

**Interview with Carol Van Strum & Susan Swift Parker on Friday, April 10 2015**  
**Interview conducted by Laura Nausieda & Lauren Rapp**

**Susan Swift Parker (SP):** This is a song written by this sweet mountain moment in Grants Pass and I'll sing two verses of it which pretty much tells much of the story:

Well one day the people got wind of a plan, there's a big lumber baron out to poison our land, kill off the hardwoods they ain't worth a damn, harvest the fur ship it off to Japan, and we just want to know, where do you think it all goes. Now whether you choose a smart business suit, a pair of blue jeans, or a strong loggers boot. Water is something that everyone drinks, and you can't clean it up by pouring bleach in your sinks, so we just want to know, where does it all go.

**Carol Van Strum (CVS):** My name's Carol Van Strum and Susan and I kind of started everything back in 1970, what was it? '75? Yeah that was when it was, 1975. So we go way back.

**SP:** My name is Susan Swift. In the mid 1970s, when we formed Citizens Against Toxic Sprays, my name was Susan Parker. And so I decided to keep my name with my birth name.

I was involved in a community group here, we called it Five River's Organizing group. We rented a schoolhouse up here by the covered bridge. We had community meetings, potlucks, and we'd rent film canisters from the school and had movies. Carol and her husband, Steve, and their four children had moved up here and had pretty much kept to themselves and they had their goats and chickens. We just hadn't reached out to meet her when I saw a letter to the editor written by her husband and her about the spraying of the roadside. Spraying actually of the river with her four children down by the river and the effects they had. And these were health effects that we had all noticed after the roadside spraying and sometimes after helicopters would be flying over. So another woman, Susie Gilbert and myself, we just drove up the driveway and introduced ourselves to Carol and Steve and said we want to talk about this.

From that we had a community meeting. And when word got out about our meeting, people came from Lobster Valley, Yachats River Road, Deadwood Creek, everybody in the Coast Range that heard about this came because they all had the same concerns. We were all seeing deformed wildlife. We were seeing deformities amongst the livestock, you know, that we had on our little farms. And so we decided to meet with the Forest Service. And we met with the Forest Service and we told them we were concerned about this. You got to understand, these were times before the internet. We had to go, our group had to go to the libraries to get scientific studies put out by Oregon State University that showed how toxic these things were. And then we had to Xerox them and put out and get information, but we tried to talk to the Forest Service about why not do it manually; between the little communities we had a workforce of 35 people. We had goatherds that could take care of, it's a brush problem that we could do it manually. Let's look into this. But they said no, they had to do these sprays which was basically surplus Agent Orange that the scientists at the Oregon State University in the Department of Forestry was convinced that instead of destroying this surplus of Agent Orange we could make our forest a primeval forest by using it to kill off the hardwoods, the alder, the maple, anything that competed with

the crop tree: the Doug Fir. So we looked into the Clean Water Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Act, and found a lawyer in Eugene and filed a lawsuit.

**CVS:** We were very naive. Extremely naive. We tried to negotiate with the Forest Service. We really thought that if we told them what was going on, they didn't live out here how would they know. And we thought if we just told them what was happening, they would stop.

**SP:** They had a three-inch thick Environmental Impact Statement on the use of herbicides and forestry that they said proved that it was safe. So we just started reading it and pulling studies quoted in that environmental impact statement. And I even went on a local TV show about how they already knew that the level of 2-4D in Yaquina Bay in Newport was already altering oyster shell growth. I mean, they knew that.

**CVS:** They didn't care. I mean, there was, a lot of it is the fault of the Department of Agriculture being nothing more than a front man for the big huge agriculture, the timber companies, the chemical companies, and the huge grain growers that they represent. They are not interested in the health of the environment or even the health of the crops that people are producing. The Forest Service is part of the USDA. And this is the modern way to grow trees and they were blind to them and the possible damage it might do.

**SP:** So I grew up in Los Angeles. I used to tell people that I grew up in Compton, California, which gives me street cred because it's a tough tough place to grow up. But I moved here in 1972 and I was shocked, talk about naive. I was shocked our national forest would cut into these little forests called plantations and that the sole purpose in the Northwest was to feed the timber industry. They had wiped out all the small town logger families here.

Carol was brave enough to write her book, *A Bitter Fog*, and I remember taking Carol to a house where a local timber company tried to poison them to get them off their land. There were so many different stories all around.

**CVS:** Well that was the idea of the book to begin with was to tell the stories about people that got together to fight the Federal Government. I mean that was kind of unheard of at that point. But then when I started writing their stories down I realized no one's going to know what we're talking about and that was when I started researching the chemicals and the history of them and then suddenly the lab fraud came up and I was like, this is much bigger than just our individual stories. But it was all tied together because what we had was the EPA, the Forest Service, the USDA, the whole government attitude was that we, out here, anything we say is just anecdotal, there's no scientific proof that these things can do these kinds of harm and yet they knowingly let those chemicals be registered and used on the basis of false information. So they were willing to go with what they knew was a fraudulent registration and would back that up instead of listening to us.

**SP:** We were called the lunatic fringe. They tried to paint us all as marijuana growers because this is what their thinking was — they figured that it had to be a financial motivation for us to do what we did.

And it was just a matter of quality of life, and tired of getting sick. Anyway, it's a long history, my daughter is extremely chemically sensitive. I want to tell one other story, kind of personal. At one point scientists came out from Harvard because he was doing mother's milk samples in Texas and he could do some random samples. So he came in and he collected five. But I was a nursing mother at the time and some of the other friends volunteered to give samples of our breast milk to go into this testing and then it came out that there were three positives in the Texas samples and one positive in Oregon. And I argued with the rest of our board because they said, "well do you think that the women in Oregon would really like to know," and I said, "yes, she has a right to know," and they said, "well it's yours." So for four days I was under the impression that I had been feeding my daughter dioxin through my breast milk and we found out later that it was just a mix up in initials because my girlfriend who I knew was named Genie, her first name was really Shirley so we just knew the first initial was S. And so they thought it was mine.

**CVS:** Then she had to go through that agony of knowing.

**SP:** But he came out, Patrick O'Keefe actually came out and talked to her personally to explain to her. She grew up along Rogue River and probably had a lot more history of exposure than I did. So that made more sense, anyway.

**Interviewer (I):** You spoke about how your community started to become organized and came together, can you talk a little bit about that transition?

**CVS:** It was a progression for sure. Initially we really thought they would listen to us. And even after we filed the notice of the intent to sue we were negotiating through the lawyers saying, "we'd be happy if you just stayed a mile away from our valleys." You know where all of us live. And the Forest Service wouldn't even agree to that, and meanwhile while that's going on, cause you guys did more of the negotiating type of stuff and I was doing the research and I was like, "wait they've been lying." And that was the point for me, that was it. I was like, "I don't like being lied to." And I think that a lot of us felt that way.

**SP:** Well we did, and I grew up in the Disneyland generation. I watched Disneyland being built down in Southern California and I don't remember, it's either Daniel Boone or Davy Crockett, one of them through their Disney program. I remember them saying, "be sure you are right then go ahead," and that's what I felt in my heart, I know we are right. I know we're right, we had to continue on. At one point in the court case they threw out the Bald and Golden Eagle Act because we couldn't find any Golden Eagles in the Siuslaw Forest. The judge put the end result of that lawsuit was we got a permanent injunction on one chemical 2,4,5-T and they are still, to this day, are twice a year spraying herbicides that have no safety data that can be proven. Oregon is so lax in its Forest Practices Act compared to Idaho and Washington. I don't know what it's going to take, it's just so hard to understand that your government sold out to the chemical company interest, to the agro business interest. We see it happening with GMO food, we see it happen on a broader scale; that I'm really encouraged when I see country after country banning GMOs. When I see people standing up and saying no because it doesn't matter if it's DOW, Monsanto, DuPont, they are all the same and it's not good to feel helpless. I don't

know how to empower other people because I know that just the fight sometimes can really crush others.

**I:** Do you have any advice for other Oregon communities that are being affected by pesticides right now?

**SP:** I think the biggest thing to do right now is that everybody needs to write to their representative and say, “look, we need more control. You got to have buffers, you can’t be spraying next to people where they live or schools or farm crops.” One of the things I’m encouraged about is how many crops are turning into grapes and wineries because grapes are really susceptible to most of the dangers of pesticides. I just think that anything we can do to inform the individual of what’s happening in their background, what’s in their water source. For a long time we could not find a laboratory to do any kind of testing that wouldn’t get bought out by the chemical companies. Then Carol, you mentioned they wouldn’t accept anything as anecdotal evidence. But I think what’s really important is what happened when they did come out and collect the actual evidence.

**CVS:** That’s right they did because that was the Alsea study which was the result of, I think there were originally 5-7 women from here and from Alsea, and that was Bonnie Hill’s doing. Bless that woman. She was a school teacher in the Alsea School and she lived there for a long time. She knew all the people in the area and it struck her how many women had miscarriages after they sprayed because she had one. That’s what got her interested. We didn’t even know each other but we were making those information packets. And she picked up one at a farmers market and that was how she knew about us and read it and that was when she started questioning her neighbors and these other women in the area about who had miscarriages and they wrote a letter and she mapped it. She drew maps of where they sprayed and where these women lived and sent it to the EPA. It was tossed to into a pile of comments on 2,4,5-T; nobody would pay attention to it except for an amazing person named Eric Jansen who I miss to this day.

They took all these samples including from a baby born without a brain. Small wildlife, from water supply, sediments, sludge, and that kind of stuff. Domestic cats born with four eyes. And all of Alsea’s little ducklings and chicks had all died. And they took those. And they promised us results in 90 days and that was in 1979. Four years later they were claiming that they didn’t even take the samples. They didn’t realize that I had kept all of the records that the guys gave me; the EPA guys when they came out to take the samples. They couldn’t say they didn’t take them. And that was when we were trying to stop them from spraying other chemicals out here.

**I:** The topic of anecdotal evidence is really important. We’ve been working with people from Gold Beach who have been telling us what has happened to them. I’ve been talking to experts who say that this is just anecdotal, we need evidence.

**I:** I don’t know if you know anything about Gold Beach, its a rural community. Similar to here, neighbors are far apart but they kind of know each other. A lot of people were affected because the

pilot flew over the town, and it was leaking (pesticides) on them. Actually leaking on them, kids were running out in it. So they have kind of banned together but in their community there is about six people that are the core fighters of it. And there are others that believe them but a lot of the other community does not believe them. I think it is the same thing because it is anecdotal. They say things like she's not an expert, she not a scientist how does she know this is happening to her.

**SP:** They tried to say to the early people, well it's their diet, because they eat brown rice. It's always something else, it can't be these incredible toxic chemicals that are giving everybody the same symptoms.

**I:** It was really frustrating, even talking to a scientist teacher early last week, I was trying to get more students involved in my county. And I was getting, "yeah I know but where is the science, where is the science behind it." I just read your article about the frog and how it is an indicator, and he told me 'Well, we are not frogs.'

**SP:** The first things you learned in Biology 101, is you pull a leaf out. You look at it under a microscope and you see the commonalities between plant life and human cells. And you take a chemical that is designed to alter and make a plant grow itself to death, fast. Is it no surprise that it causes cancer, birth defects, and mutations in human populations. But every time they have a study that proves that it is a problem, they have enough money to make that study disappear. And still 400 chemicals registered on fraudulent data, no safety data exists to this day. On 2,4-D, Atrazine, Glyphosate, Roundup, the big one, Roundup, and see people just spraying it all over their neighborhoods.

**CVS:** I mean I can't even go into Fred Meyer because I get hives just walking in. Those places reek of those chemicals. I still don't understand why, because I talked to the guy at the feed store, they sell that stuff but it doesn't smell like that. He said when that truck comes in, he checks every container and if he smells anything they take it back. He won't take it. You have to do that because that stuff leaks all over. They apparently don't do that at big Fred Meyer, Walmart and stuff. The whole store ends up being toxic, I don't know how people can stand working there. They don't know what the effects are, but when there are effects out in the environment they say, "oh well there's no proof that that's what's causing it." I don't know, that's what we're up against, that mindset.

**I:** Did you have people within this community that did not believe that these pesticides were causing these kinds of issues?

**SP:** I only remember one sweet lady, who lived in a mobile home up the road. I was interviewing her and talking to her about it. She said, "well, honey, the government wouldn't do it if it was bad." They thought the chemicals they were spraying was for the mosquito problem. But there weren't that many people. Pretty much everybody has experienced problems. So I think our community was pretty well united.

**CVS:** There were people that were scared to put their name to anything. They supported us 100%, they even gave us money. But they were worried about their jobs. These were guys who worked at the mill or they worked out as loggers for some of the big timber companies. They saw, even more than we did, what kind of damage it does to wildlife because they were out there in the woods and they are finding fauns with no eyes. There are things like that, that just didn't happen. So they would support us but they wouldn't put their names down. There were quite a few people like that. And then there were the doctors.

**SP:** There were a lot of doctors in Lincoln County that knew it was a problem. They tried to get a ballot measure passed. They had an organization to get the ballot measure on. The amount of money that came flooding into little Lincoln County to fight that ballot measure, "if this goes through you will be arrested for using weed and tease feed on your lawn." You know, they go to the extremes. And not talk about what it was actually really all about.

**CVS:** There were two mild measures, not spraying roadsides and stuff within so many feet of a school or a home. All they wanted was some buffer zones on the aerial spraying. You would have thought we were inviting the Soviets to come and take over from the reaction of the industry gave. They were bombarding our airwaves and the garbage they were filling our mailboxes with. That costs a lot of money, they spent hundreds or thousands of dollars just to defeat these little measures, that was introduced unanimously by the physicians of Lincoln County because of the incredible number of birth defects they were seeing. As one of them put it, most obstetricians would not see these birth defects in their lifetime and they were seeing them on a routine basis. And still they couldn't get the measures through because of industry pressure. That's the kind of thing we are up against. What should we tell young people? I don't know! You know what you have to do? The only way I can keep going is to find some unholy glee is causing trouble even for one bureaucrat. You have to look for the fun in it, somewhere. Or you burn out really really fast. You can't just handle the ugliness of it and the awfulness of what people are going through.

**SP:** I traveled around to many communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, I helped organize and start the Northwest Coalition of Alternatives to Pesticides. And served on the board for almost ten years. When traveling around and talking to little local groups I would be amazed the same dog and pony, the same scientist from Oregon State would show up to debate me. And in the meantime we were being slipped confidential studies from Dow Chemical showing that they were monitoring their workers and knew that they had split chromosomes. And all kinds of problems. So we were being fed information from people within both the Forest Service that really wanted us to succeed and do something.

**CVS:** Mitlan, Michigan became our sister city, that is the home of Dow Chemical. They lead the charge. Monsanto was part of it but Dow was the front man for the industry. The people of Mitlan, Michigan were also upset, as one of them put it, "we are the autism capital of the world, if not the universe." And of course they had the same problem because Dow Chemical runs the whole town. They founded the town, it is a company town. They couldn't possibly have people saying there was a

problem so they got in touch with us and the stories just keep spreading. I don't know if there is a lot of hope, sometimes I think there is and sometimes I think maybe as one friend said, "we need to nationalize the government and dissolve everything and start over." Nationalize industry, dissolve the government, and then start over, because it's all controlled by money. They have it and we don't.

**I:** When it comes to activism you two were obviously outspoken, starting organizations, and going to Washington D.C. You took on that role, but what are other ways to be an activist? What are other roles people played that really helped your movement?

**SP:** A lot of people just got involved in their local governments, coming out to their county commissioners, getting in front of them and talking to them. Trying to develop as much of a partnership as you can with your local government. And getting involved in local government. I wound up being a chairperson of the Board of the Lincoln County Planning Commission and I served on there for several years. Like I said, I was elected as chairman and all of a sudden all the bigwigs of the timber companies started coming to every meeting and were just waiting to challenge any opinion I had on any land use issue because of my activism in the herbicide wars. And it was just so funny because at one time we were having a public hearing and we were in Lincoln City, we were in municipal court and me, as chairman, they put me in the judge's seat. So I'm sitting there in this judge's seat. We were taking information and this one guy submitted some information about water quality and buffer zones. The format was just really unreadable, and I asked this young man Andy, "can you resubmit this in a little bit clearer format to make it easier? Your paragraphs are really long and if you could just summarize it, it might be really helpful for us, to be able to deal with it." What ensued after that was a forty-five minute debate within the planning department and the timber industry people as to whether or not I had the right to ask that. And when it was all over, as I was leaving, the head of Boise Cascade is walking up to me and I said, "you know, you're really entirely too emotional around this issue," which is what they had accused us of forever. That's how you get a little bit of payback, to feel like you even made a slight difference, is really helpful. And to keep your sense of humor about it.

**CVS:** Always, always you have to, have to, look for the ludicrous because and that's the other thing, I never thought of myself as an activist, I was just me, and I think it's a real mistake to label yourself or anybody else with something like that. It can make somebody else who isn't doing what you're doing feel inadequate. There are so many ways of fighting. I used to work in the theater, I was always backstage. I always did the stage-managing and the props. I loved it, but I never wanted to be out front. It is the same with what they call activism. I hate meetings. Which Susan knows, I hate meetings. I can't stand them and I don't really do well standing up in front of an audience but give me paper and a pencil and I will go after anybody. And I can enjoy it, finding a way to say it that works. I know what I'm good at, you know? I'm good at baking, Danish, and writing. So if people do what they are good at and then they can focus it on a issue. If they are good at writing songs they should be writing songs about it.

**SP:** Or put your complaint on paper and send it off. Let people know, let your representatives know how you feel; your local mayor, even your neighbor if you have a beef.

**CVS:** Now that we have the internet, there are so many ways you can get the word out. I mean I don't use all these things because I don't have time for Facebook and all that but people who do, get it out there! Get the conversation going with other people so that you can feed them information. If they make a statement that is wrong you can correct them, politely, or snidely as the case may be, but I think people need to use what they are good at.

**SP:** I called myself an herbicidal maniac for ten years. For ten years, I figured out I was a single mom with two kids. I was administering for toxic spray education workers. The first time ever we went to the State Department of Forestry we got every permit for what they were gonna spray. We got every permit, we got a giant map from the planning department. And we mapped out for the first time how many pounds and tons is going into this Yaquina River drainage. But while I was doing that I realized, I was self employed and I realized, my gosh, I'm spending \$150 a month. And this in the late 70s and 80s on the phone bill just calling back people who were calling me saying they just got sprayed who do they go to, where can they get a lab. Lab after lab like I said was no longer available. At one point when I was gathering all this data there was a big spill off of highway 20. In Harlan, a big tanker full of 2,4-D spilled; just dumped. It went into the creek. So I got a member of the Health Department to go with me. That's when one of the scientists from Colorado, Dwayne, came out and we saw where the DEQ had come and they had picked up some samples. They had decided that five yards of dirt needed to be bulldozed out where the spill was. They took it up to some state forestry land just up the hill and created an instant hazardous dumpsite where they dumped all these five yards of dirt. So I'm seeing where the truck and where the stuff might have flown, and there was this crispy little Doug Fir tree.

So I asked Dwayne from the EPA, I said, "take a sample right here." So they have a picture in the paper of them taking that sample. Now all of a sudden the timber industries the DEQ, they're all pushing Colorado lab, "What's the results, what's the results of that sample?" Well the sample was ten times higher than anything the DEQ had tested. So they came back and they removed another ten yards of dirt, which is not a lot when you consider it was a whole tanker truck full of 2,4-D. And they said that later within the next year somebody had gone up and down the river and everywhere there was an adult maple tree that got cut down, because they were dying from what they absorbed from the creek.

**SP:** I took it to an organization in Eugene to continue our funding because we were part way through but we didn't have the whole thing complete. But because my administrative position was unpaid, they wouldn't fund us. So if we could have found someone to pay me the salary to do what I was doing anyway then we could have continued the work.

**CVS:** It's still pretty incredible. If you look at that and then look at the old Forest Services maps. Until we came along, the Environmental Impact Statements were like 60 pages and they had nothing on health effects, nothing. But it was mostly maps and then a statement on how wonderful they are. Those maps are incredibly revealing. If you look at them, there is not a square inch of federal land in Western Oregon that they did not spray at least once, and most of them multiple times with Agent Orange. It's very revealing and so is your map. That's the one you did with the overlays; it's incredible. There was another spill up Indian Creek; they were filling, they had a big tank truck, and they had a big hose, and they filled the helicopters tanks from it.



They're calling it something else. Now it's not conifer release, now they're spraying noxious weeds, which anything they don't want is called a noxious weed. We don't have BLM land right here, it's all national forest. Since '83 that's when they stopped. And at that time the timber industry was taking out full page ads saying, number one, there's gonna be no timber jobs left in Oregon, and number two, the forests are gonna die if we don't spray them. Even the Army Corp of Engineers which is usually gung ho about anything technological was saying, "oh wait a minute, isn't that a little arrogant like there was trees millions of years before there was 2,4-D." But, that's the only place we were able really to stop it. Well the country doesn't spray out here anymore since they hit a roadblock of guys with rifles. Anyway that's another story.

**SP:** But I think also, I get really inspired and hopeful when I see that Mother Nature will repair. When I see that the fish and wildlife will come back to this area when I drive over the mountain and, wow, there's actually rabbits and squirrels again. There didn't used to be. I came back just a couple months ago and saw an eagle fly over. There's definitely a noticed increase in the health and wellbeing of the forest, but I still am worried about the state and private timber industry. They get tax rebates for using this poison and I just don't understand. I saw a gal using roundup spray around an apartment building and she's just got gloves on. I can see the wind blowing and she has no clue that this could be her inoculation for the next cancer round. Who knows what's gonna happen.

**CVS:** And who else is she exposing? That's the other thing, there's no accountability and there's no responsibility attached to these things. The people who are spraying have no duty under the law to tell you. So if you go on Highway 34 today, between Lebanon and Corvallis, you are being exposed because they just sprayed the hell out of it the other day. And are you gonna know that? No. And what about the truckers? How about the people who drive that everyday? They don't know either. They are breathing that stuff and it's getting into their vehicle, it's getting into their clothing. They're taking it home with them, their kids are getting exposed. There is no accountability for where that stuff goes and there's nobody to say no. Nobody, so they are allowed to do it.

**SP:** It's like we've been taught that a lie repeated often enough just becomes accepted as truth and this is what we have with our markets and the pesticides on the counters. People believe they're safe because they've been there for so long but they're not and they don't even realize what they're doing when they're using some of these things. They don't realize people don't read the labels. One of the first labels I got of 2,4-D, from the formula used that they use with the helicopter it said, "do not use where drift is likely to occur; do not use if there is more than a five mile per hour wind." Well, to me, that excluded the entire Coast Range, because where do you ever have less than a five mile an hour wind? This kind of logic, I thought, well, all we have to do is get them to read the label right? So then they put in new products. No vinyl polymers, low drift, and no scent, so you can't smell it, and make it a heavier molecule so it lands faster. I have hope. I have hope.

**CVS:** The only hope as far as I can see is alerting people, making people aware and somehow they have to not just be aware that they have to care, you know! They have to care!

**SP:** I once asked my friend if we could only get them to understand that it's the water of the planet. There's no new water on the planet. Can't we get them to understand this? She says no, if you could convince the Monday night football crowd that their beer is suddenly gonna thicken up and go stale they'll get activated. Something that they can relate to.

**CVS:** What is it that makes some people care and some not, I don't know. Remember the little story about Pierre who didn't care and he got eaten by a lion? But anyway, the moral of Pierre is to care! That was the last line.

**I:** So you mentioned community. Do you know what their vision of change is? What do you think their vision of change is?

**CVS:** If you can call it a vision, I don't know there aren't a lot of people here, right around here who are really concerned about it right now. There are in the general area in the county. There are people who, number one, are very chemically sensitive so they have actually forced the state highway people to now send out an alert if you're on their mailing list but you have to know enough to get on it. When they're gonna spray which highway and what they're going to be using but again that puts it on you to avoid that area and for how long? That stuff doesn't go away. So it's not enough is what I'm saying but at least it's something. There's quite a network of people that signed up for that and organized all that because most of the land, the federal land out here, most of the land is federal forest, so there hasn't been much spraying. When you get over towards Deadwood, Blachly, that area you get a lot of private timber and you have much more of a problem with spraying and I think there's BLM land over that way too.

**SP:** I'm concerned about the Christmas tree farms that I've seen that have browned up everywhere and I don't understand it economically. Years ago when I'd see the little trees growing in the ground I'd say, well what sauce are you gonna put on those, I can't understand putting this much investment into a crop that you can't use, you can't eat, and so you see all of these Christmas tree farms you saw them coming over here and they didn't sell their trees and so there just cutting them down, laying them down and then there and then they are spraying, gonna burn them, and plant again. And this is some kind of weird checkbook farming. If they're using herbicides that says that they are "managing" the land and they get tax credits from managing the land!

**CVS:** And Christmas trees I think you get a five or ten year total tax break, you don't pay any taxes because it's a long term crop but to get that you have to show that you're taking care of them and how do you show that? You show them the bill for having the helicopter come in and spray the hell out of them. And that's the way the system works. It's not set up for people to grow things normally.

**I:** Another thing that I think about a lot is banned technically from national land but right now there are no regulations (on private timberland), no buffer zones, no pre-warning. So, do you think it is a matter of baby steps, and what are those baby steps for creating change? Or do we just need a huge change?

**CVS:** I don't know, right now there's a couple of bills in the legislature and don't ask me for their numbers, you probably know them, but one of them is for big buffer zones and notification and that's a

baby step to me. To me that's still putting the illness on us to get out of their goddamn way when they want to poison you. It should be the other way around. We should have the right to say no! No, you have no right to expose me without my informed consent. And number one, you haven't informed me because you haven't told me what the effects of it are. And number two, you don't have my consent. Instead, we're letting them get away with putting the onus on us to pack up and leave, take our animals away? I mean what are we supposed to do? What happens to our gardens? So to me that's like a PR step. In Europe they're not allowed to spray aerially.

**SP:** In parts of the South-East they don't burn their logged areas and they harvest every bit of pulp for paper but they say, "oh no we can't do that here." It's just an unwillingness to change, it's like an addiction.

Or even if we could demand that they prove there's a benefit of the use of their sprays. You know there is no proven benefit. A long time ago all the logging on BLM and Forest Service land was based on inventories of how much they had growing, it was the allowable cut effect. As long as we prove that we have this amount growing right now we can cut this amount this year. So in this computer program. This is a part of Oregon State Department of Forestry. We'll take an acre of land and we'll measure everything that's going to grow on that acre of forestland we gonna measure the Maple, the Alder and the Doug Fir. Now if we wipe out everything else except the Doug Fir, the Doug Fir gets all the water, all the light, all the nutrients, and so it will grow an equal amount of everything accumulated. So now we're growing these supertrees that are going to grow faster. So if we have that formula put into our computer that says we have this much more growing now we can cut this much more today. Which is why there's not a lot to cut right now.

**CVS:** So there's no benefit. It's the same with the highway spraying. The last time the roadside in Five Rivers and only part of it was sprayed was in 1981. They have not done so since.

**SP:** And you can see how the brushes have just eaten the roadside you came in right. It's clear that there is no need to spray.

**CVS:** They come in and mow, but when they spray they come in and mow afterward anyway because you have all this dead stuff you have to do something about it. Why don't they just mow it to begin with. Part of it too, is that they get kickbacks from the chemical companies, the road departments, and Department of Transportation for the state gets it too. Chemical brochures they hand out it's like, that the kind of thing that goes on. I mean we don't even know about it. But there is no need for these things. There is no need for them. They were developed originally to kill crops and wipe out cover for our enemies, for warfare. They weren't intended to be safe at that point. And they still aren't.

**I:** So what are the alternatives then? What was being done before the spraying with herbicides?

**SP:** Before they were spraying herbicides here in the National Forest they let things grow, which is what I always thought we were supposed to do for our National Forest, let things grow. The Alder matures and dies after about 40 years after fixing huge nutrients in the soil, for the soft root trees to be

able take up and as each tree is done in succession and falls down, then there is a whole ecosystem that develops. Including the health of our streams, forests, rivers, all of that depended on leaving things the hell alone and so now they have to recreate what nature would do if they had left it alone. In one area they realized they've got this root problem now with the Doug Fir we have to start planting Alder. So they can fix the nitrogen to save the crop tree.

**CVS:** After they killed them all. They discovered that actually the Alder controls this root rot that kills firs.

**SP:** I think it was 20 years ago that they realized that a log truck full of Alder was as valuable as a log truck full of Doug Fir. Now I think Alder is even more valuable. But the point is how can you decide if all the diversity of trees, hard wood/soft wood, that have been growing together to help each other to make it a monoculture. We know that's not healthy. Its not healthy anywhere, in any kind of cropping.

**I:** You grew up in the LA area, with a lot of concrete and freeways, but here you both are, being so knowledgeable about this issue.

**SP:** Well this issue caused me to learn about the words teratogenic, mutagenic, carcinogenic. And then to be able to go around and talk to other people about it and even some of the timber people to find out we had common interests. Talk about what we, commonly everyone, appreciates the forest but the idea of managing it for a specific industry, I mean what if we start doing that to Yellowstone or Yosemite? They're trying to do it in the Grand Canyon; they want to mine the heck out of that.

I think there is something of great benefit to allowing a forest its natural ecosystem and you can't put a dollar sign on it, but there you know there is a difference. A whole difference of energy on the land. From land that has been totally abused by chemicals and machines and land that has just been allowed to grow.

**SP:** I'm not against progress by any means but it just seems amazing that there were scientists and families who moved to the Coast Range to get out of the big cities, to be able to grow our own food, raise our own healthy families, and then to have these governments spraying us with stuff. I mean that's just insane. I was safer with the street gangs in Compton, is how I felt. But it opened my eyes. When I came here in '72 my friends and family in Los Angeles said, "you are running away from society, you're putting your head in the sand like an ostrich." I never realized I would learn what real community meant until I moved here. Get to know your neighbors and appreciate your differences and find out what you can do to work together.

**CVS:** Yeah that is something, that's kind of wonderful with what has happened and I think it's probably happening in Gold Beach. There are people you would have never spoken to in your entire life. Their whole lifestyle and their politics and everything else is completely different from yours. They might even have a religion that you can't tolerate but you're all in this together. And it's like all those things become unimportant. You know, because you're in this common situation and facing a common enemy and I guess that's part of it. But you learn also, through all that, that these are really

good people and what was I missing before? And I think that is something you can't generate, you can't make it. It's something that happens. It's a real, intangible thing but it definitely happens. Certainly one of the best things I came out of this with.

**SP:** Yeah me too. But I felt like I became a big fish in a small pond is what I felt like when I started traveling around and serving. I learned how to run a meeting really good, for one that hates meetings. I was chairman of the Lincoln County Indian Education Program. My daughter is Northern Cheyenne. I served on that out in Siletz and they talked me into serving on the planning commission. I did that for a while and you evolve. I went into nursing school. Just figured out where I could be of service. Now I am retired.

**I:** Anything else from your experience you would like to share? Anything else you're thinking about as this movement still continues? Any last thoughts?

**SP:** Too many things are running through my brain at once. You know I got to go to Washington DC to attend this conference, Herbicides in Forestry. It was a big conference and EPA/USDA joint conference on herbicides in National Forests and this was in the '79 I think. So they were paying Steve, the president of CATS, they were paying his way. And this sweet old woman Gladys Paybell from Forks, Washington. She called me up and said, "Do I meet you in Portland or Seattle?" And I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "well, Steve's going. If he's going, you're going." So she paid my way to go to Washington DC, stay at this hotel, and attend this three day conference, and it's really funny that they would have a whole conference called "Herbicides in Forestry." I mean, there should be a conference on forestry and a really tiny subheading on herbicides in reality. So anyway, we go to this conference and there are people there from sixteen other states that I meet that also live around National Forests that are also having the same problems. They are really concerned about the conversion of hardwood forests into softwood, fast growing, paper pulp industry products. There were the Ozark Forests, sixteen states, and Canadian citizens there. 450 chemical company lobbyists and timber company people were there. And we looked at the agenda and we were supposed to have some time to go to a no host bar and sit and be able to meet EPA and USDA officials and talk to them and everything. Then, the first day we were on the first morning break and Steve comes talking down to me and he says, "Susan there is a problem." And I say, "what is it?" And he says there are 20 armed police officers out in front of the hotel and someone asked why are they there and they said they were there because CATS was there (Citizens Against Toxic Spray). I said, "Really?" He said yeah and I said, "you want me to go talk to them?" And he said, "well yeah, would you?" I said sure, so I go marching out there and there are these big, and well one guy, a really big guy, and I just went up to him. I said, "excuse me, I hear you are here because CATS is here?" He said, "yeah thats right ma'am." And I said, "well I'm CATS, we are a group, Citizens Against Toxic Spray, and I can understand why someone might be concerned about us. It's true that the president of us, her house, and four children just got burned in a fire, and maybe someone thinks we're coming here for retaliation. But all we did was try to stop being sprayed by Agent Orange. There isn't going to be any retaliation." And this big guy says, "well little lady, if more people got involved and took action like you guys, we could take care of a lot of problems in this country." And I was shocked by that. And they kind of left and I came out at the lunch break and there was one little police officer there. I said, "you're still here huh?" And he said, "yes, and I'm so

glad to be here.” And I asked why and he said, “I’m a motorcycle cop, it’s 21 degrees outside, I’d rather be here.” And that was during the days when all the farmers, this is when agrobusiness was trying to take over all the small farmers and this is the same week that the small farmers drove their tractors to Washington DC and blocked the streets and you don’t hear much about that happening. Obviously it wasn’t real effective because there are small family farms that have just gone by the wayside, there are so few. So to flip the coin on this, what is increasing? Farmers markets, Saturday markets, people growing their own food, growing organic food.

**CVS:** Urban farms, I love it.

**SP:** I helped start the food co-op in Corvallis and one in Newport called Oceanic. So I’m a starter. What I see now is every market you go to has an organic produce section and this was never heard of back then. You see that kind of progress, you see people making choices.

**CVS:** Well now they can make a choice, at least regarding what they buy in terms of food and that is hopeful. Of course, I mean, my goal would be every piece of produce including canned goods in any market would not only have to label it for what’s grown by GMO but also what pesticides are used in both growing and processing. How many people would buy a can of peas, or whatever they buy, if they could see the list of what those things were sprayed with?

**SP:** But the can would have to be too big to hold all that information on the label.

**CVS:** Well they could wrap the paper around three times. But why not? I think that is why there is such a huge battle over GMOs. I think it’s so ridiculous. Of course we should know. Whether they think it’s dangerous or not should have nothing to do with it. If you don’t want it, we should be able to choose. I think they see the writing on the wall. The next thing to come along is to label for pesticides. Again it’s instead of again having to buy organic to ensure that there is no pesticides we should have the choice. They should be telling us what foods have pesticides and what they are. And what the effects are. They don’t even know. But again, it’s so sensible but is it going to happen? I don’t know. We are dealing with mega giant corporations that are really really hard to stop.

**SP:** There is no moral compass there. I just came back from living in India for four years and I was at a wildlife refuge there and it was a very different environment but the news there would just break your heart to see there were more than 1000 farmers that had generation after generation of their family farm land, now gone, destroyed, because they bought the salesman’s information about GMO crops. Bought the chemicals. Went into debt. Lost the farms and committed suicide. More than 1000 suicides from farmers who bought into the addiction, bought into the promise of bigger yields that never ever transpired. Having to buy these chemicals and not harvest any seed. And I see that destruction happening world wide and I know that if you use 2,4-D or roundup you use those over and over and you have destroyed that lands growability for how many generations to come and what is happening to those farms that can’t grow anything anymore? I look at the long-term effects and I get really kind of freaked out by it when I look at it globally. I get so excited when I hear the different countries set fire to the crops. Just say no. No you aren’t going to do it here. So why are those countries so better formed

and better to take action than ours? Once again we're back to the corporate dynasty that runs our country not a democracy.

In the late '50s '60s everything had Hexachlorophene in it. Your soap, your deodorant, everything had Hexachlorophene in it. Oh, oops, Hexachlorophene has dioxin okay lets take that off the market.

**CVS:** Yeah but you know it wasn't the Americans who did that. It was the Swedish who blew the whistle. The same thing with Lysol, the active ingredient in Lysol was made by Monsanto and you know what it was? A waste product of making Agent Orange. And what do you do when you have a waste product? You either become a Superfund site and it costs you millions of dollars or you sell it as something else. You can either sell it as a product to some naive company that just wants to make something to clean your toilet with and you can also sell it to DuPont as an inert ingredient that you don't have to identify and they can put it in their pesticides as an inert ingredient. It turns out to be somebody else's toxic waste. 99% of most of the chemicals that are marketed as pesticides. That product when you buy Glyphosate is 99 percent something or other inert ingredient, which are not identified. They legally don't have to identify them and some of them are way more toxic than Glyphosate and no one has looked at the combined effects and the registration at the EPA is all based on that.