

CATHY CLAIRE

TAPE 3, Side 1

August 29, 1996

M.O'R.: This is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society continuing the interview with Cathy Claire, and today is the 29th of August, and today's interview is taking place at the Oregon Historical Society.

I think where we left off was you told me that you had moved out into the Valley, and you became involved in the STOP movement, Sensible Transportation Options for People; is that it?

C.C.: Sensible Transportation Options for People, which was originally a group of people in the Scholls-Sherwood, that sort of nondescript area which is between Tigard, Beaverton, Sherwood and Hillsboro, part of CPO 10, and being an unincorporated area, the Kinton and Scholls area.

There had been a knock on my door which had been one of the local farmers, which is a Roshak, and the Roshaks have the original donation land claim in that area and have been farming that area for years, and one of the sons knocked on the door and said, "There's a meeting; they want to put a freeway through your house." Sensible Transportation Options for People had already started as an organization, and they were putting on some informational meetings for the community, and I attended that meeting.

Also at that meeting I believe there were some people from the County, and they were giving their proposals on what this road was, and I asked several questions and their answers didn't deal with the questions, but their answers seemed to skip around all of the issues they were being confronted with.

So I started attending some of the STOP meetings, and as any organization, they're always short-handed with people. So after attending several meetings I suddenly became a board member.

[interruption]

M.O'R.: Okay. So you became a board member.

C.C.: So I became a board member of STOP.

M.O'R.: Were you able to help them out, then?

C.C.: I did their first auction. One of the Roshaks, Linda Price, who was also on the board, we sat in her back yard of her farm and were bandying about ideas and came up with the idea of an auction and decided to have one to raise money for STOP. It was the first auction. We ended up raising about \$5,000, and that was after expenditures. At first everyone said, "Well, you can't do it. It won't happen. Nobody's going to buy this stuff." You can sell anything, it just depends how well you market what you're selling.

And we cleared out everybody's basement and attic, it seemed.

M.O'R.: So that's where the items came from?

C.C.: We would stop at garage sales, and we would say, "If you have anything left over when you're done, would you please call us?" And people would call us. We'd then go to the garage sale and we'd haul everything over to a potato barn, which is half buried in the ground and this is the cold barn where the potatoes were stored. Of course it was empty at the time. And we would sort through mounds of clothing, and we would sort out the clothing that we thought one organization should have or another, and so we would distribute the things that we couldn't use but we thought might be helpful for other nonprofits, and then the things that we thought we might be able to use or fix or change in some way that they would become useful, we kept.

It must have worked. We had a little farmer's market where we got local people to donate produce, and we earned \$5,000. As far as I know, STOP is still having, if not on a yearly, every other year having an auction and still making money. And it wasn't until I think last year that they managed to break our 5,000 mark.

M.O'R.: So the first one was definitely a success?

C.C.: So the first one was fairly successful, I think.

M.O'R.: A real milepost, it sounds like.

C.C.: And it was successful in other ways. It was successful in helping to build a community. Everyone felt as if they were participating, no matter what level. So we had folks help during the day of the event. We had farmers who kept saying, "Ah, you're not going to make anything off of this," hauling our things in their farm trucks that otherwise they'd be hauling potatoes or cows in, and people became a neighborhood, which is different - it's easy to say, "Well, we live in the Hawthorne district," or "We live on this block or that block," and therefore you have a neighborhood, but it's different in the country where you say, "Well, I'm going to go over to the neighbor's house," and they happen to be four miles away. You know, there's only three houses between you, but they're four miles away, but they're still neighbors.

So it started to create a community. And STOP tried to think of other activities. They put together the first Bike to Work, and that worked successfully as well.

M.O'R.: So you promoted people taking their bicycles to work on a particular day or something?

C.C.: Sure. So we promoted alternatives for folks and having sensible transportation options.

STOP managed to acquire the privilege of distributing a book out of Australia, and they are the only distributor within the United States, called *Traffic Calming*, and it is a book explaining

how you can organize your community so that the traffic will be calm instead of having, you know, the hectic freeway sort of traffic and people racing hither and yon. And what it turned into is that they're quite successful with this, and there are organizations, including the City of Portland, which acquire a large number of these books on a regular basis for their city planners and community planners.

M.O'R.: That's great. If I remember correctly, you told me that you had had almost no experience in Washington County before moving out there, so I imagine it was a way for you to connect with the grassroots ...

C.C.: Oh, sure. Yeah, it was a good opportunity for me to meet my neighbors and become involved with folks. I had some grassroots organizing experience through Vista, and I think what - I think the lessons that I learned through this were pretty valuable. And the friends that I made of course are still friends. It's a good organization.

M.O'R.: Are you still part of STOP, then?

C.C.: No. No. One of the ideas we then came up with - I came up with - was if we're trying to save this area, and if you see this valley that they want to put the freeway through, I think you can understand why it should be saved. While it's just a small part of the Tualatin River Valley, it's a very beautiful and historic area.

Of course our fear and one of the main complaints is that we have this new wonderful thing called an urban growth boundary. And the urban growth boundary has a very major flaw, and that flaw is that everybody inside the urban growth boundary has the control of where it goes, but nobody on the outside of the urban growth boundary has any say in where that growth boundary goes. So if you're a community, a farming community, and you're quite comfortable

where you are, and you're quite comfortable in not having that urban growth boundary, or you're quite comfortable in having that urban growth boundary be two miles away, you suddenly found that that urban growth boundary is a half mile away, and there's nothing you can do to stop it because only the people on one side of the line are allowed to vote where it goes, and they in voting vote for their Metro Councilor. But the people outside of the line have no vote and therefore have no control.

M.O'R.: Unless they're swallowed up by the beast.

C.C.: Unless they're swallowed by the beast, and that appears to be happening. So a lot of the fear in trying to prevent this freeway was trying to stop the urban growth boundary because to us an obvious step then would be if you're going to cut through some of these farms and in effect cut off the ability of a farmer to get to half of his fields because you have a freeway in between, well, the farmer's tendency may be to sell those fields he can no longer reach, and if they're sold and they're really not large enough to farm anymore, then you're either going to end up with the McMansion sort of attitude that out in West Linn a lot of folks out there have gone through, or you're going to find major developers coming through, which really is the crunch in Beaverton and Tigard. The mentality is, "Let's put in new subdivisions." So this is part of the motivation.

So our minds went along the line, all right, we have no control because we're outside of this urban growth boundary. We have no vote to stop. There are only 5,000 people in the entire valley, and that's from Sherwood to Hillsboro, from the area up near Bald Peak up in the Laurel area and across to Jacktown Road and that general area around the back side of Beaverton.

M.O'R.: And remind me again, this is the late 80's we're talking about, right?

C.C.: This is the late 80's, yes, early 90's. Late 1989.

M.O'R.: Okay.

C.C.: So we decide we don't have the power, so perhaps if we could show these folks that this area is of some significance and has value, then those people who can vote will help us in preventing its development.

So we started a campaign. We had walking. We would walk from one area to another. There was one road in the Aloha area that the freeway was supposed to go through, and they would have taken out several grade schools. So e walked the four or five miles from one grade school to another and picked up as many people and made a crowd and a little bit of noise, you know.

Then the other idea was, how do we get people out here? This is a beautiful area. Its recreational value, aside from the fact that it gives them food, is outstanding. How do we get people out there? So we decided to have a canoe trip. If these folks, if we can convince the masses to love the area as much as we do, then it will be preserved.

So we started our first day, and we couldn't figure out what to name it, so it was named Tualatin River Discovery Day.

M.O'R.: Before you tell me about that let me just ask you who were some of the other active principals, then, that you were working with?

C.C.: In STOP?

M.O'R.: Yeah. Either on the earlier things or on specifically the Tualatin River Discovery Day.

C.C.: Linda Price was one of the original people.

M.O'R.: And who was she?

C.C.: She's a local farmer. Mickey Blizzard was the public focus, public spokesperson and the head of the organization for years. Molly O'Reilly became involved, and Molly's better known

for her work with the Friends of Forest Park because she didn't live - she was an outsider that became involved with our issue. Dave Stewart.

M.O'R.: Okay. Also a local ...

C.C.: Lived up on Bald Peak and now lives in Southeast Portland, but he's very much involved with STOP still. And there were two or three other people that lived in the area whose names I can't remember who were involved. I think our oldest member is Erma Krohn, and Erma turned 86 this year, and she was there on the first trip and has been on trips since.

What you should do is the first year - I think it was the first year, maybe it was the second - we had the news there, the news media showed up. And Erma has a very interesting verbal commentary that she made while she sat in a drift boat and floated down the river, so this would be good for you to review, I think.

M.O'R.: Okay. By the way, I interrupted you. You were telling me that you came on the idea to organize this float down the river.

C.C.: To organize it. So we had the first Tualatin River Discovery Day. Thousand Friends of Oregon had given us a mailing list, so we used that mailing list plus we would have booths at fairs with maps explaining to people what was happening and having people sign up, so we sent flyers out to everyone.

M.O'R.: About how far in advance of the float date did you start, would you say?

C.C.: It's always been the last weekend in June, and we always started work at least in February, at the beginning of February.

We went - oh, I think it was billed as half a day's float down the Tualatin River. We had boats that couldn't make it. We had one fellow who made a craft out of PVC pipe and plugged the holes

and built it, and it turned out to be a total disaster. They had to tow it back.

We had a couple of rafts, and we learned that you don't want rafts on that river because there's very little flow, and rowing a raft one mile is like rowing a canoe 25 miles; it's very difficult.

People volunteered for all sorts of jobs, from directing traffic to minor little things. We got involved - and I can't remember if it was again the first or the second year, I think it was the second. The first year what we did is we got people involved and we said, "If you don't have a boat, don't worry about it because we'll try and partner you with other people that do have boats. And so we set everyone up. We ended up having 35 boats, and that must turn out to be about 75 or 80 people the first year, and it was a good trip. We didn't have rain, but I don't believe we had straight sun, either. But people learned.

M.O'R.: And from where to where did you go on the first year?

C.C.: We went from the Chamberg Bridge. The Amstads own the largest farm in that area. The Amstads are on one side and Erhart Steinborn's dairy is on the other side. On that property, which is on the north side of the Chamberg Bridge, the northeast portion of the bridge, is an old park called Elsner Park. It hasn't been a park; it was sold to Amstad years ago, but a lot of community - oh, what are those little books of maps that get put out every year? - Thomas Guides show it as a community park.

We asked permission and got it, as long as we didn't let the cows out of the field, and it's a very small field. So we had some people guard the cows. We used their driveway and dropped people off. We had a shuttle, and I think the first year we went to Cook Park. So we had a shuttle where people would then drive their cars down to Cook Park, and we would drive down, pick them up and bring them back, so the cars were permanently parked down at Cook. Then

they would have their lunches there. So Elsnor Park, which was actually owned by the Amstads, to Cook Park.

M.O'R.: It sounds like Amstad was supportive enough of your idea. Was that generally true of farmers along the river?

C.C.: I can't tell you about a lot of them; I can tell you what it is today. I don't think back then we were really - it was the first time so there weren't a lot of farmers who were aware of what's going on, and it's very difficult when you're a farmer to have anything of interest other than what affects your land, and this route takes you through - this route is an excellent route because it takes you out of farmland into developed area, and what we found is from one bridge to another usually is about six miles, somewhere between five and six miles. The route from Scholls to the Chamberg Bridge is the longest, and that's about 11 miles, if not a bit more. But on a standard they run about five, six miles. So there weren't a lot of farmers who actually farmed down to the water's edge that knew or cared, and that was an issue we really never thought of. We had no plans of stopping at anybody's property.

We did stop and ask the community of Rivermede, which I think is around 136th off of Beef Bend Road, where the power lines are, if they would mind if we used their dock area as a rest station, and they said sure, it was okay. I understand there was some dispute there and still is today amongst the community members. They don't want to encourage people using the river, and what it's developed into today is nobody wants to encourage anyone to use the river. Another Catch-22.

M.O'R.: Not even the Riverkeepers, huh?

C.C.: Well, the Riverkeepers will encourage people to use the river, but one of the priorities is private property rights, and a lot of the farmers today complain, because I've gone and spoken to

a lot of groups, particularly farm groups, and what they do is they say, "Well, we don't want people trespassing. My pump got shot out." And they'll have, you know, a 60- or \$70,000 irrigation pump that will be riddled with bullets.

And we try and explain to them that it's not the folks who are using the river that do that. People don't go down the river in a canoe with a shotgun or a rifle just so they can shoot up pumps. It's people who are coming in either by motorboat or by ground, just hiking in because the area is developing so quickly and you're getting subdivisions close to farms now. You know, we have a surplus of subdivisions, but somehow we don't have a surplus of parks anymore. They've neglected to develop the parks, so these folks instead are going onto the farmers' lands, they're walking through orchards, and that's how people's pumps are getting shot out. So there's a very serious concern on the part of the farmers and anyone who owns property along the river that if folks go in and use the river, they're going to damage personal property.

Now, I lived along the river at that time, and I lived next to Elsner Park where the first put-in was on the river trip, and we've had boats that we've lost, but I've found poachers on the other side, and they will park their cars at the Chamberg Bridge, and then they'll come in and they'll poach duck. It's a nice straight stretch of river, and when the ducks came in they were shooting them, but they weren't catching the ducks afterwards. They have no dogs to retrieve the ducks. They were just killing them for the fun of it.

And one instance when these folks saw me, they tried to hide behind trees. Well, you can't get a 200-pound man with a gut on him and yellow rain gear trying to hide behind a foot in diameter fir tree; it just doesn't work. So these guys aren't very bright, and there seems to be an overabundance of them.

So you can't - the farmers have a real serious concern; I don't know, though, that they understand that if you have - let me back up a little bit. You know they have the organizations now, Take Back the Night. You know, people will say, "Well, I'm not going to go out on the street because I'm going to get mugged," when in reality if everybody went out on the street who was good, the bad guys wouldn't have a chance to be bad, you know. So it's let's put people who are good on the river, and let's make the river known as a source of community and a source of recreation, and then you're not going to have the bad guys with the guns and the destructive play out there because they're not going to have the privacy to commit their crimes. So that's sort of the round-about reasoning that we've used.

M.O'R.: Well, it sounds like that first float was pretty successful, then?

C.C.: It was extremely successful. Extremely successful.

The next year STOP chose not to sponsor it because it really wasn't directly involved with the issue of the roadway, and my involvement with STOP was winding down, so I had been involved with them for two years. And you can just sit in a booth so many times at a fair or go to so many board meetings and you get tired of them after a while.

So on the second year I decided to do it myself, and I put together packages, books, and tried to solicit people to become involved with the situation or the event. So I put together a presentation, and I sent it to organizations such as USA, Audubon, to a variety of different environmental and private - REI, private organizations. And we actually got nibbles. USA was more than happy to be involved. But you had folks like REI who said, "You know, this is perfect for us, but we don't want to become involved if USA is going to become involved."

M.O'R.: REI said that?

C.C.: Yeah. And we had the Sierra Club, it ended up with Mike Houck helped negotiate with REI on that second year - no, that was the third year. The second year it was the Sierra Club who refused to participate if USA did. So I said, "Okay, I'm not going to invite USA to join, to be involved." And wouldn't you know it but the Sierra Club never bothered to participate even after they said they would. So I learned a lesson in the second year. I learned that you can't play these games that these people play. Either the principle of the activity is significant enough that everybody wants to be involved, or you don't have them be involved. But you can't say, "Well, if this one does, then I won't, or if that one does, I won't." The idea is, you know, everyone flushes a toilet in Washington County and has a vote, well, then you're responsible. You can't just blame USA for being responsible if you have a vote, because they are there because of elected officials.

There originally was an organization called the Tualatin Riverkeepers, which was started by Jack Churchill to help clean up the river, and the organization was not incorporated but it was started as a name and ended up involving, I think, three people, perhaps a few more, to file a lawsuit against the Unified Sewerage Agency, and that lawsuit came about I think in 1989, September, something like that. It actually went through and won, and then the Riverkeepers sort of went by the by. Jack had not been involved when we started Tualatin River Discovery Day. Jack was not really active on the river anymore.

In his place was Carl Cook, who was also one of the original people that formed that organization, and on the first year I met Carl and said, "Okay. Will you participate? Can you act as guides, provide service?" and he said yes. And then come canoe day, a week before the Tualatin River Discovery Day, I called him

and his phone had been disconnected. So we had no Riverkeepers there. We had no one of the original organization who claimed to be able - and it turned out that Carl had moved to Seattle for a job opportunity, but he hadn't bothered to tell us.

[End of Tape 3, Side 1]