

Interviewer: I'm going to ask you a couple of generic questions and just go off and talk about whatever you want to talk about really. If you could just say your name, a little about yourself, the issues you're involved in, and your vision of change.

Lynn Bowers: Well, I am Lynn Bowers and, I am a potter and a hermit by inclination. I had absolutely no idea that I would ever be a public activist. But, I'll tell you the story of how I got into it.

LB: The summer of 2003, my husband and I were helping a friend of ours die. And that same summer there was a clear cut across from where I am sitting here. And the fella that was doing it had I think its a skidder that had a terrible high pitched whine to it. So it was going on all day, and he was night logging, I mean way past dark.

LB: You know. And finally my husband came home from being with our dying friend around 10:30 or 11 at night. And I was just crying and screaming, saying I just can't stand this anymore! And he says 'There, there dear.' like that. So, the next morning I woke up and nothing had changed, the guy was back at dawn, and I thought well crying and screaming doesn't do a damn bit of good. I have got to change my attitude. And I thought okay. I'm going to do something about this.

LB: So I started being on the phone with the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, forester and I would call him a couple times a day sometimes. So this was my education about forest practices in Oregon. And this forester was telling me how everything this guy was doing was all perfectly according to the rules.

LB: After I had been talking to this forester for a couple of weeks he said you know, one thing you can do is subscribe for notification of forest activity. Costs you five dollars a section a year. I go down to the ODF office and sign up and I started getting notifications the very next day. And within a week I was getting notifications for aerial sprays, I mean, close by here. I had no idea that was going on. And I said 'that can't be good!' This just can't be right.

LB: So I started investigating and organizing and I thought of jeez, this is just terrible luck that its happening near me. Well, the further I spread my investigation the more I found. So by 2004, I said, we need a map. So I had a friend who was working at the U of O Geography department and we found a way to do data mining off the ODF website. So we took a section down the middle of Lane County, arbitrary section, and I hand mapped all of the one whole

years worth of spray. And the whole map was covered. I thought, 'this is not an isolated situation.' This is going on all over and apparently I'm the only one who knows about it.

LB: So, I started taking this map around to everybody who I could get to sit down long enough to look at it. Including my state representative Paul Holvey. He had a copy made and he may still have it hanging in his office in Salem.

LB: So that was the beginning of it. **In 2005 we took the top five timber companies from our map and went and did prayer circles in front of their office.** I would call them up in the morning and say 'we're coming over!' Because I didn't want to scare them you know. We just are so concerned about what you're doing near our homes, we're going to come and see you. **We never had one single person come out to talk to us.**

LB: So in 2005, after that I started getting some interaction with both Beyond Toxics and NCAP, NCAP taught me all I know about what these chemicals are. And I have been on contact now with different people who have been sprayed. **And it is a miserable life. I mean this is permanent damage.**

I: Were you ever sprayed on?

LB: I was sprayed in town several different times. Twice in the parking lot of the Oak Way Mall by Rexius. I think that I have convinced them that they just shouldn't be doing it there.

Interviewer: It wasn't a helicopter spray though, right?

LB: Well...

Interviewer: Just a backpack sprayer?

LB: Yup, yup like that. And over this period of time there was this gradual dawning that I am really very chemically sensitive. I like to say that its a liability, not a defect. I have the ability to sense the presence of chemicals that overall people don't notice. So I'm personally motivated to stop this terrible practice.

I: Have you noticed it out here? Spraying nearby?

LB: Okay, within the last three or four years we had a helicopter spray within one mile of our valley. A lot of the neighbors you know were very concerned.

LB: We were able to get notification so the people nearest by could close their windows. and or evacuated. We had a ODF forester on the scene monitoring and he reported to us afterwards that it was okay, that the wind was going the other way. Well what that means is that it was going away from us but it was going toward the people in the next valley. And that doesn't count?

I: So you signed up for the notification process, and you felt they were really good at telling you when they were spraying? Because so many people in Gold Beach were saying that they would not notify them, and would say "oh sorry we forgot"

LB: Oh yeah, sorry! That does happen to us too.

I: You said you keep to yourself and that you were pushed to be involved in this, do you remember that moment where you decided, I have to do something, I have to change?

LB: Thats the first part of the story, I have got to do something about this you. It's not in my nature, I'm a shy person. This is my soap box you see where it says soap. My husband built that and we carry it to wherever i'm doing any public speaking. It terrifies me to be in public like that.

I: So we can see it right over there where they logged in 2003?

LB: And there's other this years loggin that you will have passed. There's one up in the valley there that, maybe not gonna sprayed because its more of a real estate scam than a timber operation. One of the, well one of the local bad guys.

I: What advice do you have for these communities that are currently fighting issues with pesticides?

LB: Well, I'm afraid after all these years I'm pretty skeptical about any legislative relief. As you know Beyond Toxics put an enormous amount of time and effort into their bill for notification and buffers. Which, just in the last week or so completely collapsed, and I'm not surprised. I'm just amazed to watch these regulatory agencies quick stepping around, how they can avoid

their responsibility to regulate and same deal with legislators. I'm just watching, well how do they do that to avoid their responsibility to protect the citizens of Oregon?

LB: So as a result of that for about four years now I've been involved with the community rights organizing effort. I'm chief petitioner for the support local food rights. We have a ballot initiative to outlaw growing GMOs in Lane County, we've just re-filed that. We're queuing up a ballot initiative to outlaw aerial spraying in Lane County. So you now I do have faith in the people. You know they might be swayed by industry propaganda but they might not you know in the privacy of your own home you might be able to vote for something as simple as that, no GMO, no spray.

I: Do you have more faith in a county passing this kind of legislation than the whole state?

LB: Well, it's an easier fight. Lane county you know they vote to pass to legalize marijuana. You don't have to collect you know only a fraction of the signatures to get it on the ballot as opposed to statewide. I think it can be done without spending a whole bunch of money.

I: As far as the most effective means of creating change, would you say it is political and you want to pass legislation or do you think there is other methods?

LB: I do think in this amount of time i've been working on it, we have had some effect. People are more aware that there is something really bad going on. I don't know if you all read the register guard, but there was just this old guy, it was a letter to the editor last week that if they spray this logged unit up above our mobile home park its going to kill us. I mean this old guy knows that it's gonna be a problem. It wasn't clear that he had any idea that he knew what to do about it but, he knows theres gonna be a problem. It will be interesting to see like is that timber industry gonna go ahead and in the face of that or what?

I: It's about making things publicly known. We were interviewing Carol Van Strum and that was really eye-opening. She was talking about how in recent years there has been more community organizing around pesticide use, and I am wondering if you would like to talk more about that. There was a moment when she said there wasn't much hope, but then she was thinking about it and saying how there seems like a lot of communities in Oregon starting to really care about this issue, do you feel the same way?

LB: I think that the communities around Oregon have always been really concerned but I think they've been really intimidated. I heard Kathryn say that it's really bad down there, the strife in their community. I think people are anguished about that, but still some people like the ones in Gold Beach are willing to step up and speak out, and I'm proud of them.

I: Where is the first spot where an Oregonian should start if they want to make a difference? In terms of GMOs, banning aerial pesticide spray, what is the first small step that people should be making?

LB: You start with what's going to personally impact you. Because that's your authority to act. Where ever it is!, It's the same bad guys. It's the chemical industry. They are ruthless. I'm gonna start using bad words.

I: So you start contacting Beyond Toxics or somebody like that to volunteer?

LB: They can use all the help that they can get and I think that people have to be personally creative. Follow your heart. Our neighborhood group is called Forest Lane Dwellers and our motto is all the trouble we can make for free from home.

I: What is the Forest Lane Dwellers?

LB: That's our nonprofit activist group, that's the group that subscribes for notifications, and do samples all over Lane County. We spend about \$600 to \$800 a year on subscribing for notifications.

I: When did that start up?

LB: I would say the first day of Forest Land Dwellers was when I started subscribing for notifications. And then I got my neighbors involved and helped them with that. We got a spray alert network. Whenever I get a notification that a spray is going to be affecting us close by here. We have an email network where we send out copies of that notification to everybody that is interested. I think there is about 60 or 80 people. The thing is it looks peaceful and rural but there is people living in all of these valleys. Wherever they are gonna spray, somebody is going to get hit.

I: What is your opinion with logging and clear cutting?

LB: I just hate it. But I'm not going to give those guys a bad time. I think it can be done decently with respect to the neighbors. I think massive clear cutting is just a really dumb idea. I can't imagine why they think spraying poison on the land then is a good idea. It just makes no sense to me at all. The crop they are trying to raise, the Doug Fir, they stick up they are pointy, they grow like weeds you can't stop them. The vegetation control is totally useless and a big waste of money. People have been logging these valleys for 150 years. Almost all of those were never replanted. As you can see there are lots for trees growing.

I: How long have you lived out here?

LB: Since 1972 so 40 years.

I: Are you a native Oregonian?

LB: I came from the midwest and I grew up in California. I came up here in 1960 to go to Reed College.

I: Where in the Midwest?

LB: Ohio

I: Would you say that Oregon is different than any other place you've lived?

LB: Oh yeah, its an amazingly, wonderful spot. It's paradise. You couldn't ask for better. It's just great.

I: What do you love most about it?

LB: I love the trees and I love the people.

LB: And there they are they invested their retirement money they are stuck [people who move from California to Oregon]. What's the moral value of selling somebody else your poisoned spot how can you do that. Your property values have plummeted to nothing.

I: What would you say your vision of change is?

LB: Well pretty damn soon they are gonna be out of trees. If you look at the google earth you can see the barrenness. The Siuslaw forest seems like it working pretty well. Yeah national forest model, why not.

I: Tell me again what those are?

LB: They don't do spray at all. They are using the money they are making on the thinning of their previous planation to use for restoration work on neighboring corporate forests. Really if you just leave it alone nature heals itself. This restoration work looks good on paper and it looks better than some of the other stuff but really you don't have to do much. This place, our 25 acres, we have never done anything to it. No management whatsoever. And its getting better and better all the time. If we have time i'll take you on a walk through our woods. Its gorgeous.

I: So in response to the argument that, well we need wood to build houses, would you say thinning is the most responsible?

LB: My husband is carpenter and we use wood, we burn wood, our homes are heated by wood. We're not opposed to cutting down trees but it can be done so that it still looks like a forest instead of a plantation.

I: Anything else? What gives you hope? This isn't a really happy and fun issue.

LB: I think it is fun, its pretty entertaining to see how they do that. All the kinds of explanation they come up with for very stupid ideas.

I: Have you tied your pottery in with activism at all?

LB: Its grounding. Clay is wonderful you know. Thank you students for doing this.