

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 10, Side 1

November 29, 1995

M.O'R.: Well, it's November 29th today, and this is a continuation of the oral history of Althea Pratt-Broome.

As I said before we started the tape here, why don't we talk a little bit today about your observations of the river over the years since you've lived here since - the river runs through your property; is that right? Or alongside it?

A.P-B.: No. The stream runs into the river down by the bridge. So if you go from the house here down the road, then it would be like two city blocks beyond the curve of the road there to the river.

M.O'R.: Right. Okay. Now, that I think about it realize it's - I didn't have a clear sense of exactly where your property line was, but it was - I took a walk in the park the other day down by the river.

A.P-B.: Oh, did you? Well, yes, if we go over to the park I'm only - what? - a block-and-a-half away from it.

M.O'R.: Right.

A.P-B.: I was thinking of the Sweek's property. The railroad is the dividing line, and then the Sweek property went from there over all of the golf course and all of that land in there was part of this place. So that way you'd end up two or three blocks if you went straight over along the railroad track to that part of the river, but when you go along by the park we're only a block from it.

So it was a matter of the stream - I think I told you that when Dr. Harding sold the place to me the stream was very straight and not too much flowing over no real wetlands down in here. And he said, "Now, ever year you have to clean the stream out. Otherwise, it's going to turn back into marshes."

And I thought, "Oh, goody." I mean, I love a stream, but having marsh means more birds, more wildlife and all these wonderful things that I moved out into the country to get and to have my children grow up with, because I spent my life in the cities and I didn't want my children to do that. I wanted them to be out in nature because this is very important to me - the earth, and everything on it, and our relationship to the animal life and our relationship with life of all kinds, all the plants, everything.

So first thing I knew, in the field on the other side of me here, on the south side, I think I told you that a farmer had leased that part of the land from Burlington Northern, because the Sweek sons, after John died, formed this investment company they called the Sweek Investment Company, and they sold off these portions.

The first one to go was the section by the river that now is the country club. The country club people had bought it with that in mind, and I have early pictures of the first clubhouse over there, and I also in the desk there have a book that they kept some of these records in that tells how much the country club paid for that huge piece of land that is so beautiful.

M.O'R.: Probably seems like nothing today?

A.P-B.: It was \$14,000 for that whole thing. Incredible.

M.O'R.: Probably couldn't even buy a 50 by 100 lot for \$14,000 today.

A.P-B.: Oh, no.

M.O'R.: I'm sure you couldn't, in fact.

A.P-B.: Around here they're paying anywhere from 500,000, and some of them are 150,000, but most lots go for well beyond that, and then they put a horribly expensive house on top of that.

M.O'R.: Right.

A.P-B.: So, no, you're looking at another kind of world.

M.O'R.: That's right.

A.P-B.: So the river was a place that I could take the girls and show them, but primarily we were interested in all of this that fed the river. How does a marsh work? How does the stream carry things? How do fish come up from the river along the stream? There were trout in the stream here, besides sunfish and blue gills and little mosquito fish, of course. And what else was out there?

But birds, so many birds. The first time I had ever seen a real live wood duck, I couldn't believe this creature that I was looking at. It was during storm time like this, and flood time. And of course this is what wetlands are all about; they're to hold the flood waters, and if you dam them up or if you destroy them in any way, you're causing huge flood problems for yourself.

This is why we have these enormous floods up and down the Mississippi River: We've made a hundred-mile canal out of it by filling the wetlands. The flood waters have no place to go. You look at pictures, the way it tries to spread out - I was down there one time and the river was trying desperately to form more horse-

shoes because they dammed up parts of it so it wouldn't go into the Mississippi. It's perfectly ridiculous.

Well, this is what was happening out here. People wanted to dam. Well, they do have a dam on down the river, towards Lake Oswego. And we had these barrier reefs just down the river here, and this was holding a lot of the water back, too. So this was what had formed all this marsh land in here. Well, in order to farm it the Sweeks and others had ditched and drained.

I have a very interesting article written by one of John Sweek's sons who was both an engineer and an attorney, and I think I told you he helped bring shipping and railroading here to Oregon. And he wrote this article on how to ditch and drain marsh land in order to farm it. And you walk out there and you can see where they took the stream and did just what they did down here by my place, just ditching, so that it's straight; it doesn't meander like it ordinarily would. Now it meanders, but some of it still retains that ditching that they did.

But they farmed it, and then there's a dike just on the north side of me on the other side of the marsh there's a little road and a big pond. I used to call it a lake. It was a small lake, and I used to take the girls out there when they were little. I'm sure that it was a big natural low place that formed a large pond, but I think that they dredged it, too, to keep it for a watering pond for cattle and irrigation and things like that.

There also were water rights. Most of the people up and down the river had water rights, and there were old rights that the Sweek people used for irrigating. The well just outside my kitchen there is this little well house and the well is only 17- $\frac{1}{2}$ deep, but

it had an ever-running spring down there until Unified Sewerage a few years ago, and two years ago as well, began to dig to put their sewage pipes, because we have all this housing going in and all this sewage coming, and the Durham treatment plant is right over here on the other side of the river. So they were putting in these huge pipes, the first time in 1977. And this big pond just north of the kitchen here, in three days - it was like you pulled a plug in the bathtub. It just went whoosh, and here were all these floundering fish, and young people from all over here who really cared about the marsh, everybody was out there with buckets and pans, anything to get the fish out of there and run them down to the river, so they were all racing down the road with these buckets of fish and dumping them into the river.

M.O'R.: Now, what caused the marsh to drain? Do you know?

A.P-B.: Yes, because right outside of here they had hooked up a pumping system, because, you see, the water table is so high here that if you dig down three feet you're into water. Well ...

M.O'R.: So it was causing problems?

A.P-B.: Yes. They were going down deeper, and they were putting in these big pipes. So guess what? They ran this great big hose, only enormous, down to the river, and they were pumping like 300 million gallons of water out of here. They were pumping faster than there was water.

M.O'R.: Than the groundwater could flow in?

A.P-B.: That's right. And so our well went dry. Nine other wells in the vicinity went dry, all upstream up here, of course. And ...

M.O'R.: And that was for the duration of the construction, then?

A.P-B.: Well, by the time you disturb an underground water table like that, it takes time for it to fill up because the way a marsh works, as the rain comes down and the waters flood over it, then it begins to leach out all of the impurities in it, and it settles down through all that beautiful loam and all of those plants, and as it goes down the impurities are left behind, and then it's pure water when it gets down into the water table. Well, it takes time for it to percolate down there. And then it happened to be El Niño drought summer as well.

M.O'R.: Oh, yes. I remember that.

A.P-B.: Right. So they began doing this in July. I was down there in Southern California teaching. Rebecca happened to be home here. She didn't go that summer, and she had a woman staying here with her. And she called me. She was just absolutely frantic. Everybody was out there trying to save the fish, and how was she going to water the plants, what were they going to do? So they were all involved with a co-op across the street here, so they were bringing water from the co-op so that they would have water for bathing and water for drinking and cooking, and they dug an out-house out here because we didn't think then about getting a port-a-potty, because the port-a-potty companies were way out in North-east, Southeast Portland, and so they didn't do that. But anyway, I would call all the time to see how things were going, and it was just really terrible.

M.O'R.: You'd call USA?

A.P-B.: No, I'd keep in touch with Rebecca.

M.O'R.: Oh, I see. Okay.

A.P-B.: To see how they were getting along. So when I got back in the end of August then we didn't have water until this time of the year, November, almost the end of November before we had even a little bit of water in the well. And then it had to be thoroughly boiled because it was full of sediment and things that had settled down. The lining on the well, since it's all hand-dug, is handmade brick. When I first came I had the water tested, and I would every year or two have it tested again for coliform and everything, and it was pure water.

And then when Jack I got married 15 years ago, he said, "Well, I want to have more testing done than just for coliform. I want to find out are there any other impurities in there, what's the mineral content and so forth." Well, that cost \$300 so I'd never done that. So he took his sample down to them, and when he came back to get it, they said, "Where in the world did you get this water?"

Well, being a nervous soul, Jack just about panicked. He said, "What's wrong with it?"

And they said, "Well, nothing. It's just the finest water we've ever seen. It's absolutely pure. The mineral content is just exactly right. Where did you get it?"

And he told them, and they said, "Boy, you must have some spring down in there."

Well, when I first came I tried to have somebody come and clean the walls [of the well and everything so there would be no impurities for my children, and you can't get in there and do the job because the spring was bubbling away all the time, and the

water was just coming right back up. You could clean the walls, but you couldn't clean down below. So anyway -.

The great big cottonwood tree right behind here, there was a little spring right by its roots, and it was always wet there, and the water would just puddle up all over the place. We'd always go out and look at it because little frogs would get in it and things like this, you know, and it was just such a great place. So even that dried up.

M.O'R.: Was this something that the United Sewage Agency anticipated and just ignored or - they must have really caused hardship for people here.

A.P-B.: They just either didn't realize or totally ignored, and I think they totally ignored. They had an engineer who had checked out supposedly everything. So I happened to know him. So I called him and I said, "What is this," you know, "why did you let them do that? Why couldn't you have just pumped the water back into the marsh?"

M.O'R.: That was going to be one of my questions, actually.

A.P-B.: Yes. Well, they just thought they needed to get rid of it.

So they were going to do it again the next year. They hadn't finished. And I talked to the City and I said, "I have never sued anybody, but I'm about to if you do this again next year. If you can't work it out where you just pump that water back into the marsh, then you have no right to do it."

And since I worked with the City, they listened, and I talked to Unified Sewerage, and they did, and talked to the engineer again. Well, they didn't do it the following year, but then the

year after that they did. But they dumped the water back in, and we didn't have that disturbance.

M.O'R.: What about the wells? I assume they maybe still had some problems, or did they?

A.P-B.: A lot of those people finally paid to go on city water, but because of the railroad out here, it's very difficult. The City isn't going to go under it for you, and you have to get a drilling company.

We went through all of this last summer because last year because of more development up on the hills there they needed even bigger sewage pipes. And so they started up there and came down, and when they got down into the city here, they started pumping, and they didn't pump just in the daytime while they were working as they had done the first time, they pumped 24 hours a day for two to three months. We had no water. The summer arts program was going on - fortunately over at the park, not here. We wouldn't have been able to do it.

If you've ever tried to get along in this modern day and age when you're working, and Jack had company come from New York - no water. We were hauling water in in big blue plastic barrels. And bless Richard, Richard was bringing it for us. The City allowed us to get it over at the park over here. But if you've tried to bathe and live normally ...

M.O'R.: With no water. I can imagine that it's quite a problem.

A.P-B.: It's pretty tough. I still bathed twice a day, spit baths, you know. You haul the water up, you heat the water on the stove, and I finally took one of the foam plastic washtubs that we

were using over there at the summer arts program, and I brought it over and I put it in the shower, and then I would haul the water up and dump it into this little thing. Fortunately I'm small, so I could get into this thing and take a bath, you know.

M.O'R.: Did you decide at that point to get on city water yourself?

A.P-B.: Jack did. But it cost \$4,000 to go under those railroad tracks and dig new ditches all across the yard. You can still see where the ditches - where the ground sinks. Because you fill them up, and then the rains come and it sinks, and then you fill them up a little bit more and so forth.

But we had to disconnect the well from the house. Now the water is back in the well, but it fluctuates a great deal. After the 1977 thing it took us years to bring it back to normal again. It takes that long when they have disturbed the water table. This time I think they disturbed it permanently, because they had filled the previous year, it's been two summers now that they filled all of this marsh land south of me that we had lost when I was fighting for the wetlands. We lost part of it on the south side. So they filled and compacted, but if you look out there now, there's standing water all over that thing.

I don't know how they're going to put buildings here. They're going to have to raise it because even though they've filled so much and compacted, it would just shake the whole house when they were compacting. It was like a earthquake all the time. But they - it's an impervious surface now. It takes a long time for it to go down, because it's not marsh land, and the water table doesn't get that water now.

M.O'R.: Right.

A.P-B.: And a lot of it runs off. They have big pipes coming down into the part of the wetlands that I had saved. There are about 75 acres of wetlands still, but that's not enough to handle flood and all the rain that we get. And so the marsh is just getting totally flooded, and then no water, or very little. And they came in and they broke down the beaver dams, so the water then just rushes through and rushes on down to the river, and you get all this silt and stuff into the river. You're going to get a lot more problems with the river now.

One thing with urban renewal that we did, it was one of the things that I did not want to do, but there were all those who felt that it was a very important thing to do, and they wanted to do it, and that was to take out two of those big reef barriers so that the water would flow through faster in flood time; instead of the two big floods we had had, 1964 and 1974, when my place was the only place out of water downtown here, because the pioneer knew where to put it, on this little hump. And you're not aware that it's on a little hump until flood time, and then all the water is rushing in from the north side here, all along the marsh below me. Both times it came clear up to the edge of the driveway next to the porch, and then it swings around out back by the barn and then swings down just on the other side of my line. So the hump is right in through here.

M.O'R.: Well, that was one of the things I was going to ask you about, was whether you experienced flooding out here and when that would be, and it sounds to me like - well, I'm not so sure about the '74 flood because I'm a little uncertain about the exact

timing, but I guess the Tualatin used to flood every year in wintertime before they built Skoggins Dam and set up the Hagg Reservoir upstream. But several people have told me that since they did that that flooding is much less of a problem, and it sounds like maybe the '64 and perhaps the '74 floods were both before Skoggins Dam.

A.P-B.: I don't remember exactly when they put that in. That's a good question.

M.O'R.: It was in the 70's, but I don't have the exact date, either. I should have, obviously.

A.P-B.: No, I'd be interested in knowing.

M.O'R.: I'll try to find that out, and I'll let you know.

A.P-B.: And let me know, because historically I like to know all these things, too.

M.O'R.: Well, one of the things that I wondered about was because I've heard the Skoggins Dam made such a big difference in terms of the annual, you know, flooding of the river, whether these measures that you talk about here, them taking out the barrier reefs to promote drainage, whether those would have been really necessary after they had the dam built upstream there.

A.P-B.: I don't think they would have been. But they even talked about diking, building huge dikes along the park. The bank is steep enough going up by the golf course, I think, so that you wouldn't have gotten the flooding there. There's a very low part just on the other side of the country club property, the west side, a steep bank slopes down into this very low area that again is a wetland area that holds flooding.

Did you need to turn that?

M.O'R.: No, not quite. Almost.

A.P-B.: But when those came out, then it did help. But 1974, those apartments down by the bridge, they were rowing into the second floor and the first floor was totally underwater.

M.O'R.: In your own experience of those two floods, what kind of problems did they cause here?

A.P-B.: Well, for one thing I had to park my car clear up on the hill up here and walk down, and I was the only one they would let come down into the city because my house was the only one out of the water. So I would just put on these boots. I carried them in my car, and leave my car up there and hike down the railroad track and hike through the flood water.

M.O'R.: And how deep would it have been, do you think?

A.P-B.: Well, there were times it went well over my boots, and I got very wet. But at least I got home. And when I got home I was fine.

M.O'R.: Needless to say there was plenty of water in the well?

A.P-B.: Well, in fact for a while I couldn't use the well, because the water came all the way up, and all this flood water was in the well.

M.O'R.: So it wasn't very good quality water?

A.P-B.: No. I brought it home from school, and the kids brought it over from the co-op, and we had water. But again we were down to this thing of just spit bathing. We were all doing our little - carrying our basins up, and it was just like the old days, you know. And we kept saying, "Oh, well, we're pioneers," you know.

M.O'R.: Well, to some extent interrupting a normal routine is maybe not entirely unhealthy.

A.P-B.: Oh, no. It's just that when you're working all the time, you know ...

M.O'R.: Of course, it's a burden then.

A.P-B.: That's when it's really tough.

M.O'R.: So you don't use your well at all anymore?

A.P-B.: Not right now. We were hoping that it would come back enough so that this summer we could have watered with it, and Richard, who is very, very clever - in fact Richard did a very clever thing ...

M.O'R.: Richard is your son-in-law?

A.P-B.: Yes. Rebecca's [husband]. And he, as I said, was bringing in these big blue barrels.

M.O'R.: Right. .

A.P-B.: Well, one day he took two of them, set them by the back porch there, and he was out there figuring out piping and electricity and everything, and he worked this thing out: He hooked it up to the water pipes that came from the well, and he hooked up a pump on these two blue barrels, and the pump, you would flip it on, and it would pump the water into the system and for a few minutes you could actually take a shower. And then it would automatically switch to the next barrel. These were 55-gallon drums, so that you ended up with 55 out of one, and then it would switch to the next one.

[end of side one]

ALTHEA PRATT-BROOME

TAPE 10, Side 2

November 29, 1995

M.O'R.: Well, it seems in a way kind of a shame that you don't have the wonderfully pure water your well. As nice as Portland city water is, it still isn't completely pure.

A.P-B.: No, I don't like drinking chlorine water at all, and it certainly is not good for your system.

When I was in cancer research up there at the medical school, one of the things that we found was that chlorine over a long period of time definitely affects the kidneys, and particularly if you take chlorine water and you heat it, it turns the chlorine into chloroform, and the chloroform is very carcinogenic. So you're fighting all of these things when you're using water with chlorine in it. It's something that we prefer not to do, and we miss our well water tremendously.

But when all the shopping center, over on the south of side of us, all the housing on the north side of us goes in, we may have contaminated groundwater. It would be something that we would have to check all the time. But if the well ever stabilizes again, then we're going to hook up so that - see, I have a pump in the kitchen, a little hand pump, just as they did in the old days. It's right by the sink; I can take you out there and show you. And right now it needs a new plunger. The plunger got dry on it because we haven't used it.

But it used to be so much fun when the children's tour groups from the schools and the Scouts and everything came through here,

and I'd take them all out to the kitchen, and after they had looked at all the old things then they got a turn pumping their own water, and they loved it.

So if we get the well back again, then we will have one pipe and the faucet that will come in for drinking and cooking and this kind of thing, and the rest of it will be for city water. You can't put them both into the same pipelines; that's against the law, because it's might back up, and then if you have impurities in your water, it might get to someone else in the city, so you can't do that. So it would have to be a totally separate line with separate faucets and everything.

M.O'R.: Well, for that matter you probably don't want the city water contaminating your water, either.

A.P-B.: No, I definitely do not.

M.O'R.: Let me just ask you a follow-up question on something you said earlier. When you first bought the place you mentioned that the doctor had told you that you needed to keep the streams clear ...

A.P-B.: Right.

M.O'R.: ... maintain them each year or the marsh would come back. And I assume, of course, that you didn't do that?

A.P-B.: No, I didn't.

M.O'R.: How long did it take the marsh to establish itself again?

A.P-B.: Quite a number of years. It began right away, but the stream had been ditched enough so that it still was pretty much running into the ditch. However, probably within a couple of years the pond on the other side of the kitchen there had formed because

it had little islands in it, and my little girls - we built bridges out to the little islands, and they would make little huts and things on the islands to play. And then after a number of years you couldn't get out to the islands anymore because they were covered.

And the farmer who was farming out here, I think I told you, came up the driveway one day - this was during the first year that I was here, with winter rains and all, only it was spring. And he came with an armful of dynamite on a nice sunny day.

M.O'R.: Oh, that's right. He was after the beaver dams, wasn't he?

A.P-B.: Yes. He was after the beaver dam. So the beaver dam didn't come down, after our long discussion, and later when I started fighting to save wetlands, I think I told you that it was because the iron foundry over here was dumping slag down into the marsh, and I called DEQ, and they came out and investigated, and they told them that they had to clean that up. And they didn't, so I called them again, and they went out again. And they said, "You will be fined \$2500 a day if you continue to do this." So they got their act together and began to dump it elsewhere instead of in the marsh. But you see, this is typically what people did with a marsh; you dumped everything in. I was constantly hauling out old tires and everything else that got dumped into it.

Then on the south side, down west of us here, another fellow was beginning to fill, and I think I told you that. He later came on our board and became one of us, but at that time he was filling. So then we - that was when I started calling the agencies, and all these young people working with me were calling people, and we

eventually got everybody into the act - DEQ and Division of State Lands, and Oregon Fish & Wildlife, federal Fish & Wildlife, Army Corps of Engineers, Thousand Friends, Audubon, Isaac Walton League, you name them, they all got involved in it.

M.O'R.: Now, this was in ...

A.P-B.: 1975.

M.O'R.: Okay. When you first came here to this house, I think it was approximately the time that the Army Corps of Engineers had put forward an ambitious plan to sort of tame the Tualatin. They had a plan to straighten it out so that it would run a straighter course than it does, and I believe they were also going to line the banks of the Tualatin with concrete or some sort of material that would ...

A.P-B.: Which was very typical of that time. You see it - I can show you pictures taken of other places, California and back East there, where they did exactly that, and either they used heavy rock and lined the river, or they mostly cemented. That was the Army Corps' favorite way. No plants. And now they have become convinced by a lot of the people who have fought environmentally to change that, to put some rock in but mostly all kinds of plants on the banks that are water retentive, and then leave areas where the water can flood, but put a lot of wetlands plants that help to purify and help to retain it. So yeah, they were really going to fix the Tualatin just like they did the Mississippi, get rid of all these wetlands.

M.O'R.: Now, had you - by the time you got here was that already resolved? I know that there were a lot of people who - some of whom may have been initially in favor it, but once they

figured out exactly what was involved I know that there were many, many people that were opposed to it, and they did manage to stop it.

A.P-B.: Yeah, I did not get involved in that at that point. And it wasn't until later that I got involved.

M.O'R.: Well, we talked a little bit about Skoggins Dam already ...

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: ... and about how that controls the flooding here, to some extent at least. Were you aware of that project when it was first proposed?

A.P-B.: Yes.

M.O'R.: Did you get involved in that one at all?

A.P-B.: No. No, I did not. I was so tremendously involved in teaching and trying to raise three children and ...

M.O'R.: You had your hands full.

A.P-B.: ... and do all of the lecturing and everything that I needed to do in order to have enough money to maintain my children, and we were very poor anyway, but I didn't have the time, and by the time 1975, you see Rebecca, who was born in '55, seven months before I moved in, she was 20 years old. And so the girls were grown and were helping to save all of this, but I wasn't tending them like I had when I was trying to make a living before. So I didn't have the time to get involved in all those things, other than to read about them and to talk about them and try to influence other people, but as far as actually getting out there and doing what I did in 1975 to start saving the wetlands, no.

M.O'R.: Did you notice the effects of the dam when it went in?

A.P-B.: Yes. We didn't get as much water coming up and into the marshes. I mean, if you look out there now, out my kitchen window, you'll see how far the pond has come up. Well, before Skoggins Dam, it would have come up almost to the well, and it would fill in all around me, not like it would with regular flood time, but that was how I happened to see the wood duck, because I told you that I wanted to farm, and I bought cows, and I'd go out there and clean the barn and milk the cow and all of that. Well, the flood water was clear up - it had - do you know what a Dutch door is?

M.O'R.: Is that where you open the top ...

A.P-B.: Yes, you can open the top and the bottom stays closed.

M.O'R.: Right.

A.P-B.: Okay. That was just at the end of the milking shed, and then the ramp went down from there down to the ground just above the marsh. Well, the water was so high that it was up to about an inch of the top of the lower part of the Dutch door. And I got out there to milk the cows, and of course I had the cows inside because of the flooding, but I looked out and this duck was floating on the water just within 18 inches of me. I was standing at this Dutch door looking at this gorgeous thing looking at me, and he was swimming around up there on that water. So this was all before Skoggins Dam so you can see how far up it came.

M.O'R.: Right. I guess the other impact of the dam was that you had greater flow in the summertime down the river?

A.P-B.: Yes. Yes, it was much better.

M.O'R.: You know, the other thing that happened right around the time you became active in saving the wetlands, maybe slightly before was that there was a building moratorium here in Washington County because of the fact that there were so many septic tanks, and for that matter even local sewage systems, I guess like the Aloha Sanitation District and some of the others were notoriously bad and were putting waste that really received very little treatment ...

A.P-B.: Running in it all the time.

M.O'R.: And then I guess the response to that was to form the Unified Sewerage Agency and to get all these little sewer districts together and upgrade the ones that were in really bad shape.

A.P-B.: Well, they came out and examined everybody's septic tanks, too ...

M.O'R.: Did they?

A.P-B.: ... their whole system. Oh, yes, and they came out and examined this one. We still are on septic. The City has never run their pipes over here to us. We've talked to them a number of times about it, but no. Septic tank is right out there, and the drain field is out this way.

So they came numerous times and examined the water coming out of the sink and the water coming into the - out of the septic field, how far it traveled, et cetera, and it came nowhere near the marsh, so we were perfectly okay. But they were doing a lot of examinations.

M.O'R.: Now, when you say "they," who ...

A.P-B.: It was Unified Sewerage people.

M.O'R.: It was Unified Sewerage people?

A.P-B.: Yes. Uh-huh. And then they also would come and check for the quality of the water in the wetlands all the way down. They were checking the industries to see what was being put into the wetlands and what kinds of chemicals, runoff, this kind of thing.

And you see, in doing this development over here now, one of the things that we kept insisting was that you have to have a runoff catch basin. You either develop a swale of some kind, which is not that practical when you're on a marsh, or you develop this low sump area, a trap area, for it.

What they do most of the time now is kind of a combination of the holding pond and the swale, so that you - well, actually at NASA they built their own sewage system with three wetlands ponds. So the sewage goes into the first one, and the plants that can handle that do their business, then it flows into the second one, where those plants work on it, then it flows into the third one. By the time it's out of the third one, it's pure water, because of the plants.

M.O'R.: You said NASA? You mean the space agency?

A.P-B.: Yeah, the space age place. They were one of the first to do it. And in Eureka, California, they have this huge place where they do this. It makes this beautiful big lake for wildlife, and when you go in to use the toilets, there are little signs that say, "Thank you for your contribution." And it all goes into these big ponds and comes out pure. And the birds, migrating birds just absolutely love the place.

There's another one down at Seaside that they have been experimenting with for quite a number of years, probably ten years now. And it will become a great deal more popular, I think, as people catch on to what a great system it is. So that's what we keep trying to encourage these people who are going to have all these businesses out here and all of this runoff. And of course they want to use the marsh entirely for that and not have to do all of the other stuff that they need to do.

But one of the things that had happened either one year or two years before I started this thing in '75 - I think it was only a year - was that the Clean Water Act, which had become federal law saying that all waters of the United States were part of the river systems and that even streams - and this is what the 404 section was - that even streams and marshes and everything were all part of the federal waters, and this is the only reason that we could make any of this stick. But none of us, not even the agencies, knew how strong this was. So we lost a good portion of these marshes south of me simply because we didn't know. And in bargaining ...

M.O'R.: Didn't know that you could use that section of the law to protect it?

A.P-B.: We knew we could use it, but we didn't know how strong it was or how far it went, and we were just - it was a landmark case in Oregon, because nobody had ever fought for an inland wetlands before. When I first started talking to people about the wetlands, other than the agencies, they were saying, "You mean that puddle in the back of your house, Althea?"

And I was saying, "Walk with me," because I was taking school kids and Scouts and everybody out there doing all kinds of nature

things with them, and we wore boots. And so I kept trying to convince the City staff, because that was one of the reasons that I went on urban renewal when they asked me to be a part of it.

So at the first meeting that we had - as I think I told you, that's where I met Jack, because it was his firm that was doing the planning - and the two things that I wanted most to do: save the wetlands, get the cities involved in it so that they would see the importance of doing it so we weren't constantly fighting the City as well as the business people, but also because they had zoned this whole area around here, including my house, as heavy industry, and this was what they were intending putting.

That was the other reason that I decided to try to save the wetlands was because Zeidel Company, who had bought the land, the 140 acres, from Burlington Northern, they were talking about bringing a lot of their steel waste that they had down there along the river in Portland, using it - some of this land for stockpiling it. So those two things I managed to do through urban renewal, to begin with, was to get this changed, the zoning of it, and to change the way they were looking at the marshes.

But the first time I said to them, "Go out and walk with me. You don't believe ..."

"It's just a field out there," they kept saying.

So I said, "Wear your boots."

They didn't. So I brought a bunch of school kids with me. I said, "Shall we get them wet?"

They said, "Let's get them wet."

So we hiked them everywhere, all over that marsh. They were believers when they came out of there. It wasn't fields; it was marshes. It was quite an experience for them.

M.O'R.: Did they believe that they should be protected, though, I guess is the question?

A.P-B.: Well, that took time. That took a lot of time. Some of those business people pounded the table when we'd all sit down together and swore at me, and I'd let them yell and scream and carry on, and then I'd say, "Okay. Now can we talk?" And then we talked.

I kept saying, "Look, I'm trying to understand where you're coming from. I'm not asking you to give all of it. I'm just saying, "Can we compromise? Can you give up some of this wetlands, which was cheap land? You bought it for practically nothing so that you could fill it, but have you looked at history? Have you looked at other places?"

Mexico City is built on a marsh. They constantly have problems. Boston, they filled up a lot of the wetlands along the Charles River. You go into one of the churches there in Boston near the Charles River, and it's all sloping. They constantly have problems, engineering problems everywhere they've done this. The leaning tower of Pisa. Same thing. All over the world people have tried to do this.

In very ancient times they were sensible. In Ireland, in Switzerland and all over where there were lots of wetlands they put posts down and they built the house up. In Malaysia you see this, too. And then you can row out to them, or what they did in Mexico City back in the ancient times with the Native Americans there:

They had this beautiful center in the middle of that lake. There are early records of this, the explorers telling about this. And then these fan-shaped docks, only they were bridges, like floating bridges came out from it. They grew their vegetables on top of these, and their flowers, and early records say that it was absolutely beautiful.

You stood at the edge of this lake, and here were these rays like the rays of the sun, with all these flowers and vegetables growing on them, and then walkways, also, where you could walk over. But enemies you could see and battle with them and dump them in the water. That was their system. And this is how Mexico City grew, and they are still fighting all the engineering problems that they have because they've tried to build in modern ways instead of the way the Indians did it.

And you're going to have the same problem here. Not only that, but with an earthquake ...

M.O'R.: Right.

A.P-B.: Severe earthquakes ...

M.O'R.: Fill is not a good idea.

A.P-B.: ... it liquifies.

M.O'R.: Yeah.

A.P-B.: And you just sink. And so I'm sitting here thinking, "Well, how far is this house going to sink?" It sits on a hummock, but I'm sure underneath this hummock there's that water table still down there, and I may be just sinking, too. But those out there are really going to get it.

M.O'R.: Right.

A.P-B.: I don't care how much they compact.

M.O'R.: At least this house is built on a hill that nature created rather than ...

A.P-B.: That's right. They didn't create it. Nature did, so it's pretty solid.

But you know, there are still mastodon bones under Fred Meyer. That whole marsh system in here ...

M.O'R.: This Fred Meyer here, the Tualatin Fred Meyer?

A.P-B.: This Fred Meyer in Tualatin, and they allowed them to build on it. Portland State's archeological anthropology department was able to save enough of the bones to put together almost a complete, not really complete, but a mastodon. But there are all kinds of bones under this place.

One of the things that two of the fellows from Army Corps at that time went out with me into the marshes and we took core samples all up and down about three-and-a-half miles, and it varies from place to place. In one spot you'll do a drill and you come up with sand, and a few feet away, or even one or two feet away, you go down and you come up with gravel. I mean, it changes. And then you get loam and clay, and you just get different things down there. It's tremendously interesting what a wetlands in an old lake bottom can be like.

And of course we have these scab lands just above here. There's a big wetlands up there. It is beautiful. The railroad track goes right through it. There are some unusual plants up in there. And now finally with this new metro green spaces they're going to save part of it. We're working with a fellow now, and he's coming up with the plan for Metro. There are little volcanic cones up there, and they call it the scab lands because when the

Missoula floods came racing down through here it scraped out whole sections up there. You can go up there and you can see the striation marks. There are just so many fascinating things in this area that were caused by water.

So you had this big lake in here, and this is where all of those prehistoric type animals came, and so no telling what kinds of bones are in there. And then of course the Indians did a lot of hunting here because of the marsh land, all of the bird population, and because of the river. They could bring their canoes downriver. They could come up the streams, go into the marshes. This apparently where I'm sitting was one of those seasonal campgrounds, because I find bits and pieces of arrowheads. Just last fall when I was digging to put tulips in, I only got down about six to eight inches, and I came up with this absolutely perfect beautiful little arrowhead. It's pink quartz. It is gorgeous.

M.O'R.: That must have been a wonderful experience, finding that.

A.P-B.: It is so exciting. One of the most exciting things that I ever found - see the old maple tree that's dying and falling apart out here, that I keep hoping will continue to last? It's all hollow in the center and everything.

A number of years ago I decided to make a flower bed around it. So I was digging and I was tossing out rocks, and I just about tossed this one, and I realized what I was holding. It's this woman's stone scraper. It fits perfectly into the palm of my hand, and it's been shaped all around as a scraper for scraping rabbit skins and things like this. And to hold that in my hand, it was the most wonderful feeling of being connected to somebody from the

past. And now that they are going to develop the park up here where we're doing the summer arts program on the other side of the freeway, there is - the whole barrier reef runs along there. We tried to dig down to put some barrels for holding sink water and things like this over there for the summer arts thing.

[end of tape]