MERRYHILL SCHOOL
A Nobel Learning Community

Passport to Literacy

John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*

Merryhill School

2007 - 2008

Passport to Literacy

Passport to Literacy was a cross-curricular project where each grade level chose a work of literature and did a variety of projects related to that novel. Our middle school students took on John Steinbeck's classic book, *The Red Pony*. The theme of the project was to examine life on a farm in the 1930s and today. The students broke up into several teams, each worked on a different aspect of the project. The sixth grade class composed and illustrated original poems based on farm life in *The Red Pony*. The seventh grade students researched prices of everyday farm items, wages, and land prices. They then calculated and graphed the rate of change in those values over the last seven decades. The eighth grade class combined science and entrepreneurship to create business proposals for upgrading a farm to become more eco-friendly and energy efficient. The heart of the project, however, was created by our writing team of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Together they wrote a biography on the life and works of John Steinbeck as well as an original short story, "The Party," which stands as a continuation of *The Red Pony*. Our students worked extremely hard on this project and their work impressed a Steinbeck scholar at the Center for Steinbeck Studies at San José State University. The project will soon be on display at the San José State University/Martin Luther King Jr. Library! We are very proud of our middle school students and are very excited about seeing their work on display at San José State.

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Introduction

The smart Steinbeck is a work of art
He made so many books that it could fill a cart
He married three times, like a desperate heart
When he first began, he wasn't sure where to start

The skies are blue
The sun is yellow
The wind is moaning, I want to bellow
My horse is sick
Why is the world such a witch!?

Gabilan was as fast as a light
He was strong and very bright
Big black buzzards killed him is what I think
My sad life is now a broken wing

Jody was very curious, like a black hawk,
About the Great Mountains, that could not talk
Gitano was old like Easter the horse
Failing, fate, without force

Symbolism

A rose can say I love you
And for me to be yours
A rose can say thank you
For being very kind

As I look out the window
I see the moon winking at me
Greeting me with love and all kinds of sorrow

The grass is rippling outside my window
Saying hello without any problems
While the owl's hoot and say I love you
Love lies like lemons

Poems of *The Red Pony*…

Gabilan

Jody's eyes were drawn upon
Gabilan's silky red fur
As the sun shone over the young pony
While he nibbled away on the golden brown hay
Which looked just like Jody's hair
As it rippled in the light breeze
Like the waves of the ocean

Gabilan's Death

The day Gabilan died
Jody felt a sense of dread
His heart felt as empty as an old attic
He felt like the horse he loved and missed
He would never see again
During the night
Jody glanced at the stars
As if he saw Gabilan trotting
In a meadow of everlasting light

Jody screamed as if someone had hit him hard
When he remembered the image
Of the black buzzards
That surrounded Gabilan's dead body

Billy Buck's Guilt

Billy Buck used to be close to Jody like an older brother
The sun danced when they were together
But fate took a turn when the wind changed
Billy made promises that he did not keep
The brotherhood parted like the red sea

Life on a Ranch

Life on a ranch was my kind of life
There were those happy days when I got my pony
And those sad days when the rain fell down on the ground in its gloomy careless way
There was that day that my grandfather came
But there was also the day when he would tell and retell about the Indian days

There were days when I remember how Nellie died
There were days when I would visit my favorite place, the meadows
There were days when my father would tell a simple joke
There were days when I could still see the gleaming sword of Gitano in my mind
I grew up on a ranch

A Rancher's Life

A rancher's life is tough
It's rowdy and it's rough

I won't hesitate to tell you
About a rancher's life
But if you want better info too
Go ask a rancher's wife

It starts out with being smart
Those chickens will really getcha
Roping up those animals, now the hard stuff has to start
When you're done with that, you'll be in pain, I betcha

Next is feeding all those creatures
They tend to peck at you
But it's because you're tall with scary features
Those animals are scared of you! Who knew!

A rancher's day is long
They sing their life in song
For us, that's too long a day
I would rather go than stay

It's only noon and they're tired
But they wouldn't stop they'd get fired
Taking a lunch break really short
Back up again for another report

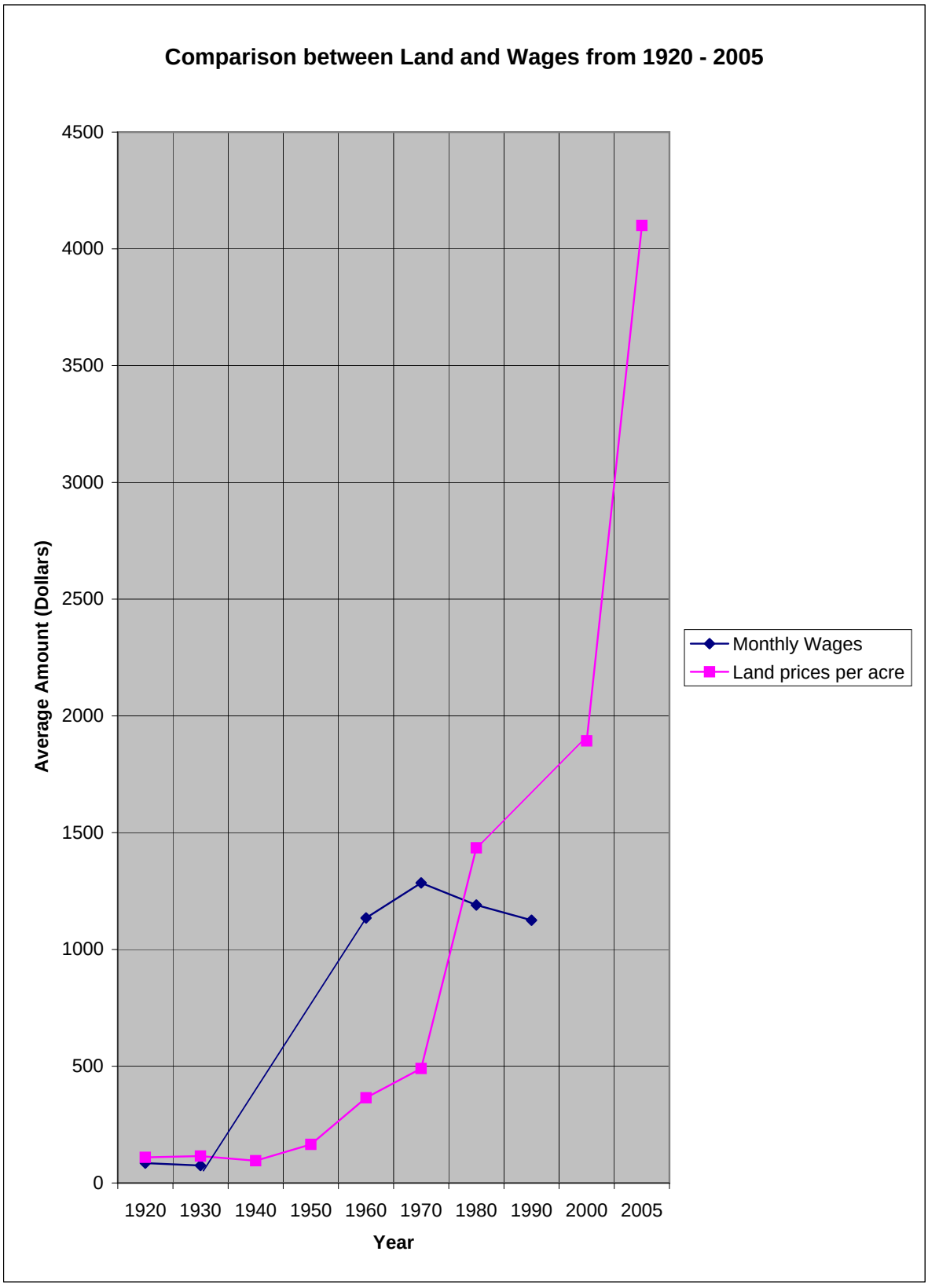
He took a trip into town
Got back when the sun was long down
Came to greet his kids and wife
And that's a day in a rancher's life

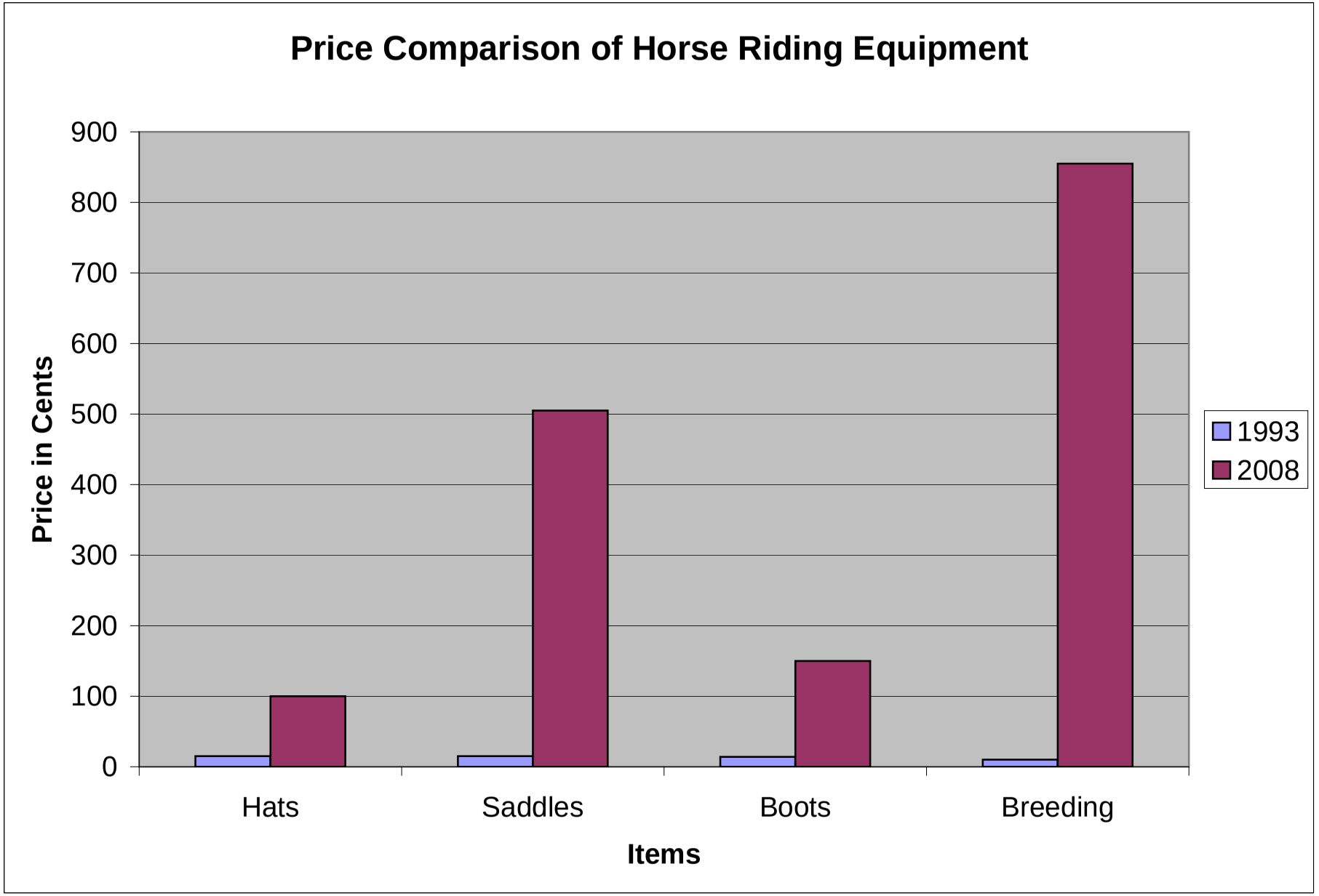
The Death of Gabilan

The sky has lost its color.
The clouds have turned to gray.
At least that's how Jody felt,
When his pony passed away.

He killed the big black buzzard
Because he was so sad.
He took his anger out,
And then looked really mad.

Prices of Food & Utensils in 1933 & 2008
1400
1200
1000
800
600
400
200
0
Cost (cents)
Utensils
Egg
Bacon
Compared Items
1933
2008


Comparison between Land and Wages from 1920 - 2005
Average Amount (Dollars)
4500
4000
3500
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
1920
1930
1940
1950
1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
2005
Year
Monthly Wages
Land prices per acre


Price Comparison of Horse Riding Equipment
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
Price in Cents
Hats
Saddles
Boots
Breeding
Items
1993
2008

Make the Right Choice Today®

April 25, 2008

Jody Tiflin
Merryhill School,
1500 Yosemite Drive,
Milpitas, CA, 95035.

Mr. Tiflin,

Thank you for your time and effort of acknowledging our proposal. We know you have a hectic schedule, and we appreciate you taking time out of your day to read this letter.

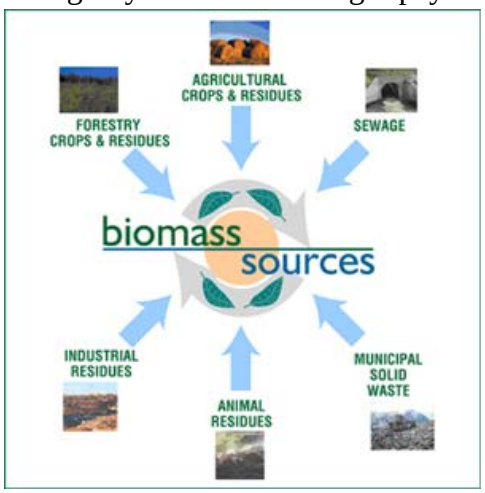
The following is a proposal that we have put together believing that you may run a more efficient and eco friendly farm. We advise that you make the switch to cleaner fuels because as I am sure you know, our planet is going to a crisis. Every switch makes a difference. As you may know, there is new technology available for your convenience, as well as our planet. Though there are many other alternative energy source types, we will endorse biomass which is the second most popular source in the United States. Of course, it is completely your choice for which alternative energy source you decide to use. As we stated previously, our suggestion is that we use biomass, for the subsequent reasons:
-biomass is readily available on farms especially as there is an abundant and inexhaustible supply of the key components of biomass (manure, decaying plants, etc.)

-Biomass is a rising star in the world of alternative energy sources. Many gas stations have started offering ethanol and biodiesel (both types of biofuels) at the pump.

-The low costs, and great production will very soon, rapidly pay itself off. Biomass energy will never fluctuate in the long run; you will see that the revenue will be much more secure ensuring a safe path to retirement. Be a part of a worldwide effort to fight against a threat towards civilization.

-You should choose biomass energy over our competitors because it is efficient, cheap, cleaner/greener, and solves the hassle of disposing of garbage. Unlike solar energy, an up and coming technology, Biomass is steadfast, does not have any fluctuations due to weather, and is not pricey!

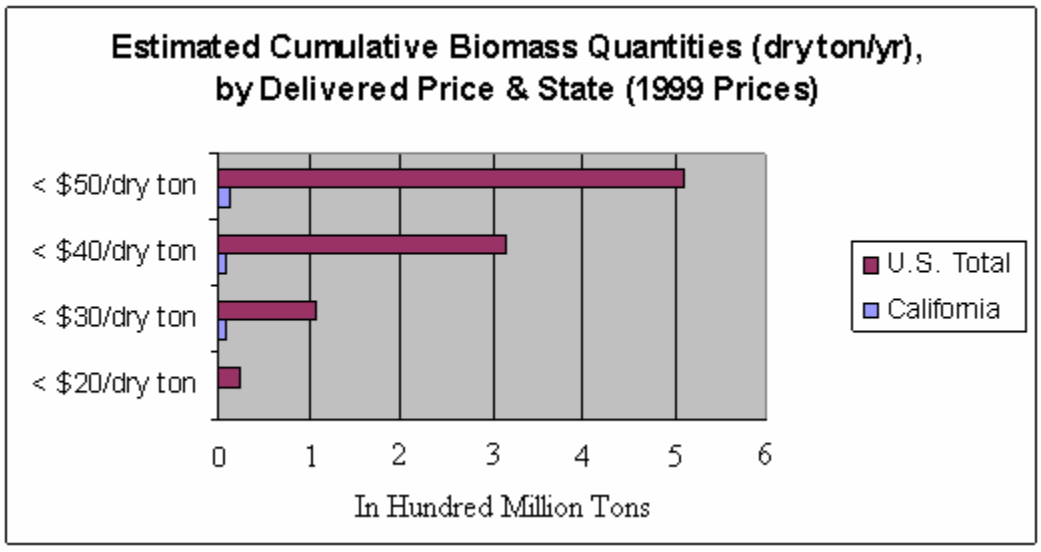
-If you choose to switch to Bioenergy, you will not regret your choice seeing it pays itself off in several months.

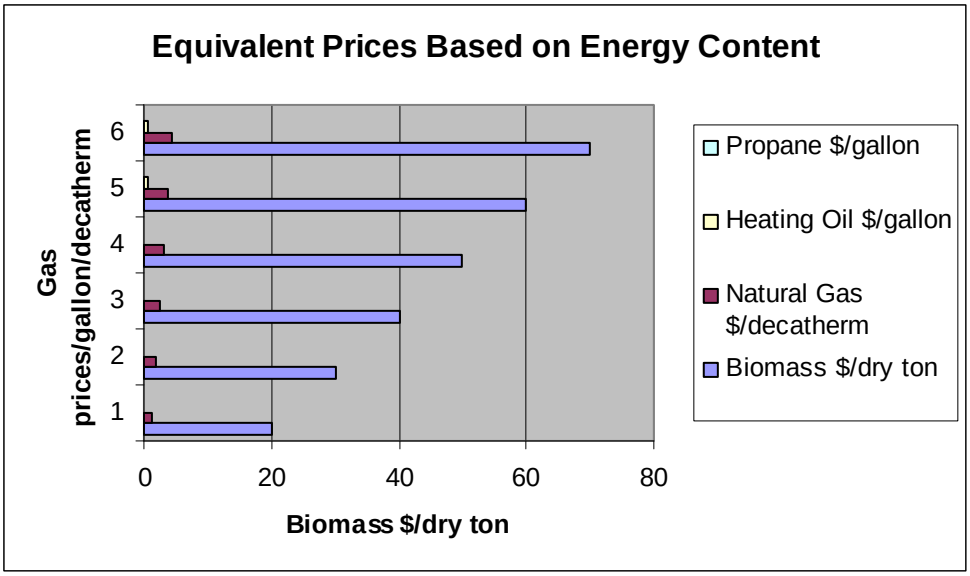


Sincerely,

Co-founders

Make the Right Choice Today

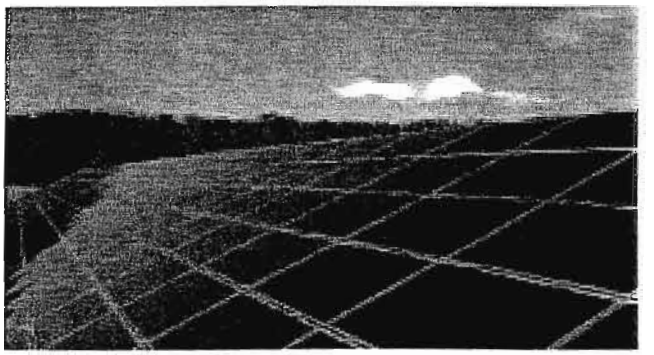

Estimated Cumulative Biomass Quantities (dry ton/yr),
by Delivered Price & State (1999 Prices)
< $50/dry ton
< $40/dry ton
< $30/dry ton
< $20/dry ton
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
In Hundred Million Tons
U.S. Total
California

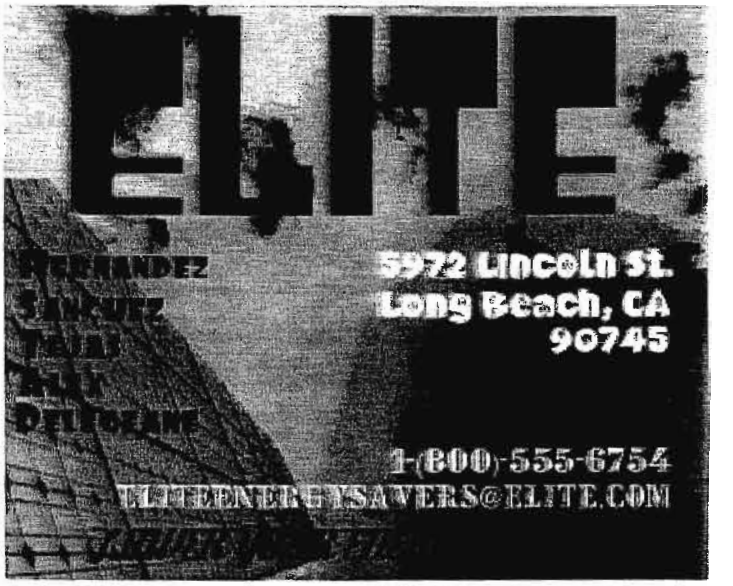

Equivalent Prices Based on Energy Content
Gas prices/gallon/decatherm
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
20
40
60
80
Biomass $/dry ton
Propane $/gallon
Heating Oil $/gallon
Natural Gas $/decatherm
Biomass $/dry ton

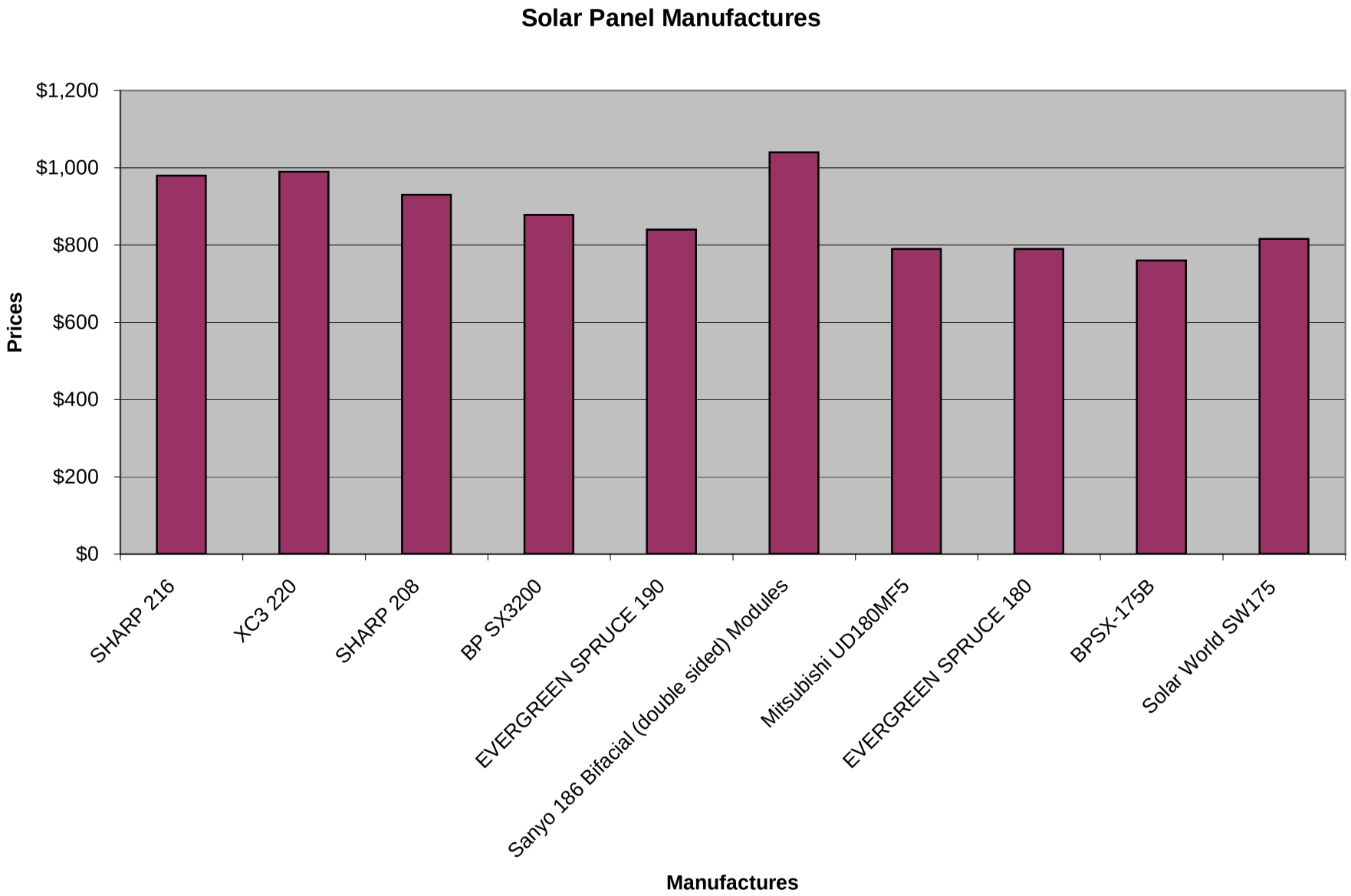
ELITE ENERGY SAVERS

ELITE

Are you tired of paying those expensive electricity bills? Well, Elite is here to help, we can provide you with solar panels; a new way to help you save energy, and your money! A solar panel is a device that consumes sunlight from the sun and then converts it into a form of energy that you can use on a daily basis, in your household. This panel is known as the PV (photovoltaic) panel. It will cost you about $15,000 for the whole job, depending on the size and wattage, but the prices are negotiable. It is made up of 100% pure silicon. It is 40% efficient. It is a better source of energy for you to use for your electrical appliances in your household. It is a renewable source of energy and it doesn't pollute the air. It is a good solution for your household and a new way to help you find a way to save your money. Our solar panels generate a lot of energy which flows through two ports. One port is connected to a generator or a battery and the other port is connected to the PG&E network. The generator is used to generate electricity into your own household, while the off grid port is used to pass the energy onto another network such as other residences or PG&E. Don't stop reading it gets better! You can even make money off of the extra energy your solar panel collects. You pay at least $50,000 a year for your regular electricity bill, now imagine using the solar panel, and pay only one payment of $15,000 and it will last you a life time! So use a solar panel! Save energy, help your community and environment; supply yourself with your own energy, and save your money! You even have a 10 year warranty, so if anything happens to the solar panel, give us a call and we will send in a couple of people to fix it for you. If you are satisfied with our offer, we can supply you with workers and materials needed to build your solar panel in your community now! We guarantee that you will not regret this offer! Only $15,000 no tax! Just pick up that phone and dial 1-(800)-555-6754 now or contact us by email, eliteenergysavers@elite.com.

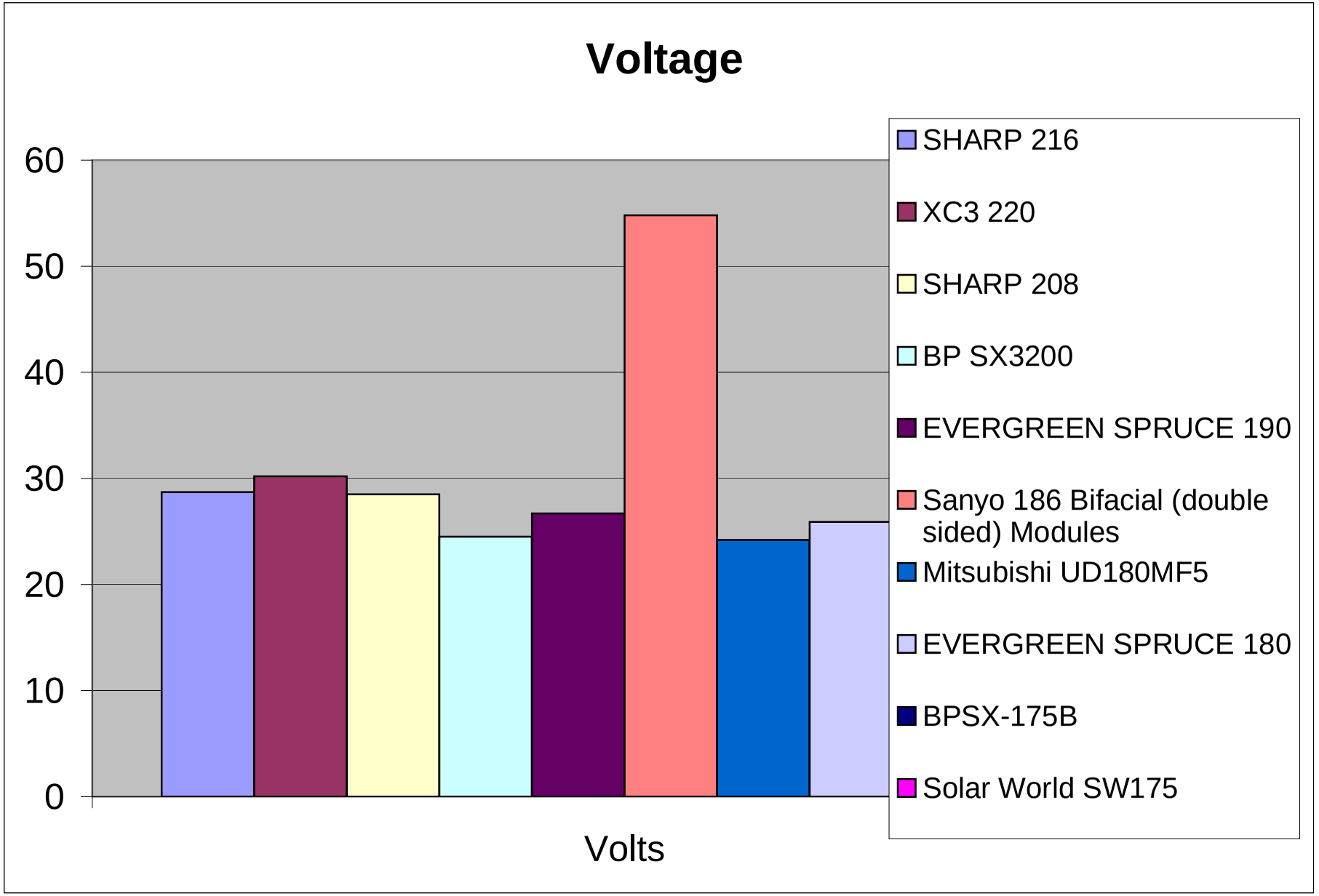





Solar Panel Manufactures
$1,200
$1,000
$800
$600
$400
$200
$0
Prices
SHARP 216
XC3 220
SHARP 208
BP SX3200
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 190
Sanyo 186 Bifacial (double sided) Modules
Mitsubishi UD180MF5
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 180
BPSX-175B
Solar World SW175
Manufactures

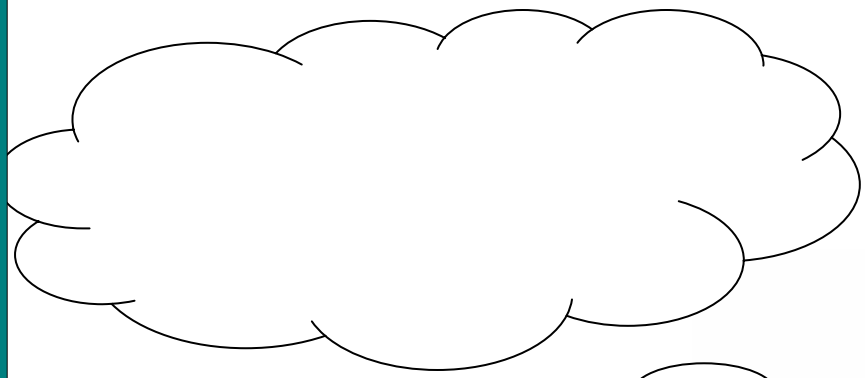
MANUFACTURERS	
Brands	Costs
SHARP 216	979.97
XC3 220	989.97
SHARP 208	929.97
BP SX3200	877.97
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 190	839.97
Sanyo 186 Bifacial (double sided) Modules	1039.97
Mitsubishi UD180MF5	789.97
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 180	789.97
BPSX-175B	759.97
Solar World SW175	815.97

Voltage	
Brands	Volts
SHARP 216	28.71
XC3 220	30
SHARP 208	28.5
BP SX3200	24.5
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 190	26.7
Sanyo 186 Bifacial (double sided) Modules	54.8
Mitsubishi UD180MF5	24.2
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 180	25.9
BPSX-175B	35.4
Solar World SW175	35


Voltage
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Volts
SHARP 216
XC3 220
SHARP 208
BP SX3200
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 190
Sanyo 186 Bifacial (double sided) Modules
Mitsubishi UD180MF5
EVERGREEN SPRUCE 180
BPSX-175B
Solar World SW175

Water World Inc.

WHAT CAN BLUE DO FOR YOU?



Water World Inc.©

1500 Yosemite Drive * Milpitas, CA 95035 * (408)945-9090

May 7, 2008

Mr. Jody Tiflin
Tifin Ranch
Salinas Valley, CA

Dear Mr. Tiflin

We would like to take this opportunity to discuss our newest power source especially designed for farms by Water World Inc©, The Water Wheel. Hydro-power is the future of providing easy access electricity to farms and farm houses everywhere. Further more, we would like to provide our services to you and your ranch.

Water World Inc. © has been a productive source of energy for the past several years, and have sold Water Wheels to large companies including the Nobel Learning Communities, Inc. We have currently expanded to providing our Water Wheels to individually owned companies such as your fine estate.

Some advantages that come with choosing Water World Inc. © is our alternative energy source type that is renewable and will continue providing your farm with power as long as the water is flowing. There are endless supplies of water energy everywhere, and they will continue producing energy with much efficiency. Water is needed in everyday life and can be used for more than just energy. For example water can contribute to the health and well-being of your crops and animals. As for cost, on average farms will pay up to ten billion dollars a year on energy related expenses; we can cut that cost after installation. We guarantee that you will be paid back every penny you pay on our Water Wheels in the course of five years.

Some disadvantages of other sources are: with solar energy the sun cannot always supply energy (e.g. when the weather is unsatisfactory or during the night.) Wind turbines can be expensive, and may not always repay your investment, and the wind is not always abundant, Biomass may be effective, but supply of manure may run short.

Water Wheels come in many styles such as overshot, undershot, breast turbine, etc., allowing us to provide all your power needs. Our systems are able to power

anything from your household television all the way to providing heat and light to your barn and most importantly your family.

All of us here at Water Worlds Inc. © would love to get the opportunity to get to know you and your estate further. We are interested to get in contact with you further to discuss our services and how we can help you achieve a common goal. If you have any questions regarding the Water Wheel or how Water World Inc.© can help your farm please feel free to call us anytime. Water World has excellent references which we are happy to provide.

Thank you for taking your time to read this letter and have a nice day.
Sincerely

Potential Power Available
(scale down)

-gross head * flow * system efficiency (in decimal equivalent) * c=power (kw)

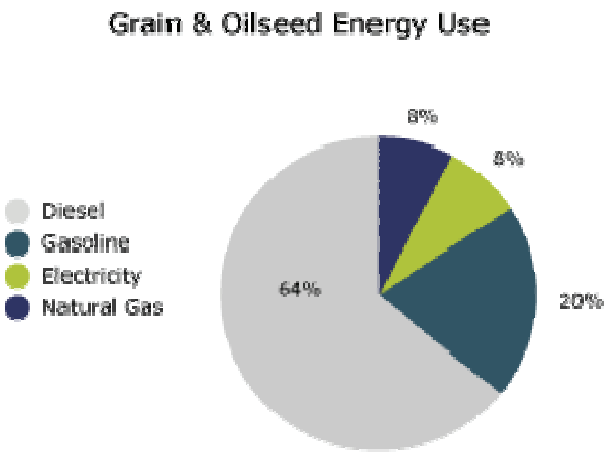
c= is a constant (the value is difference in English and metric units)

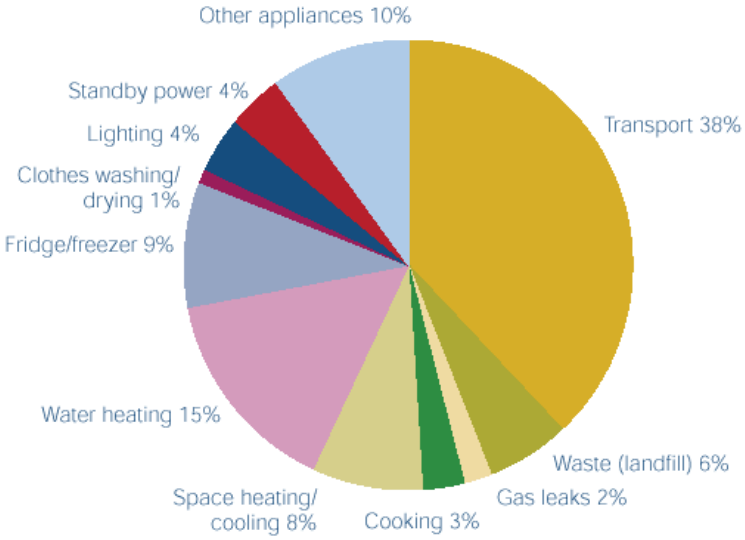
Example :

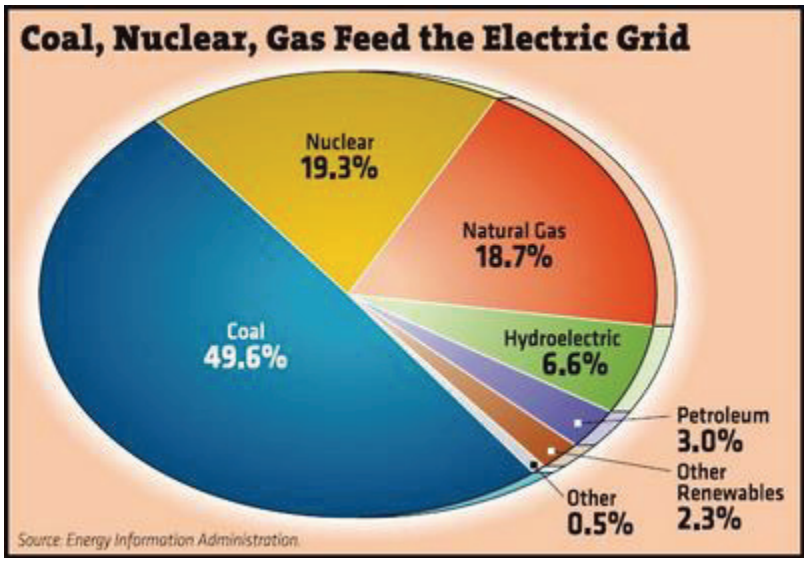
15meters * 0.02 centimeters * 0.55 * 9.81 = 1.62 kw

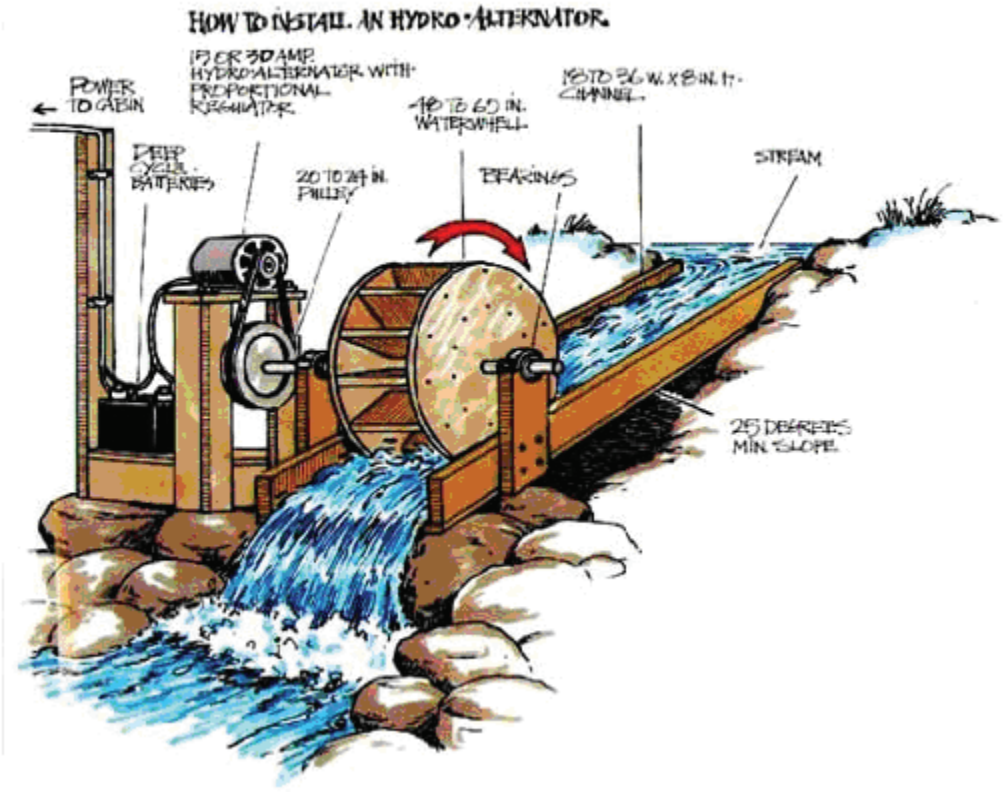
every 2 inches =5 meters

CHARTS OF ENERGY USE

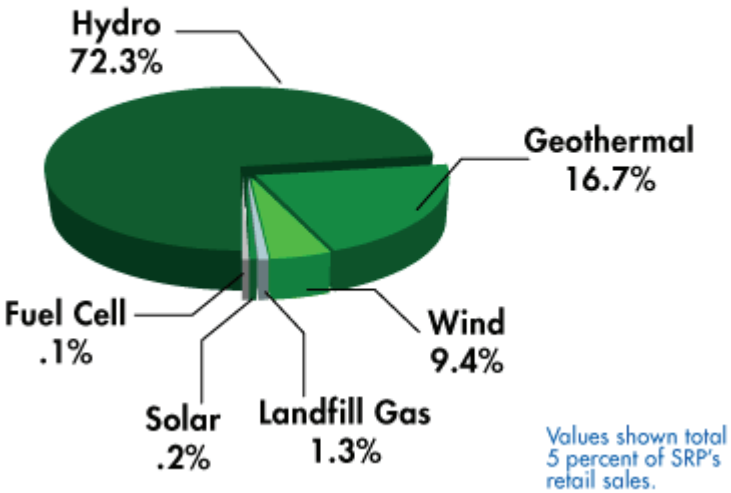






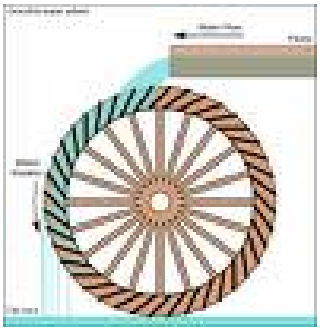


Renewable energy during fiscal year 2007

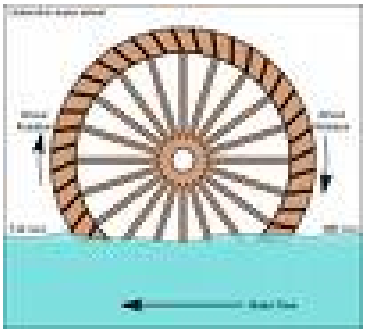


Values shown total 5 percent of SRP's retail sales.

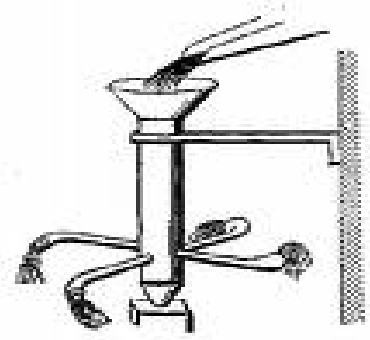
Water Wheel Types



OVERSHOT



UNDERSHOT



BREAST TURBINE

Windmills and Co.

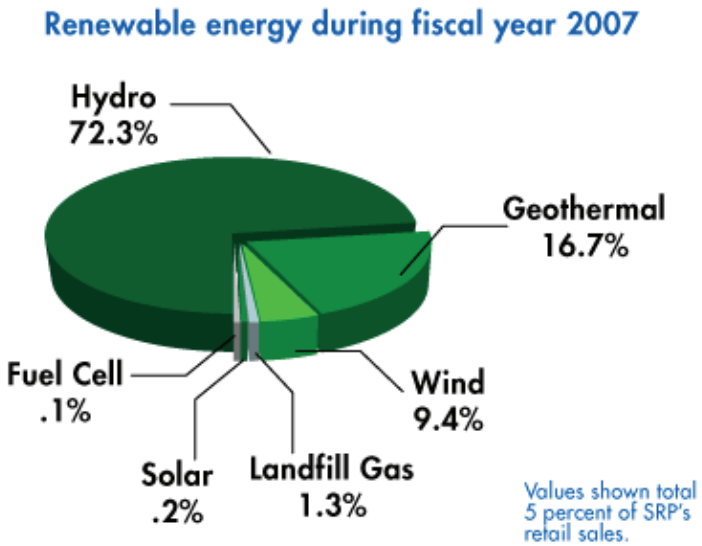
1500 Yosemite Drive – Milpitas, California 95035 – (408) 945 9090

Dear Mr. Jody Tiflin,

We would like to interest you in buying wind turbines to power your farm. Wind turbine use is increasing quickly in the world of energy. In other countries wind is the main source of energy and they have made record breaking industry growth. Wind has been the fastest growing energy source in the world since 1990. These do not have the hassles of other sources like pollution and high bills.

There are different sizes of wind turbines provide an opportunity to find the perfect fit for your property and lifestyle. The initial investment for a wind turbine is five thousand dollars. They easily pay for themselves in a few years, whereas others may take a long time to do so or cannot pay for themselves at all. They will not release any type of pollution or by-product which ensures the health of you, your family, and your animals. There is an infinite amount of wind; your source can never run out. The costs are not harsh, wind turbines cost between four and six cents per kilowatt hour. They work best on farms and use only a fraction of the land. The energy can be stored in batteries.

If you work with **Windmills and Co.** we guarantee that you will be completely satisfied with our product. World oil use was about 65 million barrels a day in 2000 and it will decrease to 20 million barrels a day by 2020, this will affect your farm and wind can make up for this deficit. Having wind turbines will benefit you and your farm.



What is Wind?

Wind is air movement. It depends on the earth's rotation and temperature. Different parts of the atmosphere are different temperatures. The sun heats air above land, which expands and rises because it is less dense than the rest of the air. Then cooler air rushes in to take its place, creating wind.

Windmills and Co. ©

1500 Yosemite Drive
Milpitas, California 95035
(408) 945 9090

Windmills and Co. ©

Bringing the Future to You

1500 Yosemite Drive
Milpitas, California 95035
(408) 945 9090

Wind Turbines

There are two types of wind turbines or wind machines: horizontal-axis and vertical-axis. Wind turbines convert the kinetic energy of the wind to a form of electrical or mechanical energy that can be used for functional use. It is mostly used for pumping water.

Wind turbines use wind to make electricity; they essentially work the opposite of a fan.

The process of creating mechanical energy is: the wind turns the blades, which spins a shaft, which connects to a generator and this makes electricity.

The size of wind turbines varies with what they are used for. Smaller wind turbines are generally used for individual homes. Larger wind turbines are used for businesses.

Prices

The average household spends $2,000 - $3,000 a year on energy without the use of a wind turbine. With the use of a wind turbine, you would save about $2,000 a year.

It costs about $6,000 - $22,000 dollars to install a wind turbine. In the long-run a wind turbine will be less expensive and more energy efficient.

Pros and Cons

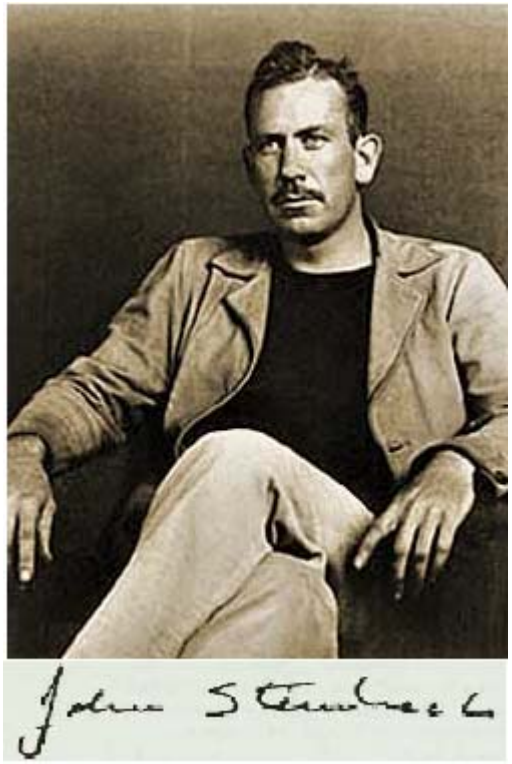
Pros

- Wind is the fastest growing energy source.
- Wind is a clean fuel source.
- Wind doesn't pollute like: fossil fuel, coal, natural gas...
- Wind cannot be used up.
- Wind is the lowest priced renewable energy source.
- Wind is only 4-6 cents per kilo hour.

Cons

- Windmills need initial investment.
- Wind does not always blow when it is needed.
- Wind cannot be stored unless the turbine has a battery.
- Windmills make noise.

John Steinbeck
Biography



www.steinbeck.sjsu.edu

By:

The John Steinbeck Writing Group

John Steinbeck was one of the world's most notable literary authors. He was born on February 27th 1902. He had a great education for the time. He wrote many novels that started small but over time, his success grew. Steinbeck had many wives who were a major part of his writing. He participated in World War II as a correspondent. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. Steinbeck's original name was Grossbeck, and his grandfather later changed it to Steinbeck before he was born.

John Ernst Steinbeck was born on February 27th 1902, in Salinas, California. In his life he worked on many farms and ranches in his time off. This was to pay off his college tuition at Stanford.

This affected his attendance because he took months off to work. He always wanted to become a writer but he went for other things like marine biology from 1920 to 1926. He also had some odd jobs in New York as a reporter, and other jobs as an apprentice carrier and an apprentice painter, caretaker, surveyor and fruit picker. His father was John Steinbeck Sr. and was of German descent. He was a county treasurer. His mother was Olive Hamilton Steinbeck and was a big influence on his writing career. He inherited her love for writing and reading. *The Red Pony,* one of his famous novels, was written on his mother's death bed.

Steinbeck had a good education, but his attentions were only on English and Literature. After graduating from Salinas High School in 1919 he went to Stanford. He wanted to be an English Major but his attendance was irregular, and he had many jobs. In 1925 he left Stanford permanently to pursue his writing career in New York. He was unsuccessful and

came back to California. A director named Elia Kazan in New York stated of Steinbeck, “He was a prose writer, at home in the west, with land, with horses, or on a boat. In this city, he is a dupe.” Living in New York could have to led to his drinking problem and becoming overweight.

www.notablebiographies.com

His career started with his first book *Cup of Gold* in 1929. It wasn’t that successful, but his editor had given him $150 in advance. His other early novels were not successful, but then he released a book called *Tortilla Flat* in 1935 about pleasure loving Mexican Americans. The theme was hidden from readers and critics for some time. He originally made $35 a week, but later he was making thousands of dollars for movies of his books. Another book C*annery Row* (1945) had a similar theme to *Tortilla Flat*. In 1937 he wrote The *Red Pony* on his mother’s death bed. The book contained four different stories.

One of his first bigger successes was his book *Of Mice and Men* (1937). This story revolved around migrant workers’ lives during The Great Depression. One of his Pulitzer Prize winning books, *The Grapes of Wrath,* actually originated from Julia Howe’s *The Battle*

Hymn of the Republic in 1861. When U.S. congressman Lyle Boren saw this he said “A lie, a Black infernal creation of twisted, distorted lies.” But then, when Steinbeck received his Nobel Prize, the Swedish Academy called it an “epic chronicle.”

Steinbeck had many wives. His first and the most influential on his writing was Carol Henning. They married in 1930. She had a drinking problem. Steinbeck had some stress on his hands and thus the marriage ended in 1942. This was sad because Carol was the only one who could read Steinbeck’s writing.

Steinbeck’s second wife was Gwyndolyn Conger. With her he had two sons Thom and John. Their marriage was unhappy and ended in 1949, about 7 years long. She died after drinking heavily. Elaine Scott, the ex- wife of Randolph Scott, a western star, married Steinbeck next. His son took up after his mother, and John died in 1991.

Steinbeck had many odd habits. His writing, for example, was much smaller than most people’s and it was unintelligible by any other person besides Carol. At the time, paper was scarce, and thus he wrote small, to conserve. Steinbeck did not like to type on a typewriter, and he hated reading aloud his work, so Carol would do it for him. He absolutely hated criticism. He fancied pigs especially the one that flew. He loved dogs too. He took his cane everywhere.

In 1962, Steinbeck accepted the Nobel Prize for literature.

Steinbeck Accepting Nobel Prize.

http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/nobel/nobel.jpg

Steinbeck died in 1968 of alcohol poisoning and a heart attack.

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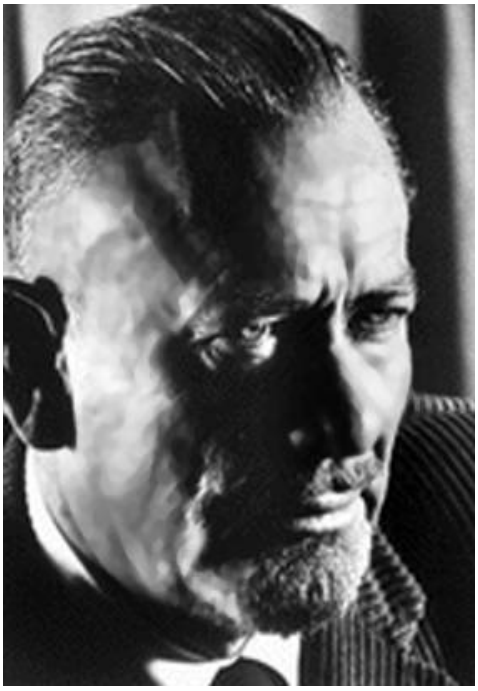

By: The John Steinbeck Writing Team

At the crack of dawn an old man's shadow rose from his bed to attend to his daily chores. His hand rose to his face and scratched the gray mass on his chin, and he put on an old flannel shirt tucked into his old worn out blue jeans. He walked out the door in an old grumpy manner and stretched his limbs. As the light of the sun appeared in the distance, the features of his face were revealed. His bright blue eyes shone in the sun. His nostrils breathed in the whispery breeze, and his gray hair resembled the thoughts of his mind. His face was worn out completely, and the wrinkles were a miniature of the mountains and valleys. His eyes wandered across the land searching for an answer. His bare feet dug into the grass and the insects on the ground scattered to the field. A serene emotion blanketed his heart. But as he looked in the distance, an unpleasant image reached his eyes. The sound of cars honking and busy people going to work echoed in the distance. His face twisted in disgust at the smell of smoke coming from the cars and factories. He turned around and walked to the stable and peered into a stall. He brushed the dust off the horses as they flicked their tails at the lingering flies. He turned to the last horse and smiled sheepishly. He walked forward with extra attention and coaxed him with care.

The old man walked to the porch and leaned against the post. He gazed into the vast amount of space with countless memories of the past. The open space had vibrated freedom throughout his life, but now it seemed that that had changed. In the distance, the hills were a lush green but the million-dollar homes took away from its beauty. As he inched to his rocking chair, a plane thundered across the sky. At that moment, he wondered if there would ever be peace again. The man looked about eighty or so and a queer feeling of wisdom surrounded him. Rocking back and forth with the squeaking of the oak, he watched as the wind glided above the flowers making them flow an ocean of gold.

On the road a small figure, gradually growing bigger, headed down the path to the ranch. As the car grew closer, the old man began to see the car pounding against the rubble winding past the field of flowers. He slowly got up, rose from his memories, and started towards his relatives' arrival. He gazed intently at the old Mustang he gave his son years ago. The car came to a halt and the car doors swung open. A boy of about 12 years of age with hair the shade of the golden field climbed out of the old machine. His shy eyes were a reflection of his grandfather's. He wore a blue jacket over a gray t-shirt. His faded jeans and his worn out high tops scuffled toward his grandfather.

"Hey Gramps, how you been?" the boy said in monotone. "Got any sodas in the fridge?"

Gramps shoved his thumb over his shoulder, "Yup, they're in the back."

"Thanks Gramps," said the boy while hustling into the kitchen.

"Hey you, get your butt back here. And help me with the bags," said the voice from the car. The father of the boy chuckled as the boy cracked open a soda and plopped down on the porch. The foam of the soda sprayed in his face. "That's what you get, Jesse," he smirked.

Gramps flicked Jesse on the side of his head and stepped down to the car. He grabbed the last of the bags and turned back to the house and went inside.

"Go inside and help your grandfather with those bags," said the father who took a slug of his son's soda. "I'm gonna go visit the horses. I'll be back before Ruth and them come." Jesse grunted and nodded toward Gramps.

"Okay just be careful with the horses, Billy," Gramps said to Billy, the single father.

Jesse was playing outside with a rope tied on the black ancient ugly tree when he noticed a shiny sleek black Lexus rumbling down the road toward the ranch. Jesse sighed and jogged into the house.

"Dang it, *they're* here," Jesse said.

"You better get yourself straightened out kid. They're family," Gramps sighed.

"Whatever, Gramps," Jesse replied.

"You should be more respectful to your grandfather," Billy scolded.

"Fine," he moaned.

Billy walked out onto the wide porch, his dark eyes showed exhaustion from the long trip home. The wind blew his dark hair as he ambled lazily down to the car. As he leaned on the suave car the sun beat down on his dark red skin. He forced a grin as he opened the car door for his sister. A sun-drowned brown head bobbed up out of the car. The hurried mother uttered a quick thanks and turned to open the door for her children. A quiet voice scolded a girl about the age of seven playing on a Gameboy. She idly turned it off and rolled her eyes. But the scold was not directed to the smaller child staring out the window. She turned her head and smiled at her mother, and a sweet atmosphere surrounded her. The smaller child was about five and had gleaming blue eyes with countless freckles across her cheeks. The children climbed out of the vehicle and the older girl giggled at the sight of Billy. "Nice shirt." His shirt had a few holes here and there and one or two dirt stains on his sleeve. Right then a man in his late thirties emerged out of the car in a polite fashion. His suit seemed brand new with his hair slicked back. He grasped Billy's rough hand and shook it firmly; Billy looked into his eyes with a smooth expression.

"How ya doin' brother?" Billy asked in a welcoming tone.

The businessman grimaced at this informal greeting. “I’m fine, thank you. How have you been?” But his business-like tone was ignored when Ruth pressed Billy into a heart-warming hug. They walked arms-over-shoulders to the house in fervish conversation.

“Rob! Get the bags, will ya?” Ruth called over her shoulder.

“Sure, honey,” Rob answered. He turned to Susan, who was playing on her Gameboy, again. “Now you’re gonna be on your best behavior, and I’ll buy you a pony.”

“NO! I don’t want a pony! I want a new game! You promised!” Susan complained. Her beauty was no excuse for her snobby and selfish character.

Sally was quiet and ran inside, her blue and white sundress dancing in the wind. Her Mary-Jane shoes stumbled inside. She was greeted by Jesse who patted her on the head. She smiled back politely and continued through the house. She stopped behind her Grandfather and poked him playfully.

“Hi Grandpa Jody, how are you today?” she said in a small pleasant voice. Her small arms tried to give Grandpa Jody a hug. He picked her up and hugged her.

“Hi, Sunshine,” he smiled back. Then they heard a knock on the door. Grandpa Jody put her down and walked chuckling to the door. He opened the door still smiling, but his expression turned to a frown.

“Hi there sir, we were wondering if you would purchase some solar panels for your ranch’s land-”

“Get out! I already got calls and letters from you people, ain’t that enough?!” he snapped.

“But sir, think of all the possibilities solar power can bring to your ranch! There is so much sun here, and our solar panels could make good use of it. Our solar panels are state-of-the-art, and if you use them, your ranch will be the most energy efficient ranch in this state! Look at

all the land you have! You should put it to work! Do something of it all old man!" The salesman was trying to persuade him, but Grandpa Jody's face only began to grow as red as a beet. Grandpa Jody's hands began to shake with anger, but he remained silent. Of all things, he didn't deserve this.

Grandpa Jody turned around, "Sally, can you please go help your mother in the kitchen. I have some business to attend to with this businessman here." Sally nodded and skipped off to the kitchen.

"Oh, so you'll do it! That's great! Here are the terms of agreement." The salesman put out a piece of paper.

"Please give me a moment, I'll grab a pen." Grandpa Jody walked into the kitchen. He came back with a shotgun. "Here's my pen," the young side of Jody smirked, "Ain't it a beauty? I'll give you 5 seconds to get off my land," He raised his shotgun and pumped it with enthusiasm. He lowered the gun into the salesperson's face. "One… Two… I'm not kidding… Three…You better run… Four… Five!" Grandpa Jody ran down the porch and began to fire at the sky. The hysteria of the man brought back his youth. He cackled and shot at the mirror of the car. "Good luck fixin' that son!"

"Good day sir!" the salesman tipped his hat before he climbed inside, a look of panic on his face. But it was only one second before a pellet punctured the black hat. Grandpa Jody started chuckling then started wheezing and coughing and went back to the house. Jody came around the corner and saw Jesse cracking up.

"Wow! You have to teach me that! Good going Gramps!" Jesse sniggered.

"You got a lot comin' to ya kid." He looked down at him with expectancy.

He walked into the kitchen, as Ruth scolded at her father. “That poor man! He was just trying to sell you something. I bet he was scared out of his wits.”

“Aw, I didn’t hurt him. It was just rock pellets. Skimmed his hat, though,” Grandpa Jody said.

“Good going, Pop. Haven’t seen you going off like that for a long time.” Billy took a slug of milk from a carton.

Jody nudged his son, “Gimme somma that!” He grabbed the milk carton, chugged the rest and crushed it with his hands. He grew silent once more. He stared at Sally who was smiling with her feet dangling below the chair. She climbed into Grandpa Jody’s lap.

“What was that big bang earlier?” Sally said with curiosity.

“Oh, that was just the salesman showing me a demonstration.” He looked at Billy. “Nice man, nice man!” He said nodding appreciatively.

“Can I have a piggyback ride? Please?” asked Sally.

“Your Grandfather hasn’t the strength right now for that,” said Rob.

Jody picked up his granddaughter and gave Jesse a noogie. “C’mon Sally. Wanna go see the ponies?”

Sally smiled and nodded with excitement.

Ruth shook her head and tended to the night’s dinner and Susan yelled after them. “Hey, I wanna come!” She ran after them but they were already out of sight.

“Could you pass the potatoes, please, Aunt Ruth?” Jesse asked.

“You’ve already finished yours?” Ruth asked bewildered. “Boy, can he eat!”

“That’s my grandson,” muttered Jody.

“Yep, he’s gonna get fat pretty soon,” Susan smirked.

“Susan! My goodness! What ever made you-” Ruth stiffened at the thought of her daughter saying such a thing.

“Mommy your food tastes really bad,” Susan said cutting her off.

Ruth pursed her lips. She sighed and changed the topic. She looked at her father. “So what did the salesman want today?”

“Like I said before, I didn’t hurt him…” he paused. “I’ve tolerated as much as I can take. Some polar sanels or some’n and some watchamacallit wheels for the river.”

“It’s a good idea,” said Ruth. Then, her face flushing, she realized her mistake. “I mean…to…um…do *something* with the land.”

“Naw,” Gramps said quietly.

“Ruth is right.” Robert the suit finally said something. “You could make so much money, there’s so much land here. You’re not really doing anything with it. I mean, any business could snatch your land up in a second, eat it, and regurgitate it into a profitable place.”

“Nope,” he said, looking down at his food. “This really is good food, Ruth, thanks for makin’ it. I haven’t tasted anything like it since your Mama made it.”

“Thank you, but Dad, don’t change the subject,” Ruth stared at her father.

“We think a retirement home would be a good idea,” the suit stated. The eyes of the room looked up to his, and the dark, now angry eyes of Billy glared.

“You should’ve saved that for later…” Ruth said quietly to Rob.

“A worthy proposal, yet I think he’s fine on his own,” said Billy. “He doesn’t need no retirement home.”

Jody ignored the comment and wiped his nose on his sleeve. Sally's eyes became wary and her fresh face grew somber. "But Poppy, what dya mean a retriemint home?" She said her words slowly, with morbid curiosity. "Is Gampa leaving?"

"It's where the…old people go to-" He stopped himself, but was he too late? His eyes wandered to the face of his in-law. The face remained still and blank. He looked out the window.

"Are you agreeing to this, Ruth?" Billy accused a little too loudly.

"No, I am afraid for him…It's always something to consider…I don't think that he can take care of himself," said Ruth, her voice shaking.

"It's his birthday tomorrow! He's turning 83, and you come here and make things depressing for him!" Billy's voice thundered. "You might as well not come at all!!!"

"She's not coming back," said Rob sternly. "We're moving away to Canada in one week."

"What?" Jesse proclaimed. "You *can't* take Sally away…She *loves* Gramps."

"It's already settled," Ruth almost whispered. "Rob found a wonderful job, it's a once in a lifetime kind of opportunity….I wanted to say goodbye. We won't come back for a while, you know. I came to celebrate a birthday." A look of reluctance crossed her face as she looked at Rob, who sat, smug, hiding his pride.

"We'll get a nice big house and the children will get a wonderful educ--" Rob stated in his professional tone. Ruth quieted him with a finger.

A row of silence occurred once more. There needed to be time to think more things through. No one was eating. Everyone was just picking at their food. Billy's ears turned red, Ruth began to fidget in an anxious fashion, the silence was uneasy. Susan played with her hair as if she wasn't listening intently. The only one unmoved was the grandfather figure of the family.

The wise one, who'd been through it all once or twice. Only his face was lit with the glow of the summer evening, and melancholy clouded the room. He continued to stare out the window.

It seemed as if the clock was ticking louder and louder. Yet, the most interesting figure of all was Sally. The entire time, she looked at her Grandfather. Her one and only, Grampy, the one who had no emotions set on his face. In the light of the sun, his tanned, wrinkled face illustrated past times.

"Why are you listening to him, eh, why?" Billy turned to Ruth.

"He is my husband, I love him very much." She shot the head above the suit an adoring look. She now looked helpless. "But, you guys won't mind, will you? I mean, everything will be fine…There's always an end to everything…and a beginning. I just can't let you stay alone anymore, Dad."

"He's lived here all of his life," Billy declared, his laid back, airy father personality was serious now.

"We're leaving all the same," said the suit in unvarying feeling. He looked Billy right in the eyes. However, Billy looked away quickly knowing he had lost all of it. Ruth was gone, and so were his beautiful nieces. He stared at his plate.

Billy chuckled dryly trying to bring back the air of happiness, "You know, I'm gonna miss your cooking, Ru—"

"I'm staying here," a once absent voice now seemed to bound into the room.

"But Dad," Ruth paused. "I don't know if you even understand how important this is."

"I am allowed to die at home, aren't I?" his voice sounded defeated. "I'm stayin' here. It's not like you care about the father who raised you, or even this family anymore." And the blue-gray eyes released themselves off of the scenery. He got up and left his food lying there.

“I’m going to bed. See you in the morning,” the hoarse voice sounded. His footsteps were heard as he went up the stairs, the wood creaked. There was a silence at the dinner table. Jesse looked up.

“Could you pass the salt?” Jesse asked, glaring at Rob.

He glared back. “Here, kid.”

The last of the golden rays disappeared behind the crack in the hills. A light breeze passed through the trees, taking a couple of leaves along with it. The heat of day lingered as the sky grew dark, and you could see the twinkles of diamonds start to appear in the sky. The calls of an owl signaled the start of the night.

The barn door creaked open and a shadow sneaked toward the barn. A whinny echoed from the barn. Grandpa Jody looked up from his book and out the window, sighed, got out of bed and trudged out the door. He looked at the barn and saw a light. A second whinny was heard in the distance, and the sound of pounding hooves could be heard. Grandpa Jody swore and grabbed his flashlight and jacket, and throwing it on, bustled to the barn. He shined the flashlight at the barn as he ran toward it.

“Alright, who is it? Come out now ya scoundrel,” he grunted.

“I ain’t comin’ out for you, ya old geezer,” a little girl’s voice boomed from the inside of the barn. Jody saw the shadow of a young girl trying to mount a horse. Grandpa Jody barged in and grabbed the girl. The girl screeched and started whining.

“Susan Elizabeth Anderson, what do you think you’re doing?!” Grandpa Jody scolded. “You could’ve gotten really hurt!”

“Look who’s talkin’ ya old fart, you can’t even ride a horse yourself,” she retorted as she squirmed in his arms.

Jody was silent. His expression went blank and walked out of the barn still carrying Susan. Susan kicked and threw a fit. He went back into the house and placed her on her bed.

“Go to sleep and don’t go back into the barn,” Grandpa Jody walked out the door. “I don’t want you to get hurt like I did.” Then he closed the door behind him.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she whined to herself.

The chirping of birds could be heard outside the window sill. The golden rays of the sun beat down on the waking eyes of Grandpa Jody. The morning felt awkward, as if there would never be one like it. The events of yesterday were running through his mind. The pain of his daughter and her family moving away, granddaughter disrespecting him, and all the mess of him wanting to being sent away. As the sun steadily rose over the ranch, he could hear his family waking up.

“We wake up too early! I want to go to sleep! That stupid rooster!” Susan complained.

Unfortunately, Susan’s loud complaining woke her sister, who was in the middle of deep slumber. Soon Sally’s wailing could be heard. Her parents called up to her, “Be-”

“SHUT UP!” yelled Jesse from upstairs. “I’M STILL SLEEPING!”

“Jesse!” Billy scolded, “Don’t use that language with family!”

“Oh *thanks*. Now I’m really awake,” Jesse complained sarcastically.

Jody chuckled as he buttoned up his shirt. He walked past the arguing children and patted Sally, who was sniffling, on the head. He walked down the stairs and walked into the adults’ conversation.

“He’s not going to a retirement home!” Billy argued.

“It’ll do well for him!” Ruth said.

“Yeah, to die in hell,” Billy said sarcastically.

“Have you heard the news lately? Do you *think* they’re gonna take care of him there? News flash: We’re family! We stick together!” His voice shook with emotion.

Rob was sitting at the kitchen table, drinking coffee and reading the news. “Hey, stocks are up.”

“Rob!” Ruth said sternly.

Before Billy could speak, Ruth nudged him in the ribs. They suddenly noticed Jody, getting his toast.

Billy forced a smile and changed the conversation. “So. What about those stocks, Rob?”

Rob sipped some coffee. “The NASDAQ is up five points, and the DOW is up three points.”

Billy lost his interest. “Oh, that’s nice.”

Jody pulled out a chair and slumped down, and took a chomp out of a piece of half burnt toast. Everyone started to drift away into their own little worlds. Rob flipped the page of the newspaper, while Ruth washed the dishes, with the faucet roaring loudly. Billy paced around for a bit and walked towards the door.

“I’m gonna go check on the horses,” he said flatly, and slammed the door.

Ruth turned around and put down the dishes, “That reminds me, I haven’t finished dusting yet, I’ll go attend to that.” Ruth rolled her sleeves down and walked out.

Rob and Jody were the only ones left in the kitchen. Jody took another chomp out of his toast. Rob flipped the last page of his newspaper and put it down. He got up slowly, and walked towards the door.

Rob called over his shoulder, “Whether you like it or not, this ranch isn’t going to be yours anymore.” Jody’s expression remained unchanged. He looked out the window and back at the door, and swallowed the last bit of his toast. He grunted.

“No matter what you say this ranch will always be a part of my heart,” Jody whispered.

Rob sniggered, “You call this your heart? This is a piece of junk!” he said while spreading his arms out wide and walking out the door. Jody looked down at his feet, intently, and soon a look of bewilderness overcame him. He looked as if he didn’t recognize his feet. Then he heard footsteps coming down the stairs, and they belonged to his grandson, Jesse.

“Happy Birthday Gramps.” Jesse avoided his eyes and grabbed a carton of milk and chugged the rest of it down. He wiped his mouth with his sleeve and threw the carton in the garbage can.

“Try to learn some manners Jesse, you’ll never get a girl *that* way," Ruth teased.

“Who says I need a girl anyway?” Jesse replied.

“Suit yourself, but you’ll need one later,” Jody stated, chuckling.

“Psh! Whatever,” Jesse remarked.

Suddenly, a little girl barged in the room and jumped on the old man’s lap. “We’re gonna make you a cake today!” Sally exclaimed.

“What kind? My favorite?” Jody asked.

“Of course your favorite, Grandpa. What other kind is there?” Sally said happily.

“So we’ll have a white cake and chocolate frosting, with strawberries on top?” Jody asked, teasingly.

“If that is your favorite,” Sally said unsure, looking to her mother for support.
Her mother gave her a reassuring nod and said, “Ok, enough of this for now. Dad, you go out of the kitchen so we can get started. Jesse, go entertain your Grandfather.”

Jesse swallowed the last of his breakfast and said, “Sure, Aunt Ruth.” Both the boys went into the living room and Jesse plopped himself on the couch. He asked, “So…What do you want to do?”

“What do you want to do? You are the young spirit,” Jody said with a smile.

“Um… Well, you don’t have a TV or a computer or anything electronic to play with,” Jesse said in an unenthusiastic tone. Jesse saw the picture above the mantel. His face showed the expression of curiosity. He got out of the chair and walked over to the mantel. “Gramps, who is this picture of? Is this me? It looks like me,” Jesse asked confused.

Grandpa Jody went over to his grandson, and smiled at the memory that the picture brought back. “Nope. That’s me,” Grandpa Jody said proudly, “It does look like you…” Jody looked at the light that was shining from his grandson’s eyes. “I was your age when this picture was taken. It was the new colt I got that autumn. The colt’s name was Black Demon. He is the descendant of Nelly the horse, and he’s in the last stable today.”

“Really? Isn’t that the horse that my dad learned how to ride on?” Jesse asked.

“Yup that’s the one. Your father loves that horse. If they sell the ranch, that horse will be gone too,” Jody said sadly.

Jesse said, “I don’t think that they would seriously sell the ranch. I wouldn’t worry too much about it.” Jody looked at his grandson endearingly.

Jody smiled weakly, “Thanks for the encouragement, kid.”

“No prob. Since there isn’t any entertainment here, how about we go outside,” Jody suggested.

They headed on out to the front door and onto the porch. Jesse stopped at the porch steps. “You know this place better than I do, so where should we go?”

“Well…” Jody paused, looking around the ranch. He started to walk down Memory Lane. He thought of all of his childhood memories and fantasies. How he pretended he was in a marching band for soldiers with trumpets and giant drums. He would also play around the old cypress tree, which was probably much older than the ranch. Then he remembered how he would spend days and nights caring for his beloved Gabilan. Suddenly, Jody wasn’t walking down that lane and was back on the porch steps with his grandson. “How about we just go for a walk and see what’s there,” Jody then suggested.

They started down the steps and headed out into the open land. Their feet shuffled against the dirt, yet they longed for the fresh touch of green grass. They looked at the sky and saw how the clouds drifted. Then Jody spotted some buzzards, and the sky seemed darker.

“Darn buzzards!” Jody yelled.

“It’s just a vulture. They help clean up dead animal bodies, so they aren’t rotting all that much. Though, they are really ugly,” Jesse said.

“Yeah, you’re right,” Jody said unsurely. You could see the disbelief in his face. The sun was coming upon them as they talked they started for the barn, and the dust behind their feet was now drifting away with their voices.

Everyone was sitting around the table, as the vibrant balloons were losing air and sinking closer to the floor. Ruth looked up to her father. “How was your birthday so far?”

Jody grunted. “It’s been alright.” Ruth frowned at her father’s response.

“How did you like the cake, Gampa?” Sally asked, excitingly.

“It was delicious,” Grandpa Jody said. “You’ll make a great cook one day.”

Sally beamed cheekily, “Thanks, Gampy!”

“Is everyone done eating?” Ruth asked.

Everybody responded with a nod. Except Billy, who replied, “I think I can eat another plate.”

“You’re such a pig!” Susan remarked.

Ruth looked at Susan in disgust. “Susan, don’t say that! It’s rude!”

“Whatever,” Susan said to her food. “This is gross,” she said to herself.

Jesse went to a chair full of presents, picked one, and gave it to his grandfather. “This is for you, Gramps.”

Sally leapt up from her seat and squealed. “Wait! Open mine first!”

Jody chuckled. “Don’t worry, Sally, you’ll be next.”

“Okay,” Sally said.

Grandpa Jody opened the gift and found a little note inside that said *From Billy and Jesse*. He discovered a memory from his past and from the future, a picture of his son and grandson. He replied, “It’s handsome, boys. Thank you.”

“We thought you would need a new picture of us,” Billy stated.

Jesse looked shyly into his grandfather’s eyes and said, “I hope you like it.”

“Oh, it’s very nice. I’ll put it next to my picture on the mantle,” Jody reassured.

“Open mine next!” Sally exclaimed.

“Okay, okay,” Jody replied.

He grabbed the gift from Sally’s hands. It was a small blue bag with bright red tissue paper and within it was a drawing of her and her grandfather. The stick figures held hands and smiled up at Jody. It said *Me and Grandpa*. Jody said, “It’s beautiful, Sally. I’ll put it on the mantle also.”

“Yay!” Sally exclaimed.

Rob took out a card from the pocket in his jacket and handed him a Best Buy Gift card. “Now you can get yourself a computer *Dad*.”

“Thanks, Rob,” he said in monotone. He stared at the sophisticated piece of shiny plastic.

“Oh, this is from Ruth and me. I hope you enjoy it,” Rob said.

Jody had no response except his polite smile.

Ruth realized, “Wait, Susan, did you make Grandpa anything for his birthday?”

Susan snorted. “Why should I? He never bought *me* anything.”

Ruth turned her head and shot her a glare. Susan turned her head and gave a little ‘humph’. Grandpa Jody nodded and got up.

“I’m gonna go to the restroom real quick, thanks for the presents everyone,” he said with serene discomfort.

When Grandpa Jody came back after finishing a few chores, he heard the agitated whispers coming from the kitchen.

Ruth’s voice was heard echoing in the kitchen, “Why does he have to go? I still don’t understand! It’s breaking my heart to leave him in that old nursing home.”

“We have no CHOICE,” Rob yelled. “We need the money.”

“But he’ll never forgive us!” Ruth wailed. “Is this how you pay back someone who cared for you when you were young?!”

“Do you know how much money we got for this piece of junk?” Rob retorted, “The buyer was ecstatic! I can’t see why he doesn’t sell it himself with the market out there!”

“But this was his home…” she almost whispered in defeat. “He grew up on this land! And I did too. We all grew up on this land. Don’t you care about my family?”

“Of course I do! I’ll get rich from this, and we’ll move into a big house and our kids will go to a prestigious school,” he boomed persuadingly.

“Yeah, but what about my father?” she broke down in tears.

“That old fart’s NO GOOD USE ANYMORE; he’s as good as dead. I wish he were dead, but that prune seems to live forever.” Robert’s voice grew strained with yelling. Quiet crying could be heard from Ruth’s grieving. She backed off.

“Okay honey, everything will be fine, I’m sorry for arguing with you,” she pleaded affectionately.

Grandpa Jody crossed the hall silently and walked out on to the porch and plopped into his rocking chair, swaying back and forth with the whistles of the wind. A slightly higher pitch of crying could be heard from the house. Sally ran out of the door and onto the porch, as tears streamed across her red face. She ran into the fields, her sundress swinging, and kneeled down and picked a Black Eyed Susan and ran back to her Grandpa. She sat in his lap and looked into his blank blue eyes.

“Here Gampy.” She handed him the withering flower. “Happy Birthday.”

Grandpa forced out a smile and accepted the gift. He fingered and twirled it in his rough hands. A light look overcame his face. He leaned over and put the flower in Sally's hair. He looked up at the Gabilan Mountains, and a heartbreaking emotion swelled his chest. Footsteps walked toward the porch and Jesse sat down on the steps, not once facing his Grandfather.

"I'm sorry Gramps," he said solemnly. "You know, what they said." Grandpa Jody nodded. Jesse got up, ran into the house, and came back out in a couple moments with a black and white photograph. "I can't believe that this is you Gramps." Jesse handed him the photograph and kneeled down.

"Yup, that was me." Jody looked at the picture of the black colt and the scruffy haired boy that was grinning sheepishly with his colt standing in a field of flowers. A tear could be seen at the corner of Jesse's eyes and it streamed down his face.

"We'll miss you Gampa. We have to leave and so do you, we don't have a choice anymore," Sally sniffled. Grandpa looked down at Sally, hugged her and ruffled Jesse's hair with affection.

"Come 'ere kid," he said, his voice shaking, and he hugged Jesse. Jesse buried his face in his Grandpa's shoulder. Strict convulsions of pain shook Jesse. Tears streamed down Grandpa's face.

The next morning, streams of sunlight lit the serene landscape. It seemed like the way it was 70 years ago. Calls traveled around the house, getting louder and louder. Footsteps pounded around the house frantically.

"Gramps?" The voice grew louder. "Gramps!" It rose to a yell. "GRAMPS!" Jesse ran onto the porch. A dried flower was left on the rocking chair as well as a piece of paper with tiny

scrawl enveloping the paper. Jesse picked the piece of paper gingerly. On it were written words: *Sell the land… Adventure…83 years old…Gabilan…Shotgun with rock pellets…Sally and Jesse, take care…Miss you…Old Fart…Black Demon…Gitano…*It looked spontaneous, as if it was a train of thought. He looked into the distance and saw a small figure and a rapier glinting in the sunlight.