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Interview with Janet McLennan (Part 1)

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Bob Straub Oral History Project
Interview by Michael O'Rourke with Janet McLennan at her home in Portland
November 8, 2003

[Janet McLennan (JM)]: By that time, I had also been active in those days in Sierra Club and some you know, conservation efforts proposal to create a national park around the Three Sisters and Mount Jefferson area. It was not a major effort, it didn't ever go any place, but it was something I was associated with. And during those years we were trying to get national park status for the Oregon dunes and hopefully, or possibly, get Dick [Newberg's] name attached to that and Wayne Morris was thwarting that effort. And Edith had no interest in it, I mean she, conservation was not her interest at any point. But then by the '66 campaign, the issue of building a highway along the Nestucca sand spit had begun to develop. I think that began to develop about '65.

[Michael O'Rourke (MO)]: Right, even before, yeah.

JM: And so I was much involved with Bob on that. So I mean, all these conservation issues were building a kind of a conery of interested conservationists who were identifying with Bob and looking to him for leadership and relating to me as a kind of go-between or a you know, [factotum] of these different issues.

MO: And now, on the Nestucca spit issue, it was I guess Glen Jackson who was then Highway Commission Chair.

JM: He was the chair, yeah.

MO: It was out of his office or whatever that that plan to reroute 101 down the Nestucca spit came.

JM: Not for, not probably Glen per se, but certainly the dominant engineering voices in the Highway Department. I mean, I can't offhand think of anything that would have made Glen personally want to see that highway located there except his probable belief that it was the most efficient, appropriate thing to do.

MO: Now did you know Glen Jackson then personally in those days?

JM: Well, you always met these people. I can't, I mean I didn't know him well, and I can't tell you when, I've been in his office a number of times I can't tell you what the dates of that might have been. In 1968, this goes a little after that, I think '68 or '69 Bob, we had an environmental campout at River Bend on the Santiam River and as I recall invited Glen Jackson to speak at that effort, and you know, it was something that I and a bunch of my friends got together, made great buckets of lentil soup and everybody came and camped with their families, and you know, you did those kinds of things. So you know, in answer to your question, did I know him, I knew him like that.

MO: And then you were, before I asked you that question you were just talking about the...

JM: The '66 campaign. That River Bend thing would have been after '66.

MO: Right, right, but we were talking about the '66 campaign and you'd told me earlier that this issue of the Nestucca spit was a big issue in that gubernatorial race.

JM: It was. Yeah. And for some reason that I cannot identify, Tom McCall felt he had made a commitment to Glen on the relocation. And now I mean, you know, sometimes you can, you can trace an economic reason for something like that, you know, where a politician makes a commitment that he doesn't want to break no matter what, but I can't tell you what that nexus between Tom and Glen on the Nestucca spit could have been.

MO: One biographer of McCall suggests that it was in exchange for Jackson's support of McCall's candidacy in that first race.

JM: Well, I'm sure McCall, I mean, as I recall...I mean, you know, practical people paper both sides, but as I recall, the disparity in the contributions was something like twenty-five to one in terms of what Glen gave McCall versus what Glen gave Bob.

MO: Maybe that ratio was consistent with both of the campaign tests overall, too. Well anyway, actually a question I wanted to ask you about the Nestucca spit, too, is that one of the sorts of, I guess indelible images or whatever from that era, one of the more attention-getting devices was that walk that Bob Straub led along the spit.

JM: Up the...and up to the hanging of the [effigy] and the guy meeting them with the rifle.

MO: Now were you on the scene?

JM: Oh yes!

MO: You were part of that then?

JM: I was part of that, and you know, one of the major organizers getting people to leave the metropolitan area and go down and be there for that.

MO: Uh huh.

JM: And all our friends and the children were along on that.

MO: Now the effigy that was, that was the Tillamook County Board, or something, Board of Commissioners?

JM: I think it was, yeah. Clay Meyer's father was a Tillamook County Commissioner in those days.

MO: So he was part of that group then that wanted to burn Bob Straub in effigy.

JM: Yeah. As far as I know he was part of it, you know, I don't mean to indict him.

MO: So that was sort of the beginning I guess, of focus in general on the Oregon Coast.

JM: Well, that was the first big issue but it was a little different issue than the subsequent issue about public right to use.

MO: Right, right it was.

JM: But the same people tended to be very interested in each, in both issues, you know and I mean once you got a mailing list of folks who felt strongly about not building a highway Nestucca spit, why you had a good mailing list on the other issue as well.