



DARE TO Dream

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As a child, I thought I would someday take over my grandmother's horse and cattle ranch. While some little girls grow up wanting to be school teachers or the president, I wanted to be my grandmother.

She was an airplane pilot, a cattle rancher, a mother, a hay farmer, and a horse trainer. She met Amelia Earhart once, and they chatted about what it was like to be a woman pilot. My grandmother is 97 now, and still tells us when to de-worm the horses and put salt licks out for the cows on our family ranch in Santa Barbara County, California.

When I was 10, I found out that my dream might not become a reality. Because of development pressures, ideological disagreements among family members, and poor estate planning, our wonderful ranch might have to be sold when my grandmother, our matriarch, passes. I began to scheme, coming

up with dozens of ideas of how to keep the ranch in the family. Fifteen years later, I'm still trying to save the ranch and carry out my childhood dream, no matter how foolish that might seem to some. And in trying to do so, I've found out that there are thousands of other families in the same boat, all across this beautiful

country. Perhaps what I'm really supposed to do with my life is to help them save their ranches, even if I'm not able to save my own.

That's why I interned one semester for the Land Trust Alliance. Working with the policy team was an eye opener for this rural ranch girl on the way the world works and the way a positive, strong message from a passionate organization can influence top-level decision-making. I've gotten a taste for what it's like to network and hobnob with people like Howard Dean and Christine Todd Whitman, and a chance to feel the sweet victory of recruiting Congress members to support land conservation legislation, such as H.R. 1831 and S. 812. I have no doubt that the impact the Alliance and all the land trusts that have developed relationships with their representatives are making today will last long into the future.

I wish my family had known about and used the conservation tools land trusts offer decades ago. Knowledge is power, and communicating and planning ahead with family members is the key to saving cherished family land for future generations.

To all land trust people out there, thanks for everything you do. Here's to hoping that your own 10-year old grandchild will have not only the desire, but the opportunity to enjoy open space in the future. 🌱