

# Remarks by Gertrude Jensen on the Preservation of the Columbia River Gorge on behalf of the Nature Conservancy and the Western Forestry Center

SR 32, Lecture

Columbia River Gorge Lecture Series

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JENSEN: Gertrude Jensen

AN: Mr. Short (Announcer)

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## Tape 1, Side 1

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AN: On behalf of the National Conservancy and the Western Forestry Center to present a personality that over a long span of time has concentrated and dominated the objective interest of saving the gorge. Not only from the standpoint of its scenic wonders and its technological architecture, such as the highway itself, but simply because it justifies that form of attention. Without a long introduction, suffice to say that Gertrude Jensen has served as chairman of the Columbia River Gorge Commission for 16 years and has been a champion of Gorge preservation for more than 30 years. It is a real pleasure to introduce to you Gertrude Jensen.

JENSEN: Thank you Mr. Short. I am going to repeat my remarks of May 5th at the Western Forestry Center given on Columbia Gorge Day to the Portland Women's Forum. "30 Years of Conservation of the Columbia River Gorge – 1951 to 1981." It hardly seems possible but it was 30 years that we have had that as our great project. At the beginning

in 1951 there were 96 organizations, women's organizations in the Portland Women's Forum. These are my remarks.

The great architect and master builder put more beauty into the Great Gorge of the Columbia than he did elsewhere in a like distance. Sam Lancaster said, "Let us hope with the coming years human folly will not spoil the marvelous beauty of this reason for the beautiful is as useful as the useful and sometimes more so." This is the autograph in Samuel Lancaster's book, *The Columbia – America's Great Highway from the Mountains to the Sea*. Incidentally, Mr. Lancaster, the great engineer who built the Columbia River Highway 65 years ago, opened in 1916, never drove or owned an automobile.

Marshall Dana, the late editor of the *Oregon Journal* and the advisor to the Save the Gorge Committee of the Portland Women's Forum through the years, and of which I was chairman since 1951, 30 years ago, wrote in 1967, "The River's spent a million years making this picture among the mountains. It had an obstruction but it won." The Great Gorge does not meet the criteria for a national park because of the railroads, the dams and the commercial arteries of travel. Marshall Dana was hopeful that someday it would be a national monument. As it is not only a state treasure. To me it is a great temple built not with human hands. Toward that end we have worked together since 1951, and this is 1981.

This has been the objective of the Portland Women's Forum. This has been its goal and until that time comes that it is under federal protection it will continue its guardianship of the gorge. Now it meets the seven requirements in the criteria for a Columbia Gorge National Recreational Area and also for a National Scenic and Historic Area. Crown Point is already national natural area and although it has its federal status it continues to be under the state park management of the state of Oregon. There was a two year delay because they were undecided as to the designation, historic or a scenic national area, or a national natural area. And when I received the call from the Seattle office that it would be Crown Point National Natural Area, I was filled with joy for it had been an objective for many years. The old Columbia River Highway and the Lewis and

Clark Highway in Washington could be national parkways. Perhaps someday they will be both a national scenic and historic area and two national parkways. It is not too much to hope for. I hope it will be so designated during our lifetime. As I stated the Great Gorge does not meet the criteria for a national park but it does meet the criteria for a national monument. That was Marshall Dana's wish and our goal. There is only one way the gorge can be completely safe and that is under the control of Uncle Sam.

Teddy Roosevelt proclaimed Mt. Olympus a national monument, Olympic National Monument overnight in 1906. He made it a national monument and later it became Olympic National Park. He did it overnight by presidential proclamation to protect the elk on Mt. Olympus. A national park must be proclaimed by Congress but the presidential signature alone can make an area a national monument. This also could hopefully happen in the Great Gorge of the Columbia River now. A presidential proclamation by President Reagan and later a national Recreation and Scenic Area. The Great Gorge of the Columbia River is perhaps the most threatened and unprotected of the great landscapes of America. Positive action must be taken soon or it will be too late. Its majesty and grandeur must be preserved for eternity.

In closing my remarks, I will read a letter I received on July 10th, 1952, in which gave me great encouragement to lead on. I was flying blind and so was the forum. Everyone wanted to do something but there was no pattern, no light to show us the way. The letter was from former beloved governor Oswald West, governor of Oregon from 1911 to 1915, 70 years ago. The letter was dated July 9th, 1952 and written from his Portland home on Northwest 20th Avenue. And here is the letter:

"July 9th, '52. Dear Mrs. Jensen. Congratulations upon the progress you have made in your fight to preserve the beauties of the Columbia Gorge. Most folks are more charmed by the beauties to be found upon the back of a

twenty dollar bill by Uncle Sam than those stamped upon the face of nature by God almighty. Sincerely, Oswald West.”

He died three years later at the age of 82. To the forum, I say carry on and more power to you it will be done.

And I would like to add to this a segment of a book, *Great American Conservationists* by Horace Marden Albright, one of a series of lectures given in the School of Forestry at the University of California in 1961. Mr. Albright, former director of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. is a valued friend. He presented this book of lectures to me with the inscription, “To Gertrude G. Jensen, conservator of the Columbia River Gorge with great admiration and deep appreciation of her achievement. Horace M. Albright, Portland July 12, 1962.” Mr. Albright and I took a trip up the gorge when he was here, just he and I up to Cascade Locks, over to the Washington side, up the river to White Salmon and then down the river to all the beautiful, beautiful places in the Great Gorge. It was a wonderful day that we spent together.

I will read from this book just a few lines or may I say a few paragraphs about what he says about Theodore Roosevelt:

“Theodore Roosevelt was also interested in conservation of wildlife, water parks and minerals. In 1908 he presided over one of the most notable gatherings of powerful men ever assembled in this country. It was the governors’ conference of May 13 to 15th at the White House. It thoroughly discussed the whole field of conservation of natural resources. One of the first speakers was Andrew Carnegie on ‘Conservation of Ores and Related Minerals.’”

And Andrew Carnegie, by the way was one of my grandfather's dear friends. My grandfather was William Druck of Portland.

“One of the last, Samuel Gompers, on ‘Conservation in Relation to Labor.’

On June 8th, 1906, President Roosevelt signed the Lacey Act already referred to, under which the president could set aside as national monuments areas containing historic or prehistoric sites and structures and objects of scientific interest and importance. Roosevelt, as I have mentioned before, used this Act by declaring the Grand Canyon a national monument when promoters sought to control the Canyon by filing baseless mining claims. He put monument reserves on top of forest reserves if some very important areas could not otherwise be preserved. He encouraged the creation of more national parks including such areas as Mesa Verde, Crater Lake and Wind Cave. It is interesting to observe this process in the case of the Grand Canyon, which was a forest reserve by one of these early proclamations. A wildlife reserve was created and in addition, the area was declared a national monument reservation to stop the mining claims. These reservations, one on top of the other, prevailed until the national park was created in 1920.”

This is the end of the quote about President Theodore Roosevelt in Horace Marden Albright's book of lectures on great American conservationists in 1961. During the past several years much has been done in the protection and preservation of our national scenic treasures and our heritage. The Connecticut River National Recreation

Area covers four states, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Connecticut and is managed by the National Park Service. Also, the Rhine River in Germany is very closely guarded by the government. The prime reason for this being so that the power of the government can assist in preserving its beauty...

[Tape stops]

Of the gorge. This plan was based on the report and recommendations of the Columbia Gorge Committee of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Mr. John Yeon was chairman of the Columbia Gorge Committee and prepared the recommendations for the conservation of the Great Gorge of the Columbia River so the scenery would not be ruined or affected by the building of Bonneville Dam. Mr. Dana, Mr. Marshall Dana, was chairman of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. This plan in 1937 was not carried out as the state planning board was abolished in the following year.

But in 1951 Mr. [Marium?], chief of region four, of the Park Service in the San Francisco, wrote me about this report of John Yeon's and said if I could find a copy it would be a fine guide. That was when we were flying blind and did not know what to do. That advice as like manna from heaven and has always been our guide and my bible. This guide has been requested by Harvard University and through the state librarian at Salem I had a copy made and sent to them. Also, a request from the Mississippi River Authority for our 25 year plan, and also a visit from Mr. Hunter Eu of the Taiwan Forest Bureau in the summer of 1966 in which we discussed how the gorge was saved and protected and how this could apply to Tiroka Gorge in Taiwan. His trip was sponsored by the National Park Service and World Wildlife Fund. Thank you Mr. Short.

AN: An excellent summary. Your dedication, the authority that you provide in summarizing all of these facts and data in regard to the beauties of the Columbia Gorge will be a part of an ongoing program to see it all accomplished.

**[End of Tape 1, Side 1]**

**[End of Lecture]**