

CATHY CLAIRE

TAPE 2, Side 1

August 22, 1996

M.O'R.: This is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society continuing the interview Cathy Claire, and today's interview is taking place at the Oregon Historical Society, and it's August 22nd.

Well, as I said, I think when we left off last time you were telling me stories of your experience in Salt Lake City working for Vista. So why don't we pick it up at that point? What did you do after that part of your life was over? What came next?

C.C.: I left Vista in December of '69. I got tired of the bureaucratic mess that the organization seemed to be in.

I had met a fellow named Andy Gold, who was the son of Shirley Gold, a local representative, and together we traveled to Hawaii and spent a month backpacking on Kauai and Oahu in places that then it cost a dollar to get a permit which would allow you to camp on the entire island. You registered initially, you got your permit, and then you could pretty much camp anywhere you wanted as long as it wasn't on private land.

We camped at Hanama Bay, which is not allowed anymore. Now it's just a park. But we met people from all over the world, and we spent a few weeks there. We spent a week on Waikiki where we rented a small apartment for \$75 a week, which again you can't do anymore.

Went on to Kauai and walked the roadways. Found that there was a lot of hostility towards whites, but more so to whites who appeared to be hippies. We went and camped on a beach, and one morning were woken by a very angry owner of the property. You know, "What are you people doing here stealing my shells?" And we

talked to him for a bit, and once he understood that we had not picked up any shells that were whole and that we had only looked at broken shells, he was so startled that he allowed us to stay there for as long as we wanted because we were not like the other people who were stealing from him.

M.O'R.: He was selling the shells to tourists or ...

C.C.: I don't know as much that he was selling shells as he was just more concerned with - I mean, this was a native Hawaiian who had felt invaded, you know, by whites coming over into his area and taking things that he felt were his. It's been my experience with meeting other Hawaiians that it isn't necessarily taking or selling, but rather just this is a gift from God and it's here; just leave it alone. It's where it belongs. And we didn't try to disrupt what was there, and so he I guess figured that we weren't dishonoring his property and allowed us to stay.

We ate at sugar cane shacks for sugar cane workers, where you would pay 50 cents for a meal. So we got a lot of good experiences that most tourists don't have.

Spent about a month there, a bit more than a month, and ended up back in Oregon in February of 1970. Arrived in a bikini, a bikini coverup and a backpack in February. Hitchhiked to his parents' house. They lent me a hundred dollars. With that hundred dollars I found a furnished single room apartment on 12th and Division and moved in. Went to secondhand stores and got some winter clothing, which his grandmother helped adjust so they would fit me, and went looking for work.

Got work at Lloyd Center in a boutique. So I would walk from 12th and Division to Lloyd Center, work all day, and walk home.

That not being the greatest job in the world, and wanting to aspire towards something else, I moved into a program, was accepted into a program called CETA, which I don't remember much about.

Another government program to help educate and employ people who didn't have skills, even though I had a two-year degree from Casanovia College in early childhood education, I needed more advanced schooling.

They paid my tuition to PCC, and I worked for them. Started working at Portland Children's Center, which is about 70th, thereabouts, and Powell, which was one of the first schools in Portland for handicapped children. It was parents - it has another name now - parents who basically had the kids, children of all sorts of disabilities. They had a workplace there as well, so the older kids felt - or older people felt as if they could earn a living, and they would wash the little rubber covers for the earphones for the airlines because back then it's when you had free movies when you flew, and so they handed out these headphones. And they would come back to the school, and things would be washed and reassembled by these people.

When you saw these children, for me it was a shocker the first day seeing these children come out of this workplace. You really saw what I think the Medieval people talked about as far as hunchbacks and deformed kids. A lot of them were Downs Syndromes, but some of them would be just giant, especially the fellows would be giant and have almost no intelligence, be extremely limited.

Not all of the children that were there were retarded. There was one little girl who had been severely abused. I was fortunate in that I could touch her, and this is a gift she did not allow very many people. Her father, to discipline her, used to hold her head in a bucket of water till she passed out, and she had numerous scars on her body where he would put cigarettes out on her skin. She had been so severely abused that it affected all aspects of her life, and she wouldn't wash she was so terrified of water. The staff felt themselves lucky if they could take a damp washcloth and

wash her face on occasion. And of course because of that, she smelled. But she was a nice person, and I liked her and got to know her.

I taught a little boy how to dance. He felt left out because he was in a wheelchair, but I taught him that just because you're in a wheelchair doesn't mean you can't move your body, what parts of your body you can. He lived with his grandmother on a houseboat in Portland.

From there I went to Martin Luther King Elementary School and worked for a year as an assistant in the kindergarten. That was interesting in that the kindergarten teacher, who did not have a degree at that point, was a terribly prejudiced person. She didn't like these kids.

M.O'R.: Let me back you up for just a second.

C.C.: Okay.

M.O'R.: Why did you leave the other place?

C.C.: To advance to a better - it was still under the same program, but it was a different ...

M.O'R.: Oh, that's right. It was a CETA job.

C.C.: It was still part of the CETA [program], but it was a bit more of an advance, and for the experience.

M.O'R.: Those jobs didn't pay terribly well, as I recall?

C.C.: No, they didn't. And worked at Martin Luther King Elementary School for a year.

M.O'R.: And you said that the kindergarten teacher you worked with ...

C.C.: ... just really didn't like the kids that were black. The kids that were mulatto or mixed heritage had a much easier time.

She was let go, and I was for the summer after she was let go I was the librarian for their summer school and taught a class on

rumors and - oh, not fairy tales. What is it? What is it when - legends. And so we tried to work around how they could create I guess today you would call it urban legends, how they could create their own legends and what the difference between a legend and a rumor is and just how stories can travel. And we compared how things were similar, and you can have a story about a mountain here that might be the same story that people you'd never met had about their mountains.

I left there to go back to school full-time at Portland State. I was admitted into a program where I would get my master's degree and step past my bachelor's. However, when I started the funds had been pulled, so I just continued going to school off and on. There were times when I was a good student, and there were times when I was a lousy student. I must have been 22 or 23 and went for the next several years going to school off and on.

M.O'R.: Did you continue to have contact with - what was his name again? Gold's son?

C.C.: Andy Gold? No. No. I think the relationship lasted about three or four years, and past then I haven't.

M.O'R.: How well did you know his parents?

C.C.: Oh, very well. Very well.

M.O'R.: Do you still stay in touch with them?

C.C.: No. I haven't. His dad, I think, has passed away. I know his grandparents have.

M.O'R.: How would you describe - well, first of all Andy. What kind of person was he?

C.C.: A sports-minded person, a very active person. A Reed College dropout. The last time I heard, he had married. He was for a while interested in carpentry and had been working as a carpenter, which I would never have thought he could have stood still for that long.

His brother, Dana, was I believe a graduate of Oregon State and very interested in radio. I think he spent a summer on the fire patrol for the Forest Service, and I last saw him, I think, in '76 or '77, somewhere around there. Maybe as late as '78. I don't recall.

M.O'R.: And what would you say about Shirley?

C.C.: They're wonderful, caring, intelligent people. When I knew Shirley she was involved with the teachers' union and trying to form a teachers' union in Portland, and we worked with them - you know, addressing envelopes. It would be very common to sit around the table after dinner and just fill out envelopes, one after another, trying to mount a campaign to persuade people along your lines.

But a very intelligent, very pleasant person.

M.O'R.: I interrupted you. You said you were going to Portland State, you were a lousy student some of the time, I guess ...

C.C.: Sometimes, and dropped out of school. Went to school on grants because I was a single woman in my mid-20's and there were grants available. So I finished my undergraduate work at Portland State not owing anybody any money, which was pleasant.

M.O'R.: And was this still in education?

C.C.: I ended up graduating with a degree in social science, general studies / social science. I did that on a dare, which I sort of regret now.

I went back to school and was a biology major, and that's where my heart still remains today, as a parasitologist. That's my first love.

What I did is I would go to school; I took a lot of geology, worked for a while in the geology lab, and would pick bugs, pick shark teeth specimens out of the samples for a fellow who's now the head of - oh, gosh, they have an archeology museum here - not

archeology, a fossil museum, and his name is Steven and I don't remember his last name. I worked with him picking bugs out of - for his samples for his doctorate.

Ended up dropping out of school and going into the title insurance business, which has - title insurance is different because it's really historical. It's a great opportunity to learn a lot of history about the city.

M.O'R.: Really?

C.C.: Oh, yeah. I work with maps on a regular basis that are from the 1800's.

M.O'R.: Do you use resources here, by any chance?

C.C.: No, they have duplications. Their maps are almost entirely duplicated, so a few years back the State came into all of the title insurance companies and took away all of their older records and took them down to Archives. So some of them are just great. I get to read the old documents. So it's not uncommon for me to have to do work in the late 1800's and forward.

M.O'R.: In the title insurance business?

C.C.: In the title insurance business, yeah.

M.O'R.: Which company did you work for?

C.C.: When I first started, I started for Safeco, which then became Chicago. But I've worked for a variety of other companies as well.

M.O'R.: Did you work for First American by any chance?

C.C.: I worked for First American before they became First American, when it was Title Insurance Company of Oregon. Do you have friends that work at First American?

M.O'R.: My brother is the current C.E.O. of First American.

C.C.: Oh, he is? Okay. I worked there for a while. Was a secretary for Ida Berg, who was one of the owners of the company.

A woman who owned a company back in the days when women didn't own companies.

M.O'R.: This is First American?

C.C.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Or the Title Insurance Company of Oregon.

C.C.: Yeah, before it was First American. Before it was purchased.

What happened is this title insurance gave me a talent, so I would work for a year and take a year off, work for a year and take a year off. And it's stood by me rather well.

M.O'R.: So you're still in the title insurance business?

C.C.: I'm still in the - it seems to be the place I always end up falling back to.

I took a year off at one point and lived on the north tip of Sauvies Island. I took a year off and lived at Camp Onalie, in Molalla and worked in Wemmie at a bookstore.

The place that I lived on Sauvies Island was the old lighthouse keeper's house which isn't there anymore. The State burnt it to the ground because it was becoming a hazard. We put in 18 windows when I moved in there and a new roof. It was at an Indian site called Warrior Rock, which for years had been - probably close to 2,000 years had been a meeting place for Native Americans in this region.

We would find on a regular basis Indian point arrowheads and at one point found the rim of a prehistoric bowl - not prehistoric, obviously, because we found it, so I guess that makes it historic, but a bowl that had been carved out of basalt and used probably to grind things in.

It was interesting to meet some of the natives whose families had lived there for years. One woman who remembered the milk boats would come twice a week, and that was the only access that you had

to the property. There were some points out there where during World War I and II there had been munitions factories. Having people point out the oldest trees on the island. Knowing or watching small lakes that would fill in with sediment and disappear that had been there for years and watching the changes was great.

The only access we would have would be driving to the end of the road and then walking three miles in to the house. There was a bunkhouse where the Navy would come and stay while they were doing maintenance on the facility, and then there was a three-bedroom Victorian home.

M.O'R.: On the site as well?

C.C.: On the site, which is where I lived, and that was a wood-burning central heating furnace, which I had never seen before.

They at one time had had electricity, but every flood season they would lose their power, so after a while they gave up. I'm not sure what happened, but they ...

M.O'R.: Were you renting it from the Navy?

C.C.: I was renting it for \$5 from a local attorney named Pozzi. I can't remember his first name.

M.O'R.: How did he happen to have control of that property?

C.C.: This is the part I don't recall. He ended up purchasing it during the 1964 flood - is that the Columbus Day sort of - there was some big flooding in that time period?

M.O'R.: Yeah, it wasn't Columbus Day, that was '62, but yeah, there was a big flood in '64. That was the only other time I remember them sandbagging Front Avenue.

C.C.: Yes. So he purchased it during the '64 flood. He got in a boat with the owner of the property, who I believe purchased it from the Navy - or the Coast Guard. It was the last manned - what I've been told is it was the last manned inland lighthouse,

and they went to automation and sold the property. It was approximately an acre-and-a-half. It was surrounded by approximately 2,000 acres of Oregon Fish & Wildlife property.

So eventually he wanted to sell it. It should have remained an historic site, but Fish & Wildlife is more into managing, and they got tired of the people who would come in off the boats and vandalize, so they burnt it to the ground.

M.O'R.: Did you live there alone?

C.C.: I lived there alone for a while and then went back to work and needed someone else to be there just to keep track of everything, so I had an arrangement with a roommate, a part-time roommate. We had a place in town, and I would live out there for four days and she would live in town for four days, and then we would switch, and we both had part-time jobs. So I would work on the days that she wasn't working and vice versa. It worked rather well.

We ended up - someone broke in and stole just about everything we owned, and at that point I had not sunk down any roots, so I kept moving on to something else. Moved back to town, probably back into the title insurance business again because that was where the most money I could get was.

M.O'R.: So when you were on Sauvies Island, you weren't working during the first part of it; was that right?

C.C.: Correct.

M.O'R.: How would you spend your days?

C.C.: Well, you know, there was a lot of work to be done at the house and at the bunkhouse itself in restoring. Also, you know, you would get up - there was no running water or electricity, but there was plumbing. So you would get up and fetch buckets in from the river, and depending on how cold it was, you'd toss in some bleach and then you'd bathe, and then rush over to the fire

and light it and try and get warm again. We were there during winter. The best turkey I've ever cooked was in a wood stove, and that Christmas we spent - we had to bring everything in, including the Christmas tree, by boat.

When I moved out, I moved out by amphibious landing craft which one of the neighbors had. It made it a lot easier than traversing the roadway which would wash out periodically.

M.O'R.: What was it about the place that appealed to you? Was it the isolation and the solitude?

C.C.: I've always enjoyed the isolation and the solitude, and I have something for water; there's something in me that requires a body of water close by, and here was one at my doorstep. It's a beautiful spot, just beautiful.

It was interesting to have the sheriff tell me that if I had any problems and had to kill anyone, to make sure that I killed them in the living room and that they bled there a while; that if I had to kill someone and it wasn't in my living room - in defense, not just go out and kill somebody, but being a single woman living out like that, and I did have problems with drunken fishermen and people who wouldn't leave me alone. I had a double barrel shotgun that I would use on a regular basis just to let folks know that I was there and I had it. You know, if they hear someone with a gun, they tend to stay away. And I had a dog that would bite.

So the fellow tells me, "If you have to kill somebody or shoot somebody and they end up being dead, don't call me. Just put the body here." And then he showed me a place where he recommended that I dump a body, and he was quite serious, because the currents there would have taken it down - this being on the Columbia - would have dragged it down to a lower set of currents, and then taken it miles and miles downriver. So by the time this body came to the

surface and was located, there would have been no way that they could have identified who'd done it.

And in fact when they broke into my house and we called the Sheriff's Department, we were in Columbia County, the sheriff refused to come to the house, and we had to meet him at the other end of the island, which was about 18, 20 miles away.

M.O'R.: Why did he do that?

C.C.: Because it was too far. It wasn't worth their while.

M.O'R.: Oh, I see. Just too much bother.

C.C.: Right. And they figured there's no way they're going to find anyone.

M.O'R.: So looking at the scene wouldn't give them anything?

C.C.: No. Someone would come in by boat and do something and then leave. I mean, there was no way -. Yeah, so that was their way of dealing with it.

M.O'R.: So did you know the sheriff fairly well?

C.C.: No. Someone introduced him. Someone on the island introduced me to him, and this is when he gave me the advice.

M.O'R.: What was his name?

C.C.: I don't even recall. I don't recall. It's been too long ago.

M.O'R.: Why the emphasis on the living room?

C.C.: I think not just the living room, but make sure they bled in the house, you know, just so that there would be no doubt whatsoever that this person was intruding on you, it wasn't some casual meeting, you know, that got out of hand. Totally bizarre.

M.O'R.: Yeah.

C.C.: Different people think in different ways.

M.O'R.: But you never had to carry things to that extreme?

C.C.: No, I didn't. I've never had that sort of a problem.

M.O'R.: But you said you did have some unpleasant encounters with drunken fishermen and the like?

C.C.: Well, someone stole our boat. There were some fisherman on one occasion that wanted to come up and visit the house, and I said no. "Well, we're going to come up anyway."

There were people, "Oh, do you live here alone?" You know, those sorts of folks are always offset by the group of Audubon people that were hiking along and didn't know the house was there and were totally surprised, and you'd offer them crackers and grapes, and they have a picnic, and it leaves them with a pleasant memory. So yeah, there's all sorts of different ways.

It's nice living in an area so steeped with history. Nice living without real close neighbors and having more serious things to think about than getting to work at exactly eight o'clock, and you know, the noise next door at your neighbor's house or who did what on television. It was a pleasant life.

M.O'R.: When you found these artifacts, did you actually have to excavate or were they just ...

C.C.: Oh, no. They get washed to the surface by the rains or the floods. No, there are farmers on the island who have buried their Indian burial grounds. They've literally taken bulldozers and their farm equipment and covered them up. The trespassers became so thick back then with people going in and taking things that weren't theirs or looking for them. You know, it just wasn't a good thing. So I'm sure if you went there and talked to any of the oldtimers at this point, you know, they could tell you spots that no one else knows about, just because they don't want to be invaded.

M.O'R.: Now, the part of the island that has roads on it I assume was popular then, as it is now?

C.C.: Oh, yeah. Some of the neighbors would have problems, people parking on their lawns. And then you'd go out and ask them to move - I know my closest neighbor, which was three miles away, had a gun pulled on her. You know, "You're not going to tell me, blah, blah, blah," that sort of thing. They'd find bodies out there on occasion. I don't know if it was drug-related at that point, but probably.

M.O'R.: I was going to say, these sound like stories of the 90's rather than the 70's.

C.C.: Yeah, they do, don't they? You know, when I first moved here and lived on 12th and Division, one neighbor across the hall - or there was a couple there, they were heroin addicts. And she stopped her heroin, but not before her baby had become addicted, and when she gave birth her baby was addicted and he ended up stealing the baby, and this made the headlines, you know. This fellow had become greatly sought after because he took his child.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

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TAPE 2, Side 2

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C.C.: He took his child who was addicted to heroin and was fleeing. They arrested the wife in the hospital and eventually he turned himself in - because the baby got sicker and sicker - and turned the child in as well.

The other neighbor, who was next door, was a topless dancer and worked at the Quill, which is off of Powell. I don't know what it's called now, but it was some topless joint.

So it was certainly an education meeting those kinds of people because I had been raised in very middle to upper middle class lifestyle, and meeting these folks, they were nice but they were a bit weird, you know. It was a different education.

M.O'R.: Did you actually get to know them?

C.C.: I would babysit for one of them, for the woman who was the topless dancer. Ended up I figured out she was going into my place when I wasn't there and borrowing my clothing. I don't know how she managed to get a key, but she did.

Not well enough to maintain any long-term relationships.

So I ended up working and going to school and working and going to school, making friends, living in sort of communal households, which was typical of the 70's. Eventually graduated from school.

M.O'R.: With a degree in social science?

C.C.: With a degree in social science.

M.O'R.: Now, you said that was on a dare?

C.C.: It was on a dare. I was going to school to become a parasitologist and had even spoken to people down in Corvallis about a doctorate program and found out that there was only one

official parasitologist in the entire state. Ended up coming back and was in my final year, and someone dared me to apply to law school. So I said okay, and in my final year ended up taking a lot of pre-law stuff. I hadn't been the greatest student, and applied to law school, and they took me. It's not supposed to work that way. You're not supposed to get into law school when you apply to only one law school. You're supposed to be nervous. You're supposed to put out lots of applications. I put out one application, it was at Lewis & Clark, and they accepted me.

I found myself suddenly going to Lewis & Clark as a full-time student. They accepted me full-time. There were some major screw-ups in the beginning. I had applied as a full-time but then changed that to a part-time student, night student, which is really three-quarter time, so I could work, and they got that screwed up and accepted me as a full-time student. At the last minute they managed to change it, and I had to work three part-time jobs and go to law school full-time. And I gained 35 pounds, which I've never lost. While I had been kayaking and helping teach kayaking and an active bicyclist and had a very different lifestyle prior to that, it just changed me. Changed my lifestyle, changed everything.

I found when it came time for finals instead of studying I put out job applications, because I just - I hated it. Took the finals, didn't pass, because I didn't study, and took a job in Roseburg, back in the title insurance business.

From Roseburg went to Astoria for two years and worked there.

M.O'R.: In title insurance, also?

C.C.: In title insurance. Applied for a position here in Portland and they accepted me. Took it. Moved into a house in Southeast Portland, lived by myself. Got tired of living in Portland and looked for a roommate situation, and found a home on the Tualatin River to share.

M.O'R.: So this is the first connection with the Tualatin?

C.C.: First connection with the Tualatin. And moved I think in 1986 or '87 to a place on Elsner Road, which has a Sherwood address but was in the King City voting district, and paid Tigard school taxes. So it's one of those unincorporated spots. And ended up sharing a house.

M.O'R.: Had you been very familiar with Washington County at that point?

C.C.: No. I'd spent very little time in Washington County. And what was very surprising was when I had been looking, moving from Astoria to here a year before and looking for a place to live, I had called this same telephone number, and they had a male dog and so did I, so it wouldn't work out. A year later they were looking for a roommate once again, and their male dog had passed away, so I ended up moving in.

One woman was a waitress, and there was another who was an artist. The artist got married, and the waitress and I remained roommates for another five years, until she got married and she left.

M.O'R.: And what was her name?

C.C.: Carol Adair, and now she is Carol Clayton. The people who own the property are Jim and Lucy Caton, and it's a retired Presbyterian minister and his wife. We rented 2,000 square feet on the upstairs, and they had an area downstairs of approximately the same size.

M.O'R.: Big house, then.

C.C.: Big house. Plus a barn, full shop, five acres, and on the river. We paid \$500 a month, and rent there now is \$650. The Catons - Jim would be a fisherman part-time, part-time carpenter, and they also lead tours all over the world. So we've stayed friends.

M.O'R.: And what year did you say this was that you moved there?

C.C.: I think it was in 1987. Then sometime around 1989 there was a knock on the door by a fellow who was quite filthy. Turns out he was a local farmer, and that's expected, who handed me a flyer and said, "We're having a meeting. They want to put a freeway through your house."

And I said, "Oh. Well, I'll be there." And went to this meeting, and it was the beginning of STOP, Sensible Transportation Options for People. There was a plan and had been a plan on the books to put a major freeway through the unincorporated portions of Washington County connecting Sherwood first to I-5 and then Sherwood to Hillsboro, and this would be a large bypass. There are people today who are still fighting to have it; even though every study they've done said it would not be cost effective, they still want it.

M.O'R.: Would it terminate in Hillsboro, or is this the project that also, then, would continue up over the mountains and across the Columbia?

C.C.: This is the one that would continue across the Columbia. The Port of Portland, who has always been one of my clients, was just adamant that no, they wouldn't allow it. At one point they wanted this to go through the Rivergate area.

Then their next plan for bringing it through would be through Sauvies Island, but the spot that it would go on Sauvies Island would bring it right into one of a number of wildlife refuges as well, so there's been a lot of, you know, bandying about as to where the exact location should be.

M.O'R.: And through Forest Park, also.

C.C.: Yeah, through Forest Park, as well. Yeah. It's a disaster.

The main objective, I think personally, for putting this free-way, it would be nice and it would be convenient, but the damage it would do in Washington County would be - it would be that much easier to extend the urban growth boundary to meet that roadway, and then everything between King City and that roadway, the boundary of the roadway, would become developed.

In the five years that I was on Elsner Road, they put in eight new subdivisions, and that's sort of crazy to go from a country road to eight subdivisions in that short of a period. They're just ground hungry out there for development.

M.O'R.: Did you take advantage of your being on the Tualatin?

C.C.: Oh, sure.

M.O'R.: You did things associated with the river during that period?

C.C.: Yeah. It's a beautiful river. It's an incredibly beautiful river. It allows you an opportunity to feel that you're all by yourself and there's nowhere around.

Have you been on the river?

M.O'R.: Yes. Last fall was my first time actually on the river, and I floated from Cook Park down to the dam there just below Lake Oswego.

C.C.: That's a long trip, but that's one of the most populated areas. If you come up in the farm country and take a trip there, once you're on the river you really feel like you're in a wilderness. You know, you don't know that you're surrounded by that many people.

M.O'R.: Well, we are running out of time today, but of course I'd like to continue, so we'll make another appointment to do that. And thank you very much.

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]