, and what you see in filmmaking as a way to talk about the natural world and, you know, maybe persuade people, not just teach them about how it works, but tell them that it's special, and it needs protection, or whatever the message is that you're trying to pass on.

Pam Harte [00:21:08] You know, I don't think I ever would have ever thought of being in this industry. It wouldn't have occurred to me. I was fortunate enough to meet a gentleman named Ben Masters. Friends brought him out here in 2017 to meet me, and he and I talked about film quite a bit. He had already started to make films and he had made "Unbranded", and was explaining to me the power of a film. And so I watched "Unbranded". I agreed with him.

Pam Harte [00:21:39] We decided to do a short documentary on mountain lions here on the property. We had seen several and we wanted to capture that.

Pam Harte [00:21:50] And I think what I learned was, in film, you can capture a bigger audience today, as we all know, than if it's in a book or magazine. And so I just, I think I became fascinated with that.

Pam Harte [00:22:03] And I serve on the Texas Parks and Wildlife's Wildlife Diversity Advisory Committee. I have done that for about nine or ten years now. And with it, I was in one of the committee meetings and we were, they brought up this situation where wildlife killing contests were starting to be more prevalent in Texas. And I had never heard of them. And they said, well, there's, the biggest one in the United States is in San Angelo. And I said, "I don't believe you".

Pam Harte [00:22:38] So I did, I got in the car that January and drove to San Angelo and was in the parking lot, and I watched it happen. And I think I really got so upset, I really wanted to let other people know this existed and how else can you do it? And now I've learned, right, it's film. So I started making little films myself with my little phone.

Pam Harte [00:23:04] And but then eventually found some filmmakers, Filipe DeAndrade and Brian Moghari, who came and helped me make the film "Wildlife Killing Contests". And it was just a way to know that this is something that happens in the United States, it happens here in Texas, and I wanted people to be aware of it. The film came out, I think, in 2020.

Pam Harte [00:23:33] And the "Lions of West Texas" is still on Ben Masters' film tour. "The River and the Wall" is, was more of a being a producer, a financial producer. And same thing with "Deep in the Heart". Will and I decided to back Ben financially. So we're not as involved in the subject matter, content or anything else, just wanting to support Ben and wildlife films. We really feel like that's a way to reach a bigger audience.

David Todd [00:24:09] Well, any sort of speculation since you've been kind of in both pockets of the, you know, writ-large, "education field", why film seems to have more currency or bigger audience than books.

Pam Harte [00:24:30] I'm not sure, except it just seems to be the way the world works now. Everybody talks about how you have to get everything out in 3 minutes to capture your audience. And I find that's true, even though I think books are, have a great place in the world, and from what I understand, book sales are starting to increase. So I think people are reading again. But I just think film is a great way to reach people through their phones, through their computers, when people are moving around.

David Todd [00:25:04] Well, maybe we can sort of drill down a little bit on the whole process of filmmaking, because it seems like such a multi-disciplinary, you know, kind of a team effort often. And it looks like you've done it both ways. You did it on your cell phone, I gather, when you did the Wildlife Killing film, but then also with light and sound and techs and videographers and audio editing with Ben Masters' work. And can you sort of talk about the two, how you approach both?

Pam Harte [00:25:45] Well, it's, I think it's really exciting to do it on your own phone. Right? And I encourage everybody to go out and film wildlife on your phone and take it home and watch it again, because you can easily miss something when you're not watching. But also do not just use your phone, but use your eyes and be out there and, you know, smell and taste and touch.

Pam Harte [00:26:09] But what was fascinating to me when I started working with Filipe DeAndrade and Brian Mochori is they were teaching me about film. They had gone to school. They had made several films already. They were very involved in filmmaking. And they were teaching me about speed, and rhythm, and light, and things that I had never heard of, and how they could film certain things at certain speeds that would be appropriate for the brain at that speed and how, and then they would teach me how speeding it up or slowing it down would make it more accessible to somebody, not alter the film, but just make it more accessible.

Pam Harte [00:26:53] So, I realized that whole industry has so much more about it than I know. And that made it exciting and fascinating.

David Todd [00:27:01] Good, good.

Pam Harte [00:27:05] Well, those are my dogs.

David Todd [00:27:08] Good friends.

David Todd [00:27:11] Well, I think this might be a good chance, a good time maybe, to talk about the wildlife-killing contests, not so much about the film that you made, but, but what are they, and who does these, and what is the purpose, and how are they regulated, if they are? What are some of the ethical issues that you see with them, and what are some of the ecological problems, as well?

Pam Harte [00:27:46] Well, in my opinion, they don't make any sense. They, like I said, that they're all across the country. We do have them in Texas. They are usually an off-season, off-hunting season. And what happens is people go out for 24 hours or 48 hours. It's usually teams. And they go out and kill usually foxes, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons. Some of them I went

to had rabbits. Some of the junior ones I went to had rabbits. And they bring them all in and they go to a parking lot and the animals are weighed or counted and judged, and then there's prize money.

Pam Harte [00:28:36] So, in my opinion, those animals belong to everybody. They're part of the state. And so for people to make money off of killing them, and bring them in, as a pot, didn't make any sense to me. That's just an ethical thing for me.

Pam Harte [00:28:55] But I think, biologically, I worry about how it affects the landscape. If you, if somebody goes to Midland area and kills 72 foxes in one night and brings them in and wins the \$7,100 prize for the most foxes brought in. And then what happens to that area where all those foxes no longer exist? And what really upsets me is they're doing this in January, February and March when these animals are starting to get together and breed. And it's just, it's too big of an effect on the environment.

Pam Harte [00:29:36] And, I also, I believe these animals are out there doing what they need to do. And the wildlife-killing contest participants, and also the people who put it on, claim that these animals are being brought in because they are problem animals, they're nuisance animals. They are being predators on farm and ranch areas.

Pam Harte [00:30:02] But, in reality, not all those animals could be a problem animal. And so that's not a form of management. If there's a problem animal, I understand that things had to be done by landowners. And, but these are just big masses of animals being brought in for no reason except they came to a call and they got shot.

Pam Harte [00:30:23] So, I just think ethically it's wrong, biologically it's wrong. And I think it tarnishes our state, when we think about it. And there have been, I think, ten or 11 states now who have stopped their wildlife-killing contest within their states.

Pam Harte [00:30:45] And so, I always hope that that would happen in Texas, that we would no longer have those.

Pam Harte [00:30:51] Otherwise, it's not regulated. David, it's not regulated at all. There's nothing there's no law against what they're doing. It's perfectly legal. There's no way to stop them. And once again, I just don't think it's right for these people to make money off of our wildlife.

David Todd [00:31:14] When you talk to the people who organized things or participate in them, what is their thought about this? I think you mentioned that, that they figure these animals are nuisances or problems. Do they get into any more detail than that about what drives them to do this?

Pam Harte [00:31:41] Well, based on interviews and talking to people, I think a lot of it's done because they just want to do it. It's a, what they want to call a "sport". It's an activity. There is hope that they're going to win the prize. It's, maybe it's collegial for some of them: they work in teams. But, and they'll claim it's about helping ranchers. We don't see any science in that. But they don't really share with me anything else besides that.

David Todd [00:32:26] And then, the just, the kind of mechanics of this, it sounds like they're calling them in and then shooting them. Or is their trapping going on?

Pam Harte [00:32:37] No. Trapping would not be a part of the program. They are called, and shot, and collected. And from what I understand, different teams have, go to different landowners and get permission to hunt on those pieces of property. All private property, from what I understand.

David Todd [00:33:02] Okay.

David Todd [00:33:05] This is going to be a very different question. But I'm remembering that earlier you said that your mother recalled that you tried to put tails back on lizards. And I'm wondering about this interest that you have in wildlife rehabilitation, which seems very much different from this wildlife-killing contest. And maybe you could talk a little bit about the rehab work that you've done and the courses you've taken and why you support that.

Pam Harte [00:33:43] Well, at one point and Will and I were out at the ranch.

Will Harte [00:33:48] I'm going to get lunch.

Pam Harte [00:33:55] That was my husband.

David Todd [00:33:57] And, we were talking to different people at Texas Parks and Wildlife. It was a really dry year. And apparently mama bears were leaving their cubs around Texas and they were finding cubs that needed adoption. And they encouraged us to build a bear rehab facility.

Pam Harte [00:34:19] So, Will and I went to school. We went back and we got our rehab license and then we got our permit to build a bear rehab facility, of all things. And we took one of our old stone water mills (I don't know, mills is not the right word), but an old stone water holder. And we added to that and we made a large metal coop. We call it Fort Coop now because it's now where my chickens live. And we created a facility for bears that would need to be rehabbed or have a place to live.

Pam Harte [00:35:03] And, that didn't happen after all. Several of our neighbors were very upset about the fact that we might be doing that. So we were asked not to do it. And then our permit, after two years, was terminated.

Pam Harte [00:35:17] But like I said, now it's Fort Coop. It's our chicken coop.

Pam Harte [00:35:23] Otherwise, I don't think we would have gotten a rehab license. It was just part of that program.

David Todd [00:35:29] Well, so it sounds like this course that you took taught you about how to build the facility. But were there also things that they told you about what to do if you had this cub, how you would care for it, feed it, let it grow?

Pam Harte [00:35:45] Yeah, you know, we learned how to take care of a cub and how to take care of an actual adult bear, if one was brought in, and was injured, and how to release them back into the wild. It, it was basically a biology class for meso or large mammals. And it was really fun: we met people from all over the country who were also rehabbing animals, who are very invested in taking care of animals - all sizes, all creatures. There was a turtle rehabber are there. And so we learned a lot about rehabbing turtles. And it's just nice to know that

there's people across the country who do this, and they're very serious about it. And there's lots of different organizations that take care of creatures.

David Todd [00:36:38] You know, that, I think that'd be interesting. You've talked a little bit about the community of folks that are drawn to this wildlife killing. It sounds like there's there's a whole analogous, but very different, community around wildlife rehabilitation. Can you recall any of the people you met, or just their overall attitude and approach to life? I mean, why they are drawn to this? It seems like an unusual kind of work and very time-consuming and ...

Pam Harte [00:37:10] Very exhausting. You could tell the people who were at this course seemed worn out. We were all there to get our license or have their license, have a license renewed.

Pam Harte [00:37:22] And, but, yeah, no, it's a very engaging, very serious way of life to take care of animals. It's 24-7. And we, the people we met were from all over the country, Canada, Mexico. I don't really remember anybody in particular.

David Todd [00:37:45] Well, you know I think this, the wildlife rehabilitation facility was sited on a place that you and your husband own and manage, called the Caldwell Ranch, which is a large tract of land northwest of Fort Davis, and in the beautiful Davis Mountains. And I was hoping that you could talk a little bit about what your attitude is about being stewards of this place and what your goals are for the ranch, short term and longer term. You know, I understand that you've had chickens, but you've also had cows. And I saw when I was coming in here, I think they were look like there were some wild hogs. And I think you have elk. And so there's just a whole "creatures, great and small" here. And what is your attitude about this piece of land and the wildlife that are on it?

Pam Harte [00:38:46] Well, I think we were drawn to this area because it's so vast and it's so open and it's still natural, it's still wild. And we wanted to live in Texas, but we wanted to live in a wild place. And our definition of wild is to leave everything as it is. And of course, you have to build some fences and you have to build some roads and you have to take care of things in order to live here. But otherwise, to us, it's all about letting nature take care of things.

Pam Harte [00:39:20] And, yes, we do raise cattle and we have horses and we have domesticated animals. And then, we have have javelina and badgers, possums and coyotes, and mountain lions and many different creatures here.

Pam Harte [00:39:42] And so people often say, "Well, what do you raise out there?" And I say, "Well, we raise land to be accessible to wildlife". We don't, you know, we do, I do still have 30 Belted Galloways and now I have a very small herd, because it's been so dry here for three years.

Pam Harte [00:40:06] But we, we think about the, all the creatures who were here natively. That's who, to us, belong here. And so I would say we're raising a place where mountain lions and coyotes and javelina and reptiles, including rattlesnakes, can live. That's what we focus on.

Pam Harte [00:40:34] And we appreciate the pinion pines and the oaks and the scrub and the grasses. We have lots of native grasses out here. And how do we, how do we make the right soil and the right water for those parts of nature?

David Todd [00:40:54] Yeah, it sounds like you have a sort of a bottom-up attitude about this, though, that you're interested in the soil and the water. And then I guess the things that are maybe more apparent like, you know, whether it's the elk, the javelina or the badgers, the possums. But it sounds like you sort of a holistic view of this whole place. Is that fair to say?

Pam Harte [00:41:22] Well, I think that's part of creating a sanctuary, is you have to create the foundation. And then, as I said earlier, my mother taught me to let nature take its course. There's dry years here. There's wet years here. We can't control the climate, the weather, what's happening here. But we can watch and not overgraze. We can be ready when there's a fire. Will and I have had to put out several fires by ourselves. We have our own fire truck.

Pam Harte [00:41:55] And, we just believe that, as stewards, we're here for a period of time, and our job is to create a foundation.

Pam Harte [00:42:05] We believe in as little fencing as possible. So we have good corridors. We have really good relationships with our neighbors. And so if they are overgrazed, they're welcome to come through our gate and graze here if we have extra grass. We hope that we can be creating corridors with them, so the wildlife can have more areas to run.

Pam Harte [00:42:30] And, obviously the elk move quite a bit. So they move, they jump fences and move from ranch to ranch.

Pam Harte [00:42:40] And so, everybody kind of works together. It's, it's been a great experience that way.

David Todd [00:42:45] You know, I think that's interesting that, you know, for I guess since Borden and the barbed wire was introduced, the people have looked on their piece of land as kind of their fiefdom, and from fence-to-fence that is theirs. And you kind of ignore the people that are on the land, that maybe are outside of that fence. But it sounds like you are participating, sharing, cooperating with some of your neighbors by allowing them to share your grass for their livestock or to allow movement of deer. And I guess you can't really do much about that, but you're recognizing that the elk and the deer will be moving. And can you talk about that.

Pam Harte [00:43:31] We lower our fences. We do a three- or four-strand fence. So and we don't have pronghorn. But some of our neighbors raise the lowest strand. We lower the top strand when we realized that the mule deer, white-tailed deer, or elk are going through those certain areas. I think Will and I both believe that wildlife corridors are really important for habitat and for diversity and genetics. So we do talk to our neighbors about that.

Pam Harte [00:44:02] And, you know, we can make it a fiefdom. But in reality, seeds travel, water travels, air travels, and animals travel. So you can think about your deed, and what you own, and you know where your property lines are. But in reality, we're all sharing the same thing together. So we've had a ball working with our neighbors. We've so far, I think three of our neighbors have worked with us just bringing their animals in. We don't do it for money. We just do it for opportunity to share grass. And it's been beneficial.

Pam Harte [00:44:43] Out here in West Texas, you don't survive out here by yourself. Well, that's one thing we've really learned.

Pam Harte [00:44:49] I mean, of course, in New York City, I couldn't survive without my neighbors there, too. But out here, if there's a fire, that, too goes. All the neighbors go.

Pam Harte [00:44:59] And, if there's an issue, if some, if a motorcyclist gets hurt on the road, we all show up. It's, it's really a wonderful situation.

Pam Harte [00:45:09] But that happens - talking about hunting, and animals, and surveys and all these things. We talk about all that stuff, and we share our experiences.

David Todd [00:45:23] So I think it's interesting that, while you are all individual landowners, it seems like there's a culture out here, and the culture has been different at different times, you know, from years ago, to what it is now. And I guess some of it's because of the individuals and the families that are here, but it's also the kind of grazing industry, whether you're running sheep and goats and cows, or if you're in the hunting business and you're trying to promote the native wildlife. And I wonder if you could just talk about what you see happening in this part of Texas - if there are changes, and if so, what they are, and particularly, of course, I'm curious about how they affect the attitude about predators and mountain lions. Talk a little bit about that - the sort of idea about culture and people's perspective?

Pam Harte [00:46:26] It's kind of tricky. And I'm not sure everyone tells me the truth about how they feel. And I appreciate that, because I am so outspoken. Maybe it's difficult to share with me how they truly feel. But it seems like most of our neighbors now understand the value of mountain lions as predators. And all of our, our two major neighbors are still run large herds of cattle, and they seem to understand that mountain lions are not affecting them at all. And we don't have any sheep and goat industry owners out here. We don't have any sheep and goat raisers out here.

Pam Harte [00:47:12] But, I would say Will and I have been very vocal, and talk to our neighbors about how we feel about coyotes and mountain lions and how they have a place on this landscape.

Pam Harte [00:47:31] And, maybe they're humoring us, but they seem to listen and understand. We've noticed no one seems to be trapping around us anymore.

Pam Harte [00:47:43] And it's just, like I said, it's a little tricky. You know, we believe that and we hope that's the case, but we're not really sure.

Pam Harte [00:47:53] And, it's an old myth. We came upon a book that was written, I think it was written in the fifties or sixties, but it's basically about this ranch, at the turn of the century and then in the 1900s, and then about the 1950s, when all the families would get together and come here to this ranch and shoot bears and lions and coyotes. And it was for skins, mainly. I think some of the fat was used off the bears for candles and different things, but it was really just a way, a reason to get together.

Pam Harte [00:48:32] And, that book had a big influence on Will and me, because we realized that, first of all, all those animals, if the tales are true, existed here. I mean, people would kill seven lions in one day with hounds. And so, first of all, we realized, "Wow, this is the place where these animals do live, or have an opportunity to live". And, if you didn't hunt them, or

over-hunt them, they could thrive. And so we've been a big believer in protecting those species.

Pam Harte [00:49:07] And, we've seen two bears on cameras. We've never seen bears, actually. We've never seen any black bears. And apparently the last grizzly bear in Texas was shot here in the fifties. And we've seen a few lions, but mainly we've seen them on the cameras, either because the scientists are here researching and studying the lions, or because the filmmakers had the cameras.

Pam Harte [00:49:36] So, we know they're here. We just know that there's not as many as there used to be. So we talk about that with our neighbors. We talk about the reverence of the coyote and how exciting it would be to know that they exist on your property and how they've lived here for hundreds of years.

David Todd [00:49:58] Well, and can you give me an idea, and I am sure that you're a polite, courteous person and your neighbors are probably trying to be respectful and all, but can you talk about any of the sort of points where you can see that there's some reluctance, some resistance to go any further, there's some pushback against some of your concerns. And, you know, where those kind of touch points are about mountain lions or other predators out here? What to do with them, and what kind of impact they have?

Pam Harte [00:50:33] Well, I know of some of our neighbors who we don't know personally who still trap lions. And they do it as an industry. They're outfitters. So it's a way of making a living. It's no longer really thought of as a management tool out here. And it's basically an old industry that still exists. It's just a way of making a living. It's houndsmen take people out, and chase a lion up a tree and shoot it, or not. They're telling me that they don't shoot females; that they only shoot males.

Pam Harte [00:51:24] But I think that's just what people used to do. And then now it's a, it's a profession. And it's a moneymaking profession, from what I understand from some of the outfitters' websites, I was told last week, that the lion hunting is the top on the list, and it can be the most expensive, and the most lucrative for them.

David Todd [00:51:51] I wonder what their, who their clients are. Do you have any idea of who they might be, where they come from?

Pam Harte [00:51:57] I really don't. I don't know who would want to do that. I don't.

Will Harte [00:52:05] Well, and I guess maybe we can go up to the 30,000 foot level here and think a little bit about why there is a mountain lion trapping / hunting business. You know, how is it that these aren't protected in some way? Can you talk a little bit about the history of their status in terms of their legal protection or lack of that?

Pam Harte [00:52:32] Yeah, it's very interesting. If you go back and read the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, which I've studied and studied for the last two years, there's a section on canned hunting which is to injure or trap an animal and release it, and then it would be available for hunting. So it makes hunting more easy. And, if you read through that, it talks about all the animals that can be canned. It talks about the animals that cannot be canned-hunted, and it says Asian or African lion. And then an asterisk, "does not include mountain lions".

Pam Harte [00:53:15] And, that's fascinating. I don't know - I think that code was written in the twenties, that part of the code. But to even designate that African and Asiatic lions can be canned-hunted, but not to mention our native Texas mountain lions. So they have been left out all these years.

Pam Harte [00:53:36] So that's one of the things in Texans for Mountain Lions, the nine of us, have talked about and hopefully will be changed, is that mountain lions will actually be included in that code. So they cannot be canned-hunted. And it just seems unfair to me to shoot a mountain lion in the foot, put it in a cage, release it, and then somebody gets to shoot it. And it just doesn't seem fair to me.

Pam Harte [00:54:01] So I don't know why they've been left out. They are not game animals. They're non-game animals. They're considered varmint. Coyotes are too.

Pam Harte [00:54:12] One of the things that's interesting is if you look at their restitution values and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, I don't know exactly, David, but I think the mountain lions are a dollar. Coyotes are zero. Raccoons move up a little bit. I think they are a couple dollars. Foxes are right above that.

Pam Harte [00:54:32] So I think that it's just been a way in Texas to talk about value - that they have very little value. And part of that is being non-game animals. They don't bring any hunting fees in. They don't have, there's no licensing.

Pam Harte [00:54:49] One of the things that was interesting, somebody shared with me last week, is that as a scientist now in Texas, you have to get a hunting license or a hunting permit to even go out on the side of the road and take photographs of animals that you're not hunting. And that also includes collecting, but it also includes photographing.

Pam Harte [00:55:14] So if you are on the side of the road and you are photographing a lizard and the game warden comes by and you don't have a hunting license or a permit to do that, you can be fined.

Pam Harte [00:55:31] So, I think they're changing the way they're looking at all of the animals. And perhaps that's a way to bring in more funds toward the Texas Parks and Wildlife. But I'm not quite sure what that means. I have to look into it.

David Todd [00:55:47] So, I think that you mentioned the canned hunting rules. And then you also mentioned the sort of non-game status, where mountain lions are basically considered varmints. They don't have a season. As I recall, back in the early nineties, about 30 years ago, there was an effort by Sierra Club to get some sort of protection, game protection or something along the lines of endangered species. But, you know, it's something that would have a bag limit, seasons, that sort of thing. Do you know much about that?

Pam Harte [00:56:31] I do. And, and because of the Open Records Act, we actually have all the documents from 1990, and Del Rio, and everything that was said and shared. And my colleagues, Patricia Harveson and Mark Elbroch, just published a paper that came out last week that goes back and shows all of those documents and what was discussed, and what was not discussed, and decisions that were made back in the nineties, and who was on those advisory committees.

Pam Harte [00:57:05] So, that is all published now. As of last week, it's out there in a journal. If you, I can always find out what it is.

Pam Harte [00:57:12] But, what I think is interesting is this - people get together and talk about these things. But if an advisory group is not tasked with making decisions, or making resolutions, it can be one of those groups that just keeps going around in circles. And then debates happen, and people get upset, and there's resentment. I think it's really important, and what we're suggesting with Texans for Mountain Lions, for this new advisory group that we're pushing Texas Parks and Wildlife to have, and apparently is almost ready to be launched, is that there has to be some decisions made. There has to be resolutions. Each person has to sign up from the beginning and say, "I am willing to be here and to help make a resolution and make a decision". And then decided when the meetings are and how often they occur and what some outcomes might be and start talking about it that way.

Pam Harte [00:58:10] Because I think what happened in 1990 is there was a lot of talk, and a lot of emotion, but there was no ... it was left after three days that landowners, which are very important in Texas, must volunteer to take care of lions, which I'm not sure of the exact wording, but it was left in that way, which basically to me means we're not going to do anything about it.

Pam Harte [00:58:39] It's interesting, in Texas, things can be changed through Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission, which is to change the code, which is what I'm talking about with canned hunting. And then there's regulatory changes, which have to happen in the Legislature.

Pam Harte [00:58:57] And, obviously it's easier to change things within the Commission and within the department. If you go through the Legislature, you're going to be dealing with lobbyists and groups and lawyers and all these different things, which is what we want to avoid.

Pam Harte [00:59:14] What we would like to see is an advisory group work together well, come up with some decisions, suggest those to the Commission and perhaps do things like just even find out how many mountain lions exist in Texas, or start to have some kind of reports, harvest reports, or census reports, so we can even know what exist here. And that's all we're asking for right now.

Pam Harte [00:59:43] And, a lot of the land owners, the people against us, have come to me and said, "This is a slippery slope, Pam. You know, we know that what you're really trying to do is to stop hunting of all mountain lions in Texas". And, you know, that's fair, if they want to say that to me. That's not my objective.

Pam Harte [01:00:01] I do think once we know how many animals there are, it would be helpful to have a season and to have bag limits and maybe even make them a game animal. But until you know how many are here, you can't make those decisions.

David Todd [01:00:24] So you had this group of Texans for Mountain Lions who I understood went down to Parks and Wildlife and made your pitch for, you know, better research and management for the lions. I'm curious how you found one another, this group, how you put it together, what you have in common.

Pam Harte [01:00:49] Yeah. It's been a wonderful experience. I think it's been one of my best experiences I've had in my life. And it's interesting, the other members say the exact same thing and we came together.

Pam Harte [01:01:03] There was a woman, there is a woman, Monica Morrison, who runs an organization in Dallas, "Native Cats", and she came out here a couple of years ago and I had several different women here who are focused on conservation, and we started talking about mountain lions. But Monica really put us all together. It was, it came randomly, and it includes scientists, it includes landowners and includes conservationists. It includes hunters, filmmakers.

Pam Harte [01:01:38] And, excuse me, and we work really well together. We often debate among ourselves. We've been talking for a year and a half every two weeks, and we often disagree and debate and talk about what would be best. But everybody's very sharp and inquisitive and helpful. It's really the way I see the world working together when different people come together from different places. We all do have an interest in seeing mountain lions thrive in Texas. That would probably be our common interest.

David Todd [01:02:20] So there are hundreds, thousands of creatures in Texas and the mountain lion is charismatic, it's iconic. But what does it mean to you? You've put a lot of effort into educating people about them and lobbying on their behalf. Why?

Pam Harte [01:02:49] I think it's more of a representation for me. I think they represent an animal that is revered by many, and abhorred by a few. And for some reason, those few in Texas are louder than everyone else. And that really upsets me. So in that way, I look at them as an underdog, an undercat, kind of like coyotes. So many people love coyotes. A few people detest coyotes. And yet those people's voices are heard more than others. And I just I don't think that's fair.

David Todd [01:03:43] Got you. So earlier, I think you said that you were raised as a pretty devout Presbyterian and that Christianity is still something that inspires you. And I'm curious if that's something that touches how you deal with, you know, other people in your life, or if it also influences how you think about the natural world and about animals and mountain lions.

Pam Harte [01:04:27] Well, I just believe that God is in charge, and I've been put on this planet to work for Him. And otherwise, I don't think I really would want to be here, if I weren't useful and of service to God. And I think God wants all of these creatures to have freedom and wants people to be treated fairly.

Pam Harte [01:04:57] And I'm very, very lucky that I was raised to not judge. So I don't judge people. I don't judge situations. I am a listener. I learn. I'm an observer. I'm fair. And I think that's what God wants us to see and experience on this planet. But mainly just to be of service to Him and, and keep things open and alive.

David Todd [01:05:38] So I think we talked about things in the past up to now. Can you sort of look into the future a little bit and tell us what you foresee for mountain lions and predators, here in Texas? What do you think's going to happen?

Pam Harte [01:05:58] What, what I would really love is for them to be revered. Look at hawks, eagles, falcons, all birds of prey. Sharks. And they, there's been enough people to fight for them; they have been advocates. And they are now revered. Sharks are revered. They're,

you know, tagged and watched, and not killed and not put up on a plaque. And hawks and eagles and falcons and all these birds of prey are watched by many bird watchers all over the state. And they're not hunted and killed anymore.

Pam Harte [01:06:42] And, I would like to see that for mountain lions and coyotes. And recognize they're also, they're scavengers as much as they are predators. I come upon some of my cattle that have been hit by lightning. And the next day, the coyotes are there, and the vultures, obviously, to clean up what's out there. And they are not always predators. And I think they have a place in the landscape as scavengers, cleanup crew.

Pam Harte [01:07:14] Mountain lions do cull. I'm not as familiar with the science about how well they cull and how that helps the environment. But I would like to see them treated as having a part in the system and being honored. And I don't know if those will be regulatory changes or legislative changes. I'd like to see that happen. And I'm not, I don't know what it's going to look like.

David Todd [01:07:53] Well, those are all my nosy questions. But I'm sure if we've left things out that are important that I just didn't, didn't give good shrift to. So I was wondering if there's anything you'd like to add, something that that we skipped over somehow.

Pam Harte [01:08:19] I'm not sure I. I think the one piece I didn't talk about, and I'm shivering now, so I'm getting, I'm, I'm getting nervous. But, one of the things that I didn't speak about is my profession. Once I left publishing, I went back to school for fun at night and got a massage license. It took two years in New York, and then I apprenticed and got a physical therapy license that took another two years, and I ended up doing something called cranial psychotherapy as one of the things I studied and after, and I did that for 20 years.

Pam Harte [01:08:58] So I was working for myself and I ended up studying and specializing in brain and spinal cord injury rehabilitation. So I think that will help you also understand why I'm all about the healing of not only people, but animals. And I was dedicated to that job and that career for many years, and I loved working with people and helping them move through injuries or Parkinson's or whatever was going on with them at the time - memory loss and bad back.

Pam Harte [01:09:36] And, how it made me really respect the miracle of life. And, I don't, I see that beyond just humans. I see it in animals as well.

David Todd [01:09:52] Yeah. I think that, that helps me understand a lot more about you, that this is something that's important to you, that you feel the pain of other people. And I'm sure you do when you look at animals that are being mistreated.

David Todd [01:10:12] Well good. It's good to know about these things. Thank you so much.

Pam Harte [01:10:16] Well, you know, one thing I'd like to say to you is I'm often accused of being an anti-hunter, or someone who's against hunting. And I just want to be clear: that is not where I come from. I didn't grow up hunting. My family didn't hunt. We were all over Texas - east Texas, Cuero, South Texas. We were in nature, but we never were hunters. But we support hunting. We, Will and I, donate several hunts a year, either for aoudad or elk, at our ranch to raise, to help different organizations like TWA, or the game wardens, or different groups raise money. And we are not anti-hunters.

Pam Harte [01:11:06] We believe that hunting has a place and we understand why certain ranches have more hunting opportunities than others, or why some ranches hunt more than others. Maybe it's a way that they can raise funds to keep the land private. So we're not against that.

Pam Harte [01:11:28] We just aren't, we just believe that every animal has its place and that it's not our role to kill a predator of an elk, because that is how it's supposed to be. That doesn't change the way we see elk hunting.

David Todd [01:11:46] Okay.

Pam Harte [01:11:46] Does that make sense?

David Todd [01:11:47] It does. I think it reminds me of something you said about, I think, your mother, who felt like there was a place in nature and that nature would resolve things on its own schedule.

Pam Harte [01:11:57] And, hunting has a place for that. I mean, that is Texas. It's never going to change. It shouldn't change. It's the way Texans function, some of them. And I think it's important. And I also believe that hunting for food is a lot of the way people want to live. They want to hunt their own food. They want to know where their food came from.

Pam Harte [01:12:26] We process some of our steers so we can have our own beef. We understand that function and we just don't personally hunt. Will and I don't hunt.

David Todd [01:12:38] Right. Right. But you see it as having a role?

Pam Harte [01:12:42] I see it as having a role. I was thinking about it the other day: if somebody came up to me and said, "Pam, I'm going to give you a gun and you have to shoot that mountain lion right there in that cage". I couldn't do it. I wouldn't know how to shoot another creature. I would, I don't know what I would do in that situation, but I know that I could not shoot that animal.

David Todd [01:13:15] And, and is there a little bird telling you that in your ear or is that your, who, what is asking you to feel that way?

Pam Harte [01:13:25] I just wouldn't be able to live with myself after that day.

Pam Harte [01:13:31] We once had a raccoon get in the coop and the raccoon ate maybe a chicken or something. It was before we sealed up the wires really well. And I knew I had to get that raccoon out of there or it was going to eat another chicken. But it was stuck in between the bull panel because it was so fat from eating a chicken. And, Will finally decided because it couldn't go in, it couldn't go out, it was stuck. We didn't know what to do. And so, Will finally got a small gun and went ahead and shot it. And he and I both said after that, we would never, ever do that again. We'd find a different way to handle that. We just, I just don't think it's fair to take another life.

David Todd [01:14:22] It's interesting, as you grow up and you realize that there are all these boundaries. Life is full of opportunities and choices and options. But there are some bright lines. And this is just one of them.

Pam Harte [01:14:34] It's one of them. Yeah.

David Todd [01:14:37] All right.

Pam Harte [01:14:38] Thank you.

David Todd [01:14:39] Hey, thank you. This is wonderful. You're so kind to spend time and think about these things and explain them. Thanks.

Pam Harte [01:14:46] Thank you.

David Todd [01:14:47] All right, I'm going to say goodbye. And this is the end.