ELEANOR PHINNEY

Tape 1, Side 1

August 13, 1996

M.O'R.: This is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society starting an interview with Eleanor Phinney, and today's interview is taking place at her home on the banks of the Tualatin River. It's August 13, 1996.

Well, why don't you first of all just tell me a little bit about your background, Eleanor. Where were you born and when?

E.P.: I was born in Eagle Rock, California in 1923.

M.O'R.: Okay. And you came here to the Tualatin in 1968, was it?

E.P.: Yes.

M.O'R.: And before that where did you live?

E.P.: Well, we lived seven years in Portland. This was on my husband's retirement from the Navy. And when we were in Pensacola during flight training, I had bought this book, *How to be Self-Sufficient on One Acre*. Oh, my land, it changed our lives!

When he retired, we moved to Portland and thought, "Well, wouldn't it be nice to have some acreage?" And we were very lucky to find this place. So in 1968 we moved down here.

M.O'R.: And were you able to exist on one acre?

E.P.: Oh, good heavens, we had five head of cattle out there at one time. We've had two different horses, but on this small an acreage, it isn't fair to a horse. We've had goats. We've had sheep, and the sheep drove us crazy. Every time we came out they would make this horrible noise, "Pay attention to me and feed me." So they didn't last very long.

And we grew enough vegetables - good heavens, we kept having to buy freezers to take care of all the vegetables. And we had

pheasants; I think we had 13 varieties of pheasants at one time. We would get the ringnecks from Oregon State and bring them up and then release them. Well, that got us started, and so we started collecting other kinds of pheasants. And it's just been an adventure living here.

You see, we have enough flat land above the river to do things with an orchard and vineyard and all that sort of thing, and then there's the riverfront.

Shortly after we moved here the river froze, and my son and a friend of his went down there with skates and a rope and whirled my husband around - oh, it was wild. And of course the ice broke! But my husband did survive that. But the river actually froze two times since we've been here in '68. One time was a very shallow freeze.

M.O'R.: But that wasn't the time they went skating, was it?

E.P.: Oh, that was crazy.

M.O'R.: Now, you moved around from place to place when your husband was still in the service, then; is that right?

E.P.: Oh, we lived all over. Twice in Hawaii, Minnesota - that's where the ice skating started - and my last daughter was born there.

M.O'R.: Actually, let me just draw you back even a little bit further in time, here, before we do start talking about the Tualatin seriously. Tell me a little bit about your parents. What did they do for a living?

E.P.: My mother had her Master's in music and English. She was a teacher.

M.O'R.: In Eagle Rock?

E.P.: Eagle Rock, California, mm-hmm. And my brother became the principal of the same school that we all went to and that my mother taught at, Eagle Rock High School. And my father - they

were divorced when I was about two, and he lived in Detroit and was a rare book dealer. He built libraries for people and all that.

M.O'R.: But you lived with your mother, then, during your growing up?

E.P.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: Well, anyway, I just wanted to get that in for the record, too.

So you moved here in '68. What was the name of the book again that you said prompted your buying this property?

E.P.: Oh, *How to Be Self-Sufficient on One Acre.*

M.O'R.: Right. Okay. So you really - had either of you had any experience with livestock or raising vegetables?

E.P.: Heavens, no. Oh, my husband was a Texan, and he had always had horses, and highly disapproved of having horses on this small an acreage. But we had a heck of a lot of fun with that horse.

M.O'R.: So you said the river froze over shortly after you got here, then?

E.P.: Yeah, it wasn't too long before that happened, and I remember crawling up on the bank, and when the electricity goes out you have to check things. You have a hand-dug well, and so we had to go down there and check on the well.

M.O'R.: And where is the well? Is it -

E.P.: It's down on the bank of the river.

M.O'R.: So is it - it's pumping groundwater, though, not Tualatin water, I assume?

E.P.: This I don't really know, but the clarity of the water - it's very, very good water, and we've had no illnesses that would be reflected on water. It is close to the river. During flood time, it does get discolored and gets the big Clorox treatment.

M.O'R.: Oh, that's how you deal with it when it gets a little discolored?

E.P.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: Had you known much about the Tualatin before you bought this property?

E.P.: No.

M.O'R.: Was that an attractive feature to you, though that it was located on the banks of the river?

E.P.: Well, I think I had a son-in-law I didn't like very much, and the confines of a house on a lot, entertaining him when they came to visit, really distressed me. And we had had this idea of getting acreage, and so I started looking around and got a realtor. I think this was the second house that she told us about, and we just fell for it immediately. Here there's enough room for anybody to do anything they want and be alone or be together.

We've had sports, baseball out here, croquet. At one time we made a nine-hole golf course. Of course, you approached it from some of the same points for different holes, but it was a nice chip-and-put. And volleyball, either out in the pasture or up here on this side lawn. Croquet. Of course we have basketball hoops up. And swimming, and a Tarzan rope. And we have a dog.

And I'm on my third boat. The first one sunk while I was working, and the canoe blew away in the big storm this winter. So now we have a rowboat, and of course rafts. But the river's been fun. I mean, this is like a dream. I have felt very blessed by having this property, and staying here 28 years kind of means I like it.

M.O'R.: Well, obviously at least in recent years you've been interested in the river and some of the other issues around the river.

E.P.: Well, the freeway was being built when we moved here.

M.O'R.: It was under construction already?

E.P.: Under construction, with all the dust and noise and everything.

M.O'R.: And could you hear it from here, from the property?

E.P.: No, not necessarily.

M.O'R.: Although I can hear the freeway in the background right now.

E.P.: You can hear the freeway. Depends on which way the wind is blowing.

M.O'R.: Sure, that makes sense. Well, I wanted to ask you when you first started to get involved, let's say, with the river?

E.P.: Well, the Pauls came visiting, Roz and Pete Paul came up to visit their new neighbor, and they're very much environmentally inclined, and I found out I was, too, and so they invited me to the homeowners' meeting.

M.O'R.: You found out; you didn't know before this?

E.P.: Well, I'd always gardened, but I wasn't too conscious of the effect like the freeway would have on the environment. So all of the information, you know, started developing, and shortly after I got involved with the homeowners - and of course they were fighting wall-to-wall housing. Well, I happened to be out working in the yard with a portable radio, and I heard Ian McHargue, and he was talking about land use planning.

I called Gill's and got the last book they had, *Designing with Nature* by Ian McHargue. And I read it, and then I was invited to go to a seminar, a landscape seminar at Oregon State. The last professor - black beard, sat on top of the table instead of standing at the mike, started out with poetry, and then he went into designing with nature, in harmony with nature.

Well, it's all logical. It costs less to work with nature than to work against. While you can't control population, at least

you can put them where the facilities to take care of population can be handled most economically. That's a funny way to put it.

M.O'R.: So it was this initial contact with the Pauls that got you interested in some of the issues?

E.P.: Of the Valley, mm-hmm. Then the professor did a model study on the constraints of ecology.

M.O'R.: I don't think we've named him yet.

E.P.: Professor Charles Dedirader of Oregon State.

M.O'R.: Right. You told me about him earlier, but we hadn't named him yet in this conversation.

Go ahead.

E.P.: Well, he and his students would up doing a topographical map about the size of a ping pong table showing all the different constraints, and they toted it all over Oregon, and it educated the people to what ecology is all about and what we do to the environment, whether it's good or it's bad, we do things to the environment.

M.O'R.: So Mr. Dedirader was an influence, then, too?

E.P.: Oh, immense. I think on Oregon, all of Oregon. We worked from 1968 to 1972 on developing the model study of the Lower Tualatin, and shortly after that land use laws ...

M.O'R.: Now, when you say "we worked," who's "we"?

E.P.: Oh, his students.

M.O'R.: And was the homeowners' association involved in that, then, too?

E.P.: Well, under their auspices we presented the study to the local - we filled the high school auditorium. It was one of the best-attended citizens' meetings I've ever gone to.

M.O'R.: Can you tell me in a nutshell what the study's conclusions were about ...

E.P.: Well, actually he wouldn't tell because then that would - where to place homes. You keep the agricultural land available. You do not disturb the landscape within 30 to 50 feet of rivers and streams. They studied the animals. They found out - they interviewed all over the valley.

Incidentally, I saw a deer last week. It had lovely antlers. It was right down on Johnson Road.

You see, when we move in, we move in with our dogs and cats; that affects the animal life, all except for moles. [laughs] And oh, my goodness, how the moles do love Oregon.

We had the DEQ put in an air quality station because a new freeway was coming through, and they would be right at the very beginning to find out what effect the exhaust and the cars had on the air quality. They said that they would come back to the site again over the years, and I imagine they will because now we have a steady stream of cars on I-205, you know. It took a little while for people to do it - not too long, though.

M.O'R.: To do what?

E.P.: To start using I-205. But it wasn't very long before it was in heavy use.

M.O'R.: Just took people a while to get used to it and to discover the route, maybe.

E.P.: Yeah, we all resist change. It's inevitable, and so you just plan the best you can to make it palatable, economical.

M.O'R.: Now, the Pauls were already in the homeowners' association; is that right?

E.P.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: And you got involved it, then, too and started attending meetings, as well as doing other activities like the seminar at Oregon State?

E.P.: And the Clackamas County Commissioners recognized - see, that homeowner association is probably one of the very first of its kind in Oregon, and they were effective; they were vociferous. And the Commissioners knew them because they heard from them all the time. As a result, it was the beginning of the CPO's, the community planning organizations. That's one of the things that they actually - I think they were the seed-planters there. And they're still going.

M.O'R.: You said when Mr. [indiscernible] presented his study that the hall was packed. Was that as a result of the homeowners' efforts to get people to come out for it, or how did you get such a good audience?

E.P.: Well, there was newspaper articles about it, and of course the homeowners called everybody; we had a pretty good telephone tree. But that was amazing. There was standing room only in the West Linn high school auditorium.

M.O'R.: That sounds amazing to me, too. Sounds like a very good turnout for an event like that.

E.P.: Yeah, the map was all lit, you know, and it was a very, very good presentation.

M.O'R.: When you arrived here in 1968, that would have been like two or three years before one political event here that had to do with the Tualatin, and I believe that was in '70 or '71 that Washington County, which is right next door, slapped a building moratorium on the entire county, and there was no more construction permitted until they figured out what to do about the sewage problem that they had. Do you remember that at all at the time?

E.P.: Oh, yeah. It was inevitable.

M.O'R.: I imagine that given your own developing ideas about responsible development, it must have been of interest to you?

E.P.: Washington County was already developing very fast. They had, I think, 28 sewage treatment plants. As a result of that moratorium, they build the Durham and the Rock Creek plant, and then were able to do away with most of the other ones, the little small ones.

At that time it was laissez faire, development was where somebody had money that they wanted to put down, and they hop-scotched, and that meant the City or the County had to take out sewage, and water had to be delivered and retrieved, whatever, and it was very expensive. But when you start planning for schools, all the different services the government gives, if you plan ahead it's going to be very much more satisfactory for everybody, and it's going to cost less for the taxpayers.

M.O'R.: Did you think that the ultimate resolution that you just mentioned, namely, the construction of these two much more modern, larger plants, did you think that was a good solution to the problem that they faced at the time?

E.P.: Oh, definitely. Then they found out that they had to go to tertiary treatment, you know, to get rid of the phosphorus. They've worked real hard to do the right things out there, and it takes money, and it takes time, and it takes brains, and I think they've utilized all three.

M.O'R.: I might tend to agree that Washington County has had some good people, I think, in decision-making positions out there. Although another way of looking at it, of course, is the fact that these two new sewage plants were built took the lid off again in terms of more development, and of course there's been way, way, way more development since that time than there was up to that time, especially in recent years.

E.P.: See, transportation, now they're - it's very wise to have public transportation, but people aren't going to give up

their cars. They're still going to use them, you know, to go to work, one person in a car. But a lot of people will find out it costs them a heck of a lot less, and they can read the newspaper or a magazine and relax on the way into work. And if they're smart, they'll start thinking, "Hey, I can do this."

You should see the parking lots down here in Tualatin and Durham to get the bus; they've have to extend those parking lots. People are using the bus. And that will happen in Washington County when that light rail is through. I don't think it's happened successfully enough on the one that goes out to Gresham. I don't think people are using it as much as they should.

M.O'R.: Well, you know, when you and your husband first arrived here, I suspect that at that point in time the Tualatin may have been almost at its low point in terms of pollution, et cetera, because most of the measures that have been taken to clean up the river have been taken since that time, starting with building the new sewage plants in the early 70's, and then as you've pointed out there was more effort on that front later on with the tertiary treatment. But how did the river appear to you at that time? Did it seem like it was a terribly polluted stream?

E.P.: It was the phosphorus in it; in certain heat conditions, the river would have these lovely floating islands, green. It was so hot one time I remember my daughter saying, "I'm going to go swimming anyway," and she had a girlfriend with her from Portland. They went down and dove in, and they came up like green monsters. Solid green. It was just hilarious.

We always told the kids, "You keep your mouth shut when you're in the river, and you clean up immediately afterwards."

We used to bluestone it. Mr. Hodell used to wigwag a copper sulphate kind of a tablet through the river. Lake Oswego has poisoned that one with too much of this heavy metal stuff, and I

don't know how they could ever get rid of it. But that's Tualatin River water in the lake, and they can have as much of the Tualatin River as they want, as far as I'm concerned, because when you swim down here at the dock, you float, and all of a sudden this ice cold water comes bubbling up. It's absolutely exhilarating. And of course you float away a little bit, and then bam! here would come another one.

M.O'R.: And what is that?

E.P.: These are springs down here that are bubbling up all the time. So my husband always said, "Jeepers, they can have as much water as they want. We've got fresh water coming in down here."

M.O'R.: But it sounds like the river wasn't in the greatest of shape when you first got here if there was that much algae in it.

E.P.: There were times when radio announcements would come not to swim in it. I talked to the lady up there at Roamer's Rest, and two little girls had gotten sick - this was way back probably before the war. I don't know when it was.

The Oregonian has - she showed me clippings from *The Oregonian*, and the Health Department shut down Roamer's Rest as a result. That was pretty sad.

My daughter's father-in-law - oh, I've got that letter from him. Because we asked people to write up their experiences on the Tualatin, and it's just a magical little river. You have both the warm water down here and the cold water up at the foothills.

And as a result, I think I told you that neighbors told me Robert Ripley had made a cartoon about the Tualatin River, that it had more fish than any other river in the United States, and it was because of that warm water / cold water situation.

M.O'R.: More different varieties of fish?

E.P.: Mm-hmm, more different varieties. But I called up the Ripley organization, and they didn't know anything about it. And I had a copy of that, and I've lost it. But I did have a copy of that Robert Ripley thing.

But 1953 is the date that's interesting on the challenge for the river, which was when the Army Corps of Engineers made a big study. The farmers up west in Washington County wanted the water to get out quicker during flood time because they couldn't get their crops in. Well, I don't blame them.

So somehow the Army Corps of Engineers got involved and did this multi-million dollar study, but the people down here fought it like mad because they wanted to riprap the river. Now, they will admit today that riprapping is not a good idea. They wanted to cut through the oxbows of the river.

You see, the headwaters start about 25 miles as the crow flies, but the river wiggles around about 75 miles. That's the sign of a dying river. But since then they've brought water in from the Trask River, which is over the mountain. They tunneled through. That brings more water. A lot of Washington County, I think, gets water from Bull Run by contract. You know, this is expensive stuff when you have to import water.

Oh, the Army Corps studied alternatives of bringing water in from the Willamette through Newberg, piping sewage out over Cornelius Pass, all these kind of things. One thing I liked about the report was they cited eight different places where dams could be put in. Well, rather than a big dam, I like a lot of little dams. That means a lot of nice recreation areas, water supply, a cooler environment adjacent to it. I really like an awful lot of the features of that Army Corps 1953 report.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

E.P.: It's funny, all the people that complain about the motorboats eroding their riverbank - see, the riprap could - well, I talked to the Marine Board - no, it wasn't the Marine Board. A gentleman told me that everybody above I-5, upriver, would just as soon have a five mile speed limit; could we get the people down here? Well, we've made a couple of little attempts, but there are other things to do. But the Marine Board would support that; the only thing, there's no way to control it.

So we all go down there when we see motorboats just churning up the water like madness, we yell and scream at them to slow down. When they start shooting our ducks, we all go out there and yell and scream at them, "Don't shoot our ducks!"

M.O'R.: So you sort of self-police it?

E.P.: Yeah. We get on the telephone, you know, and tell people, "Hey, they're coming around the bend. Get out there."

M.O'R.: It seems like it's a fairly tight-knit community here, this lower Tualatin area?

E.P.: Well, I figure anybody within five miles is a neighbor. It's a common interest. It's a beautiful little valley. It was almost a forgotten valley until the freeway came through. People didn't even know it was over here. And here it is, 15 miles into Portland, 17 - my husband worked at Lloyd Center, 17 miles from my spot. Six miles up to Tualatin, six miles to Oregon City, and 12 miles to Wilsonville.

You see, you leave the urban settlement behind, and you come and here are forests and farmlands and pastures, and it's just like a different world. It's been a lovely place to live.

M.O'R.: It is lovely. Another thing that happened not too many years after you came here was that they completed work on the Scoggins Dam and built the reservoir up there. I'm wondering if you were aware that that was going on at the time and what difference, if any, you saw from your vantage point down here?

E.P.: Oh, heavens, a tremendous advantage because there was a controlled release of water available now.

I used to drive the river, you know, and get out and look at it at the bridges, and there was just hardly any water at all.

Herb Dahlquist across the river gave me a book on the steamboating, and I read that little book and saw all the pictures. How in the world did they do it? Well, the river's full of snakes. They didn't do it during August and September at the low water months. They cleaned up the river during that time. But the little sternwheelers during the other seasons of the year it was a great picnic tour to go upstream on the Tualatin River from Portland. They'd come over to Lake Oswego. I know where the landing was for the steamboat, and then go on up river, clear up to Gales Creek.

M.O'R.: It's almost unbelievable that steamboats ran that far up, isn't it?

E.P.: Well, I forget the dimensions of the steamboat, but you could have a pretty good party aboard. There's a little miniature steamboat across the river. We'll walk over there and look at it. It's just a perfect replica. It belonged to Mr. Dahlquist, and every Christmas - see, the river's full at that time, and he'd get the Christmas music going and go on up to Tualatin, as close as he could, and then carol everybody here back and forth.

M.O'R.: That sounds great.

E.P.: Oh, it was charming.

M.O'R.: So you saw the results of Scoggins mostly in better flows in the summertime, then. Did the homeowners association join the lawsuits in the 80's that forced them to get into tertiary treatment of wastewater?

E.P.: Pete Paul did. Lewis & Clark and Jack Churchill came over. Because that is probably the most known spot in the lower Tualatin is where the falls are, the dam. So Pete signed it; they needed somebody on the Tualatin. I didn't sign it because I don't believe in lawsuits and do everything possible to avoid a lawsuit, you know. So I didn't sign it. But it was very interesting. The students - again, that was a student project at Lewis & Clark. They did a wonderful job, and they won it.

M.O'R.: I know they did. So did you have much contact with Jack Churchill, then?

E.P.: Yeah. And Jack Smith, Dr. Jack Smith. He was the one that told me about the book *Calamities on the Columbia River.*

We consulted, you know. They told me - because they're the ones that knew, they explained things to me all the time.

M.O'R.: Of the two Jack Smith was the scientist, and Jack Churchill was more of a politician. So you talked to both of them about issues on the river?

E.P.: Mm-hmm. But I also talked to the Soil Conservation people, and the Fish & Wildlife people. When we first started out on the land use planning back in '68 and '72, the bureaucrats didn't know each other. They did their own work, they made their own reports, and they gathered dust. And gosh, I couldn't tell you how many bureaus I visited. But they all got together. Of course we talked to Tom McCall.

They had sort of started the ball rolling, but you didn't know which way - how to control the ball. Wisconsin was probably the first state to really know what to do on land use planning. Of

course, in land use planning you get your sewage treatment plants and your dams and your highways and your mass transit. It all evolves.

M.O'R.: You said you didn't get involved in the lawsuit because you didn't believe in lawsuits?

E.P.: Not personally, no.

M.O'R.: Did you think it was a worthwhile outcome, though, the lawsuit's outcome?

E.P.: I often wonder where the money went. I would like to know what it has funded. I'd like to see some bookkeeping on it; it would be very satisfying to know how - well, it all came out of the taxpayer's pocket anyway.

M.O'R.: Right.

E.P.: Although I wonder, do Counties have insurance companies? How do we pay these fines when the County or the City gets sued? Sooner or later it's always the taxpayer. I'm sure of it.

So I may not be able to build an apartment house out there, if I wanted to, because you know, traffic would be affected, schools would be affected. Not only that, I personally, you see, would rather have a greenbelt. England plans so beautifully in that way, and I would just like to see Oregon protecting the greenbelts from wall-to-wall housing or huge industrial complexes. There's a place for them. Transportation-wise, you tie everything together and you can place things properly so that you can save a lot of this beauty. It's just beautiful.

M.O'R.: Did Jack Smith and Churchill come here to - when you met them were they trying to recruit your support for what they were doing?

E.P.: No, they were gaining information. The dam is a very important spot. They put up flashboards in order to elevate the water so it will flow into the canal into Lake Oswego.

That was so funny. See, we usually had meetings down at the Pauls' place because it's quite a focal point.

M.O'R.: That's the homeowners association, you mean?

E.P.: No. I would bring authorities both here and to Paul's place - you know, the Fish & Wildlife people, the Soil Conservation people. Soils are really interesting. When the river's real low you can see a white strip that's about a foot high along the river, the riverbank, and then there's the decomposed basalt above that.

Again, you see, the Bretts floods way back in the end of the Ice Age affected it. The floodwaters 40 times flowed through Lake Oswego, changed the river from going into Lake Oswego to where it is now. And so they're now called the Bretts floods because that was the geologist; that *Catastrophes of the Columbia*, that's his story. So they have the different strata, and it's visible.

M.O'R.: So when people would come to talk to you about the river ...

E.P.: I would drag them here to get them conscious of the river. I just dragged the people here.

M.O'R.: And did you drag Jack Smith and Jack Churchill here, or did they come on their own accord?

E.P.: The Lake Corporation owns the dam, and the Oregon Iron and Steel, many of the plats and titles will say that the Oregon Iron and Steel Company owns five feet of the riverbank. It alternates. That's where the meteorite was found was on the Oregon Iron and Steel property up in the hills, just two or three miles from here.

Have you heard about that?

E.P.: No, I haven't heard about that, no.

M.O'R.: Oh, it's another residue of those Bretts floods. The second largest meteorite that's ever been found in the United States, and it rested right up there on the hill. And one of the farmers found it, and he built a wagon and brought it down by horse and wagon, and then charged 25 cents to view it.

Well, a lawyer from the Oregon Iron and Steel Company went to visit it, and then he followed those newly-made tracks and found that it lodged on the Oregon Iron and Steel property. So it went to the Oregon Supreme Court. Then it was shown in the 1905 fair, and a lady bought it and sent it back to New York.

We made a couple of attempts to get it out, and then I think the American History Museum in New York, Natural History, said, "Well, you can have it if you can get it out the door." But they had put it in the basement and then built around it, and you can't get it out of there.

M.O'R.: But you can see it there; is that right?

E.P.: You can see it there, if they can remember where they put it.

M.O'R.: And have you seen it there?

E.P.: No. I think I made an attempt once and didn't succeed. But in the *Catastrophes of the Columbia*, it explains that these rocks came down on ice, on icebergs, and there's a companion book that Dr. Roberts at Portland State wrote that identifies along the Columbia River the heights of the water from different landmarks. It has 750 feet of water coming down it at 75 miles an hour, then it hit the Portland hills, and that was an obstacle, so it flowed down clear to Cottage Grove, and there are stratifications that they know that this happened 40 different times. And there are erratic rocks in Washington County. There's a signpost for a large one down in Newberg. But they're found in a rim. These are little ones; they're like golfballs, granite golfballs, that came down

from British Columbia. They're clear down to Cottage Grove. That's a lot of water.

M.O'R.: That's true. Back to Churchill and Smith just for a minute, I'm wondering if you could tell me what you remember that they said to you when you dragged them down to the Pauls?

E.P.: Oh, we were all in agreement that, hey, the river's a mess, Washington County's polluting it, and how dare they, you know. We were just pretty much in agreement that something had to be done. Jack Churchill was certainly the instigator that got everybody involved to do something. As Pete said, "Eleanor, there are times when you simply have to go to the law. You have to go to court."

M.O'R.: Right. But you still weren't enthusiastic about that approach?

E.P.: Well, they didn't need me. You know, one person doesn't have to do everything. You just have to open doors and turn a couple keys and get the most people involved you can. And then they wind up being a lot smarter than I am, and so I'm very grateful when they do their thing.

M.O'R.: So did Smith explain some things about algae in the river and phosphate levels?

E.P.: Well, he explained it, but he was so technical none of us understood. Oh, my land! He was so fascinated by the subject that it was a joy just to watch a man so engrossed in his subject and so knowledgeable. But Jack, we don't know what you're saying. [laughs] That was about it.

M.O'R.: So did you find it easier to understand Jack Churchill?

E.P.: Oh, yeah. Jack said it in very plain, almost seaman language, you know. It's so beneficial; I remember one farmer that had his contract with the canneries cancelled because he irrigated

with the Tualatin water and therefore they couldn't use the product. So you know, a clean river has its economic benefit for so many people. It has its joy in recreation.

When I was studying the wetlands, I met with the Park Bureau at Clackamas County to tell them, "You know, we don't need only high-activity parks. We need passive ones. We need to develop the instincts of the artists and the poets, people like that, and they need places to go. They need to commune with nature and see all the grand variety of creation."

And we need it for our souls. We need to keep this planet as pure as we can, in spite of us. We just have to try to take care of our own waste.

M.O'R.: Yes. I think there's a growing realization that we can't continue to go on as we have, ignoring some of these things.

Do you think that you've actually noticed an improvement in the river over the years?

E.P.: Oh, yeah. We go down every so often and check it for clarity. At first when you'd put a stick in, why, you were lucky if you could see it a couple inches down. And now you can see the stick - you know, put it in the water and see many feet down. The river will never be a rippling crystalline river because it flows through alluvium, and that's just fine particles.

Go up to Cherry Grove. You look down there, and you can see every rock, and gold flecks, you know. It's just beautiful. Rippling waterfalls, and you can see the bottom of the river. Well, you cannot see the bottom of the river down here, you know.

But it's tested constantly by - the Geologic Survey has its own testing; DEQ does its testing. This river is now being managed. It's being watched. They're working on it. And things like SOLV are most famous for the beaches, but they've kind of gone

into Adopt a Creek, and people go and clean up sections of the river.

Wankers Corners has a gang, and the tavern sponsored it, and once a year they go out and take off on the river and collect all the old tires, all the debris, and then Wankers Corners pays to have it hauled away. I would love to see that, every tavern that's near the river go ahead and sponsor it, get these guys out and let them have fun together cleaning up the river.

Well, you see, after the '64 flood, Dedirader took us on a tour out there and talked to farmers, and you see, the fall down of the trees had so choked the river that the water had to go someplace, so it would go over there, and then their fields were ruined for months.

The results were still there during that '68, '72 study. We made a grand tour of the Tualatin Valley and talked to - a whole busload - talked to the farmers, you know, and they gave their side of the problem, that they just need help on clearing up all the debris because that was a pretty devastating thing. You know, gravity takes its toll, and it all comes down.

M.O'R.: Right. And I'm sure that similar problems are occurring now in the wake of the '96 flood, too. A lot of cleanup to be done.

E.P.: It's a very fertile valley up there, but it just has to have - that's why I wish they would pay attention to those eight different spots where they could build small dams in the valley. It would just be so beneficial, but it costs money, and you have to get appropriations, and it just costs. But the benefits would be tremendous.

Every time you get involved in an environmental study, you realize, okay, here are new jobs. On both the positive side and the negative side: It costs you more if you have to clean up from

the negative side. The positive side is actually new jobs, you know, like building a dam that hires people.

M.O'R.: Well, it's interesting to hear you say that because there are a lot of people who feel that the quality of the river is compromised by this dam that diverts the water to Lake Oswego. I think the argument's been made that if that dam weren't there the water would move through more quickly, and it wouldn't be quite such a stagnant, slow-moving stream.

E.P.: That was the big argument upstream, if that dam weren't there.

M.O'R.: Right. But if you put even more dams on the river, then it would be even slower-moving, I would think?

E.P.: Oh, no. These dams would be in the foothills.

M.O'R.: Oh, I see what you're talking about. Not on the lower part of the river.

E.P.: Yes. That Scoggins is a low-down dam, but there are eight different places that Army Corps showed on several of the creeks, Gales Creek, Rock Creek.

M.O'R.: Oh, I see what you're saying.

E.P.: You collect the water in the mountain, and then you can adjust it, you know, as to when to release more water. But then in the meantime you have new recreation spots.

Also, it helps on fire control. The humidity itself has a lot to do with the atmosphere that comes from a lake. Less fire-prone, unless you have careless campers.

M.O'R.: Right. That would also be a danger with recreational areas up there.

There is talk, I think, of a second Tualatin dam.

E.P.: Is there?

M.O'R.: Yeah.

E.P.: Oh, happiness.

M.O'R.: I don't know that it's going to be any time in the near future, but there are people who are talking about it.

E.P.: You know, the farmers accomplished Scoggins, and I think it took them 20 years. A long time.

M.O'R.: It did take a while.

E.P.: This is what's sort of sad, losing the seniority that Oregon enjoyed with Packwood and Hatfield.

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

E.P.: That helped economically get some money back to Oregon.

M.O'R.: And it will be a while, I guess, before we're in that position again.

E.P.: Nothing we can do about it.

M.O'R.: That's right. It's sort of set up so that seniority rotates around a little bit, doesn't stay with one state all the time.

Besides being involved in the homeowners association, you were an officer for a while?

E.P.: Oh, for a few months I did the CPO presidency, but I had a husband that didn't like all this distraction. He didn't like a divergence of my attention, and getting involved in this, my attention was certainly, you know, on other things. So we eventually got divorced.

M.O'R.: Oh, I see. Did that curtail your activities a little bit, then?

E.P.: At the time enough other people were involved. Now, along about the same time, '68, the Oregon Environmental Council got going, and that was a coalition of many, many. They sponsored Ian McHargue out here. They brought him out. So a lot of people were getting together.

I'm a go-fer. I go find the people that know how to do things and know what it's all about. I read and learn as much as I can,

but these people have their doctorates, and they are real authorities. And I just feel it's up to them to educate people like me. And they can do it, you know. We got the citizens involved.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

ELEANOR PHINNEY

Tape 2, Side 1

August 13, 1996

M.O'R.: This is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society continuing an interview with Eleanor Phinney on August 13, 1996.

Anyway, you go get what you need, eh?

E.P.: I go find the people, and I find the books, and I study them myself, but then when you can get those people involved and get an audience in front of them of regular citizens like me, that gets a whole lot more people. Well, there are people that might like leadership roles. That's perfect. Let them take them on.

So I kind of go off all on my own to find out, and then I bring back the results of what I've found. I should have been a teacher.

M.O'R.: Do you have much of a sense of competing interests on the Tualatin or tensions between different communities having to do with the Tualatin? I know we hear back in the days of Jack Smith and Jack Churchill there was some tension between Lake Oswego and the lower Tualatin and the farmers upriver in Washington County.

E.P.: Well, it was on the quantity of water. I mean, everybody wants their amount of water, and Lake Oswego has the grandfather - that's a big economy you're talking about there.

M.O'R.: I know. Lots of money and lots of powerful people.

E.P.: Well, they want that lake. I'm not sure they wanted the flood that they got this year. My, that was awful over there. But they reconditioned their homes. They were insured, you know.

Everybody's going to compete for the amount of water, and as I said much earlier, water from Bull Run is piped into Washington

County. Well, I just wonder, you know, if there's an eternal amount.

M.O'R.: In fact, there's a great transfer of water from the Bull Run Reservoir to the Tualatin, via people's toilets and kitchen sinks and so forth and so on throughout Washington County.

E.P.: Like I said, importing water - in pioneer times, that was the bread basket of the metropolitan area. That was the farms. The population was less. But it was dry land farming, which means you use very little water and Nature provides most of it. And you know, we get a pretty good amount of rain here even throughout the year. We'll have maybe two very dry months, and then the rains come again.

It's a high tech valley now, just like Palo Alto, and the farms are going. And yet you can take scenic drives, and there are these magnificent farms. Well, each farmer has his allotment of water. A couple years ago they cut the water off. You know, the people that had water rights, the later water rights, could no longer use them so that the grandpa rights had their amount.

It's funny, I haven't studies this for so long, but even the sewage treatment plants are getting imported water, you see, through the effluent.

M.O'R.: Right. That's what I was saying.

E.P.: So a lot more water comes into the Tualatin River now.

M.O'R.: Through the plants. I've heard a statistic that the Unified Sewerage Agency out in Washington County may be responsible for as much as a third of the volume of the water that comes down the river in the summertime.

E.P.: I would guess that. They don't start their tertiary treatment until springtime. All winter time they run on a minimum, secondary treatment. And then they start the tertiary treatment when spring comes. But you've made a really interesting point there.

I remember swimming in a creek up at Spokane. It was beautiful forests, you know; this was a gorgeous spot. We were having so much fun in the water, and some people came across this footbridge, "Don't you know there's a sewage treatment plant right up there?" Well, if we'd put riprap in, the rocks hold bacteria, and the rocks and the water flows will purify the water on its own within a certain distance. But it takes the rocks to hold the bacteria. Riprap in that case would have been a good deal. I'm probably off my head on this.

Nature has a tremendous way of cleaning up the act.

M.O'R.: That's true. You were telling me the story of your daughter coming up out of the river covered with algae. Was there ever any time that you're aware of that any of you living here picked up any bugs from the Tualatin?

E.P.: No, not from the Tualatin. But that same daughter over at Waikiki Beach got a huge skin infection, ringworm, from swimming at Waikiki.

M.O'R.: Oh, really? That's interesting. That's an ocean of water there.

E.P.: Oh, you fly over and you look down, and you can see exactly where the effluent is. Fly over Lake Tahoe, and you can see exactly - the coloration changes so much, and it's just kind of like a big flow. You can identify it.

She had a rough time over there. We were stationed in Hawaii twice, and while we were waiting for housing we had to stay at the Waikiki Beach for two months. So I had to put this purple medication on her, you know. She was the only one that was affected. The other children, my husband and I weren't.

M.O'R.: What would be your vision for the future, let's say of taking care of the river and managing the competing interests,

development, et cetera? What sorts of things do you think would be important?

E.P.: Well, of course I would like to see those eight dams, first of all.

M.O'R.: Right. You mentioned that.

E.P.: Because to me that begins the answers for a lot of things.

M.O'R.: What's my vision? Well, I've got two lots here. The one that just has the barn on it is a buildable lot. It's a grandfather clause. I could sell it to a builder and be a wealthy lady right because of that.

I am in the process of putting the house on the market. I'm 73 years old now, and this should have children here all the time; well, my grandchildren are Canada, and full of activities, you know, so there's not the time to make that eight, ten hour trip. This should be a place where there are children.

I will not sell that lot until this one is sold, and I'll do everything I can to enable the people that buy this to buy that lot. It's unique. God isn't making any more riverfront property. And when you have a forest on the bank of the river, and then you can have a farm up here, this to me is - as I said, I'm very blessed to have been able to enjoy this.

For the County, government always thinks bigger is better, and I wish we all would think, even in family size. Let us do what we can that we can do well, instead of doing an awful lot of the huge population growth, things like that. That bothers me. Have as many children as you can take care of and educate and love.

I wish that the schools integrated subject matter. By integrating I mean mathematics and economics and the cost to the environment. You know, integrate land use planning a little bit more in English, everything, as a major subject, to be conscious of

all the time. That I would wish. You know, as much as history is a subject, the environment is a subject that needs to be meshed into all the other skills that are taught.

I am hoping that the government will start encouraging electrical cars, and I can see no reason why there can't be battery stations, just as we have gasoline stations, so that if your battery runs low, okay, you pull in, and you get an exchange one, and you take off. If we can go to electric cars, it will have an immense effect on world peace. The freedom of a car is absolutely wonderful; we wouldn't have the progress that we have in America if it hadn't been for the automobile and the roads to get around with them. It's a tremendous freedom, but it's also a huge benefit. But the gas models are wrecking us in so many ways.

M.O'R.: It's causing a lot of problems; that's true.

E.P.: I think that's even more important than dams, to have good public transportation and then to get to the electric car as quickly as possible.

Is that answering the question? I've forgotten what it was.

M.O'R.: The question basically was what you might want to see happen in the future, and I think you've answered that pretty well.

I'm just going to ask you a couple more questions, and then we'll conclude today. Before I move on to that, though, let me just ask you one other general question. And that is you told me the story of your daughter swimming in the Tualatin and emerging green. Now, that was a good picture in my mind of what she might have looked like when she came out of the water.

E.P.: She was a very pretty girl. She was blond, and here she comes up with green hair, you know, long green hair.

M.O'R.: That falls in the general category of the Tualatin River story, and I'm just wondering if there's any other just

anecdotes or stories that come to mind having to do with what you've seen out here off the banks at your place on the river?

E.P.: Well, of course the most frightening is the dam down there. Roz told you how many people they've rescued down there.

M.O'R.: Right.

E.P.: Like I said, this little part of the valley was very, very much forgotten.

Oh, anecdotes: It's during the flood times that people get out there in the boats and lose control. Of course, if my son was here he'd tell you about his bellyflops. We had a tree down there with a Tarzan rope on it.

And my spot here is a favorite fishing spot. We were talking about this the other day, and he said, "Oh, my gosh, do you remember the time that I was going to do the triple flip?" It wound up about a two and a half splat. And he said, "I knew my body was there, but I was up here, looking down at it."

We had a guest two years ago that was - oh, an avid fisherman. The first night he was here he was out. The second night he was ought and brought back a wide-mouth bass that we put in the pond, and two days later he took them to Trout Unlimited, and they weighed it. Well, it probably lost two pounds in the pond, and it was the largest wide-mouth bass that had been caught in the river. The second night he went out and he caught one only a little bit smaller.

M.O'R.: This was just a couple years ago?

E.P.: A couple years ago.

M.O'R.: So the bass are still alive and well in the Tualatin?

E.P.: Yeah. Brian was down there on the dock looking at the fish. He said there were three kinds of fish playing around the dock.

Now, Herb Dahlquist across the river is the one that will really know - from all these studies I still have my card file. People move, and they pass on. But there are some very good authorities. Herb Dahlquist.

M.O'R.: He's on that list you already gave me?

E.P.: Yes. They had one neighbor that fished every night. Herb probably knows more about the river as a human endeavor - how do I say that?

M.O'R.: Human activity on the river, you mean?

E.P.: Yes. And he has his charts - you know, he can navigate the river safely. They have coffee klatsches. Gosh, that would be fun for you to go down to their morning coffee and meet all these old-timers that have coffee together every morning and get them going on stories.

M.O'R.: And that's over at Herb's place?

E.P.: No, he goes down to a cafe, down in Willamette, and all these old-timers come and chat together. I'm sure many of them are fishermen.

Herb will know who knows - there was a young lady that lived down in Willamette close to the mouth of the Willamette River that was my authority, and she told me about the erratic runs of summer-time of a kind of a salmon. You know, it just made its run up the river at oddball times, not the usual one.

One of the sad things is the water going into Lake Oswego and going down Sucker Creek. A lot of salmon go there. They smell that water, they think it's the Tualatin, and they die there in Sucker Creek instead of making it through the fish thing up to the Tualatin. So that's just one of those oddball things, trying to figure out how salmon find their way back home, you know?

M.O'R.: Right. Well, I think I'm just about running out of questions. Is there any topic that we haven't discussed that you think we should add?

E.P.: Well, of course I just think that if I were doing a book like you're doing, I would start out with the *Calamities of the Columbia*, how this formation occurred, the geologic history.

Oh, the Indians. I saw one of those erratic - it was like a baseball, white. Her sister-in-law passed on, but she had Indian relics. She knew where the arrowheads were. Lillian really knew the river. Jerry probably was pretty busy with his farming, but Lillian was the romantic. But I saw that ball, big as a basketball, that she had gotten.

One of my friends is Myrna Daniels, and her father - they're down on Tualatin Loop - her father moved here I think at the turn of the century. Very romantic story there, and the little log cabin where he raised his family is still there.

You meet a lot of these old people, and you wish you had a tape recorder and you could get their whole life. There have been some charmers here that I've met, some of these old people, and it's just awful when they take their leave of us.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]