

## Climate Country Radio Background

In 1992, the Fountain Fire was raging through my mountain homeland in Shasta County, near Montgomery Creek. I was going to college at U.C.D., and hadn't heard whether our house was threatened, or if my parents had evacuated. I nervously watched the news, and waited by the telephone. In the middle of the night, my father called. He said, "Rita, I'm out on the highway, surrounded on all four sides by walls of fire. I don't know if I'll make it out." I grabbed my boots, jumped in my old pick-up, and went flying up I5 to somehow save my Dad.

He had been well prepared. He always knew that one day, there'd be catastrophic fire. He'd seen firsthand the mismanagement of the forests, how we'd lost touch with the prescriptive fire of the First Nations, and he'd spent years volunteer firefighting. So, we always spent time clearing, burning, irrigating, and grazing livestock on our land, and sealing up our old house. Since he saw the need, he advised and helped others do the same. As you might guess, "the fire burns on" in his daughter.

Today, I'm a professional songwriter known for original, country-folk music, with 8 albums of award-winning music under my belt. The songs I compose reflect my Northern California roots, both in story and imagery, as well as the country music style we heard on the stereo and radio, and the old-time music taught to me by mountain elders.

My father made it out of the Fountain Fire alive, and while he can't remember the fire anymore because of his advanced dementia, he can still remember some songs I play for him. One cannot physically take away, leave behind, burn, or otherwise destroy a song. Sometimes, as in the cases of many dementia patients or wildfire victims, it may be all that you are left with.

In the face of climate change, fires, extreme weather and public health crises, the need for Californians to pull together as a community is great, especially in our most vulnerable regions. I envision Climate Country Radio as a tool to help create resilient communities through musical messages of empowerment, hope and cheer in the face of an unsettling future.

Rita Hosking, March 2024