

## CLOSE TO HOME

ENVIRONMENTAL BATTLES  
LOST AND WON ON 101

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FOR COAST WEEKEND

Above Willapa Bay are tumbling gunmetal clouds and intense bursts of sapphire blue. Driving U.S. Highway 101 north from the Peninsula, I find my emotions equally tangled. My eyes dart to and fro with nostalgic sideways glances. My youth is flying by.

On this bay, my brother Jeff and I camped, fished, hunted geese and green- and chocolate-headed waterfowl and hiked long miles across mudflats, shorelines and through sedges and yellow waving grasses. On the fir-lined ridges that unfurl in undulating sheets of green on green, we foraged for golden chanterelles.

We filled frayed red baskets with pungent

mushrooms and begged the neighbors to indulge in the bounty, but in the early 1960s, we were summarily dismissed. “You trying to poison me, kid? Yuk!”

We moved on, back to Mom’s kitchen. She sautéed the morsels with chopped bacon and onion, slopped in a few drams of white wine, heavy cream and a big pat of butter before pouring the whole bubbling fandango over fettuccine. And she smiled as the family tummies purred with joy, the reward of hunting and gathering. We boys were so proud!

The vast networks of forests and streams, once wild and daunting to our ancestors, were now owned by Weyerhaeuser and Crown Zellerbach, and most of the great trees were coming down. If a half-dozen

logging companies defined that process as harvesting, we two brothers used other words to describe the despoiled and ravaged landscape. The riparian zones that bordered the rivers were pummeled one by one, and the salmon disappeared in historic numbers. The forests of the Northwest were becoming shadowlands to second- and third-growth hybrid plantations.

Jeff and I fished for sea-run cutthroat, filled strings with the silver glittering fish. Mom rolled the trout in cornmeal, then fried them in olive oil with a handful of garlic. Dang, they were so fresh and so good. My father, a ghetto kid from South Side Chicago, could never eat enough. Now the fish is endangered.

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Sunset at High Point, Long Island, Wash.



Great Blue Herons (the camera looking north toward Long Island, Wash.).

DWIGHT CASWELL PHOTOS