



A WALK IN THE WOODS; ROUNDTABLE INTERVIEWS, AUGUST 16, 2015;	Frances Tiger,
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**Interviewer:** Having done Jeremiah Johnson, this theme of man and nature, having almost a solitary moment, although you were joined by one of your friends, what is it that appeals to you about that to make you have explored it several times?

**Redford:** Well, I think it is that simple phrase, man and nature, man in nature, out of nature, against nature; because I just think nature just should be so much a part of our lives. It's being shrunk, and taken away in so many places. The more it's taken away, the more I'm dealing with something being lost, so that puts me into a more aggressive mode of wanting to make films that show the relationship of nature with human beings.

**Interviewer:** What made this journey interesting for you as men, not necessarily as actors, going through it?

**Nolte:** It would be the challenge to be in nature around the clock. Uh,uhhhh uh, you know, I I I'm sane in nature, you know I'm a little bit insane, that's because of all the things and thoughts. In Nature I don't have to do that. I have a relationship with trees. I do know plants, I grow my own food and I know we're intimately related and I like to feel it if I can. And you can only get it if you go to it.

**Redford:** I think it's interesting that Nick is playing against his own type because he plays a character. When I talk about being curious, he says "Well, what do you mean? Who cares about that? a rock is a rock". It's against his actual grain to be sane.

**Interviewer:** But it's right in yours.

**Redford:** Yeah. But I know you care about it. Yet, as you just heard, he's very much connected to nature. He'd be the first one to say Oh... because he's very curious.

**Fran:** Do you see yourself as a teacher?

**Redford:** I'm sorry?

**Fran:** Are you a teacher?

**Redford:** Am I a teacher? Nooo. I'm a student.

**Fran:** Really, but don't you see yourself as you are in awe of everything that you guided us very much through the nature

**Redford:** Oh, I see. I hadn't thought of it that way. I guess if you're following, I'm not aware of it.

**Fran:** Well, when you, very significant in my mind, were saying "here's the 3 types of rocks" I felt that that world was our classroom and he's sharing that with us; your knowledge just comes through. I think you're interested in everything as the student would be and so you're the teacher as well.

**Nolte:** He's also a writer.

**Fran:** And a writer.

I have some deeper questions. We think deceivingly that you're gonna deliver this whole big profound message like this is what we need to do to get in touch with ourselves is go on these visionquests; do you think we have to leave home and go on these rugged experiences in order to find that meaning of life, do we have to do these kind of things? And did the movie deliver that kind of thing for you?

**Redford:** Yes. Because it was about whatever I feel about nature has a lot to do with being comfortable with nature and also you get bombarded by voices, thoughts and noise and if you don't get out of its way sometimes, it can get overwhelming, you just lose yourself. So the idea being that if you go into nature, whether it's on horse or on foot and just be quiet, and let nature speak to you the way it will speak to you, something happens that's really special. That's the way it's been for me so therefore you want to be able to somehow put that out there that this has a role to play in life if you give it a chance. Also happens that we're shrinking nature right and left with development so it becomes even more important to put it out there. To me it's a balance between spending time in nature because you have to go into the real world, you have to.

**Fran:** Do you think that human nature hinders you or drives you? Cuz you're like the odd couple here on this journey, right?

**Redford:** But not really. In actuality, we're pretty much alike, but we had to play certain characters. He had to play a guy who says a "rock is a rock", and I'm playing a guy who is very curious.

**Nolte:** And part of that is motivated because he's Bryson and you know it's not real that Katz is really questioning what he's saying, because Bryson is talking. And if he's going to expound, maybe I don't want to listen all the way, but the point is that at the age of these men should not be out in nature, in general thought. They shouldn't be out trying to walk the Appalachian Trail, but they do out of necessity to be who they are. And, that means, you know the way I live, I make it so comfortable. I make sure my bed's made, I have clean sheets, I have all my books here, all my scripts here, all the visuals I want here; I surround the bed til I can't get in it. (all laugh). That's what humans do. Nature does a different thing. It's got roots that stick up. You gotta find a way to get comfortable. That's good. Particularly with getting, what they say, old. We're not really old and we're not really close to that final moment. Although 75 is the average age of an American, but that's not a biological age. Biological age cells live to

120, so we're not anywhere near our potential. You know, it's just that we think in terms of what is going on. In my father's time it was 60's.

Fran: We're all living longer. It's a fact. We have to adjust our thinking to that.

Nolte: Yes, absolutely.

Another Interviewer: I loved this book. What was it about this book that made you want to make this movie? How did it speak to you and the characters?

Redford: Because it had the elements, the importance of nature, the role that nature plays in our lives, or could play in our lives, or should play in our lives. It was about friendship, particularly a friendship that had been very close when the two characters were younger and were living in their wilder times, and then they parted ways and now come back together 30 years later. It was about friendship lost and regained, nature, which I just explained, and it was also funny, but it was funny in a real way. In other words, their wit, these two guys were not stupid and they're witty and they employ that against each other. I thought that gave the film a kind of buoyancy, comedy.

Interviewer: That moment on the cliff, for me, it was nostalgic to Butch Cassidy. Did it have that resonance with you at all or am I just reading into it?

All: You're reading into it! (all laugh)

Nolte: You really are, but I didn't think of it. But once you mention it, yeah

Redford: (joins in) yeah. But it's a different situation entirely.

Interviewer: Are you guys good hikers? Do you have endurance? Because it looks daunting for me to try to do something like that.

Nolte: What you saw is about as good as it gets. (all laugh)

Fran: Can you deliver that profound meaning, having been this lifetime achiever as you have been, can you both give us that message that delivers that principle you truly believe in? Do you have that?

Nolte: I can. When I was doing this, and this is what I'm kinda stuck in a little bit this last year. I have a 7 year old daughter and my maid is from England so I live a lot in London on Fulham Road. When I step out of the basement, it's a brownstone 4 story, when I step out of the basement, I step into the street almost, I mean it's really right there. So, when I travel to NY to hook up a flight, I always end up laughing a lot because NY streets are boulevards. They're gigantic compared to London. You know, so that's a real street to me. The grandmother of my daughter is my age. And I asked her if she remembered WWII, and she said, "No" (high pitched no). But I remember WWII really well. I remember the rationing. I remember the lard we got was white in a plastic with a red ball in the middle and you break that, squeeze it and it turns yellow. And then you put that on your bread. And I used to have to shovel coal into the furnace. There was only so much coal you could get, so much gas you could get. There was

rationing all the way. And I didn't see my father until the end of '45, after the Japanese surrendered. And the adults were afraid. There was fear. A lot of fear. And the rules were strict. And the 50's were awkward. Women wore girdles. Girdles! You can tell a decade by what the women wear.

Fran: And that put them to work.

Nolte: ..similar background, But it's an unconscious thing, it's not something natural.

Redford: No, I don't think so. I guess to answer your question (to Fran) for me, is, if you would put it in one word, it'd be the role of curiosity, how important it is to be curious. And also, if you were to give advice to somebody, it'd be, if you had to boil it down to one thing, it'd be PAY ATTENTION. You know, there are so many screens, (points to the table of our devices recording him) I mean look at all your screens. Everyone's so busy living in a virtual reality of their screens that they're not looking at the real life around them. So if I were to say pay attention that would mean, not so much a hand-held screen, but the world around you.

Fran: Exactly. And my only reason is to get your every word.

Other interviewer: Gentlemen, your characters have different skillsets going into the woods. What's the most impressive thing you do at your own home? You (Nolte) spoke of growing your own food. What would you say is the most impressive skill you have in your home?

Redford: I'm sorry I don't have good hearing.

(repeated question) We saw what it was on the mountain...

Redford: Oh, being careful ( all laugh). I bump into things, I knock things over and then my wife gets all upset, "I just put that in the thing" and I say "I know. I wasn't paying attention." It's having to be careful.

Same interviewer: Are you a camper? Do you like tenting? Setting up a tent? Do you have that skillset?

Redford: I did a lot when I was younger. Not so much anymore. I spent a lot of time camping out when I was a kid.

Fran: That may've answered my last question, that your curiosity, I think means that you'll never be done. You're not going to retire.

Redford: That's true, yeah. Don't look back and don't stop.

(Time's up.) Thank you.

Fran – brought them a fresh bagel in a bag with cream cheese, my card written, "some bread in a sack, now go jump over your fence. Hoping our paths cross in our walk In the woods." I also put a watercolor palette and watercolor paper cards into a bag because Redford was a painter, and visual artist, noting that maybe he will use that to paint al fresco. Nolte saw that and exclaimed that Redford didn't have any kids, but he does, so he's going to take it.

## MARY STEENBURGEN

Using Walk in the Woods as a metaphor, Fran greeted Mary Steenburgen and Kristen Schaal,

“Hi! How was your walk in the woods?” “Gorgeous”, They replied. Mary went on to say she is still owed that walk because she just flew in & out a few days to shoot. Her metaphoric walk led her to music, her passion found later in life. She plays the accordion & sings. She was so excited and took the role to act with Robert Redford, who she idolizes. She felt like a blushing schoolgirl in those scenes where her character flirts with his, but nothing is returned.

Ken Kwapis, Director; wanted to be in nature, unplug; likes to say that the Appalachian Trail is the third lead character. In the notes, his mantra is “Life requires living” and the optimism of the film. These two aging men have no business attempting this or thinking they are in shape enough to complete this trek. Nolte, “have fun before you die”. Redford, on the take away of the film “a combination of humor and pathos, with the comedy coming from something that’s real, that has to do with humanity.”