

CHOOSE THE FOREST



MARGARET SCOTT

Kristen Wentworth of Astoria wrote a letter to the Oregon State Department of Forestry in July in hopes of saving a portion of old growth Clatsop Forest from being clearcut and developed into a housing project by a gyposwap the forest administrators promoted and sanctioned. Her father Norman Wentworth has spent years creating a network of trails throughout the tract that are well used and cherished.

I grew up on Claremont Road, just outside of Astoria, and adjacent to one of the timber tracts that you are considering for a swap. I speak for not only myself, but for my family, when I say that more consideration needs to be given to the land-swap policies, especially before actions are to be taken. The property that is located on Claremont Road is a gorgeous collection of new and old growth forest that my family spends time in daily. The forest looks much as the forest probably appeared in the days that Lewis & Clark were here, and this area began to be settled. Some of its old growth dates back to pre-Tillamook Burn, which as I understand is a rarity these days. When you walk along one of the trails that my dad, Norm Wentworth, has created, you are taken aback by the beauty found there. The forest pulses with life, and creatures as small as beetles, tree frogs, and a plethora of salamanders, to the majestic elk that roam freely, can be found everywhere. Compare the beauty, peace and joy found walking with my little brother, discovering all that the forest has to offer, to some far-off clearcut piece of land, and I see no contest.

I feel the quote, "We don't inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children," should be taken into consideration. We need to preserve some of our forests, even if they are in little parcels, so that someone like me, who has yet to have children, can take their little ones out to show them what Oregon's woods once all looked like. Let them discover a hidden natural trillium, roll in a bed of pine needles, see just how big a grove of cedars can get if left to grow, and watch a salamander swim in the tiny pool of a trickling stream. If I were to try to have the same learning experience with a child in a clearcut I suppose she could discover how much undergrowth takes over when a forest is lost, and maybe the biggest field of blackberry bushes she has ever seen. But I feel if you were to indeed remember and look through the eyes of a child, you would choose the forest. You would remember the joys of a tree fort, your favorite place to find flowers for your mom, or the best climbing tree around.

A parcel of land that has been logged takes many, many years to return to a forest. And even then, it will never be the same. It won't be as diverse, and many of the animals will have had to move to try to find a forest somewhere to live. We should have a combination of privately owned land, publicly owned land, logged (and hopefully reforested) land, along with older forests to create and preserve diversity in Oregon. Isn't Oregon known for its forests?

Please don't forget and overlook the wildlife that thrives in our Oregon forests. We, as a nation, have learned that we can't just move nature to an area or our convenience and expect it to flourish. We tried that with the Native Americans, and look what it did to these people, their land — and ourselves! We will be doing the same to our native plants and animals. This is how animals and plant species become extinct. Just take away all of the habitat, homes, food and breeding grounds for these animals and vegetation, and they will die. We should be able to provide safe havens for nature, places she can still reign freely, where her rules are the most important issue.

Finally, I would like to comment on the lack of involvement the Department of Forestry has offered for the public to assist in decisions facing the land that is shared by all of us. I attended the meeting that was open to the public last year (July 19, 2000) that was held in a tiny, stifling room in the basement of the Astoria Courthouse. Most people who attended the meeting couldn't even hear what was being said because they were lined up in the back of the room and spilling out into the hallway. It was held in the middle of the day on a weekday. I knew many other young and older people alike who wanted to attend the meeting but wouldn't miss work to be there. I had to take the day off. It seems that we all work hard to give money to support the Oregon Department of Forestry, but they don't seem very eager to meet with us to hear our opinions on what the public would like to be done with our money and our forests. Shouldn't we be allowed to have a say in all of this?

Please, please, please don't trade our beautiful little parcels of forests for a pile of stumps somewhere else in Oregon. Let our animals live in peace. And let our children grow up knowing what a true natural forest in Oregon looks like, which is not just a blueprint with a lot of confusing lines and money figures on it.

INVOKING THE GHOST OF KEWPIE ZIAK

I am beginning to believe that land swaps, publicly acclaimed as environmentally friendly, are actually a newer method of allowing gypo logging companies to get at public timber, leaving the public holding the bag with decimated mismanaged land that will not regrow for generations, and only with badly conceived monoculture stands of less than prime timber.

What is being called a 'land swap' seems more truthfully a land steal. A publicly-owned living forest in Clatsop County is being traded for private cut-over and sparsely reforested land for no other purpose than to butcher it in a like manner. A federal report indicates that land swaps have been unfair to the public. This particular swap is a good example of just how unfair they can be.

This is public land, after all, owned by the state — which means those of us who live on or near the land are as much its owners as any other citizens of the state of Oregon, and we especially have a large stake in its ownership.

The State Forestry only acts as manager of the public interest yet it appears to make its decision of centralizing state property from a headquarters far removed from the needs and concerns of we who are neighbors to the land, which makes up our own environment and daily lives. The desire to consolidate state forest holdings is not necessarily important to us who live on the ground. These patches of forest are of themselves very important to us as they now are.

What is to be done with these 'swapped' tracts other than log them; what are the reforestation and management plans? How does this 'swap' affect the greater ecosystem of the Columbia River? These questions are all in the public interest: are they even asked?

Gypo loggers are in the business of destroying forests. Whether or not they reforest, their only use for trees is to destroy them. But resource industries have just about been decimated here in the Pacific Northwest. There is little left of salmon or of trees in our neighborhood. All Martin Nygaard wishes to do with this living piece of forest we treasure is to destroy it for his personal profit. He has his own land, which he has apparently impatiently mismanaged and wants to dump so he can continue his immediate profit margin rather than wait for it to mature.

The 'rarity, fragility and uniqueness of the Earth' is at play here. Satellite photos show huge barren tracts of clearcut northwest land that used to be great forests. But all anyone has to do is stand on a high hill and see the ragged quilt of clearcuts, monoculture low-grade replants, and small patches of healthy forestland that gypos like Mr. Nygaard want to cut to the last tree.

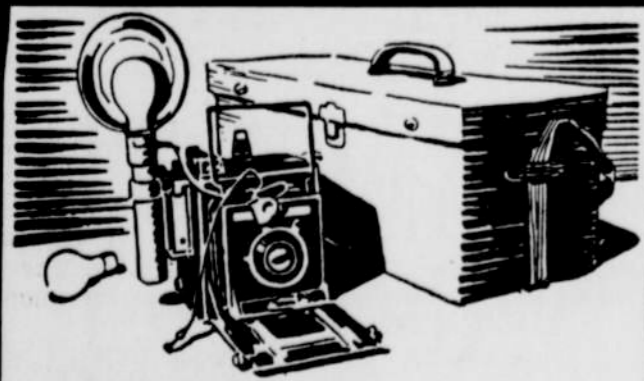
Perhaps a few folks remember Kewpie Ziak, the famous 'Environmentalist Logger' from Knappa, who died in August 1990. He forced timber companies to stop cutting eagle nesting trees, he set up a bird and wildlife sanctuary on his own land, he protected salmon habitat and hunted bear hunters with his fists.

If Kewpie were still alive he would protest this forest swap in no uncertain terms. So I wish to invoke Kewpie's spirit and quote something he said to Studs Terkel back in 1980 for the book *American Dreams: Lost & Found* that applies now as much or more than when he said it:


"The timber companies don't want a single tree standing any more. They don't understand that a tree, a snag, is not only a hotel for birds and bats and bees. They are magnificent works of art created by nature and beyond the ability of man to equal. There's a tree down the road here a few miles that's over 10 feet in diameter at the butt. At the very tip-top of it is a magnificent crown of jewels: a nest of bald-headed eagles. Timber companies are indifferent to your feelings. I don't think they have any feeling for beauty, for something that is old. The only feeling they want is tons of pulp to come out of there.

"...The timber is getting so much smaller now...I've been on the hills here and can see so far away, all this logged off land. It is almost impossible for me to comprehend that mere men destroyed all this timber. Every foot of that ground has been stomped by men. What happened to all that timber? It's one of the few things in this world that boggles my imagination."

—MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER
Statement at Oregon Dept. of Forestry
public hearing, 7/19/2000



THE COMPLEAT PHOTOGRAPHER
475 14TH ST., ASTORIA & 303 S. HOLLADAY, SEASIDE
325-0759 736-3686



Ship Inn
Fish & Chips
Imported Beer on Tap
#1 on 2nd Street
Astoria * 325-0033

Specializing in Forest Inventory
& Reforestation

PHILLIP KEIM
Forestry Technician



Office (503) 325-2690 • Cell (503) 338-9691
1505 Irving Avenue • Astoria, Oregon 97103-3721

ELIZABETH A. BALDWIN
is pleased to announce the relocation
of her office for the practice of law to
536 BOND STREET
ASTORIA OREGON 97103
Across the street from her old office
(503) 325-5137
Telephone number remains the same

HOPE L. HARRIS
LICENSED
MASSAGE
THERAPIST
503/325-2523

