

1963 park managers' meeting



## CHAPTER 4

### *There Is Money but There Are Also Strings:* **Uncertainty and Excitement in the Era of Expansion, (1957 - 1970)**

In 1964, Dave Talbot took over a park system that was exploding. Tourists and residents were pouring into parks faster than they could build campgrounds. Talbot was the fourth Park Superintendent in as many years. There were tensions between Highway leadership and park management, the Salem office and field staff, the new college grads and the old hands. Taking it all in, Talbot thought:

*This machine can't possibly function.... [and yet] [i]t functions very well.... It was a total mess, in my opinion.... as I walked in the door, I very much thought about these things and realized I had a rough gem in my hands that I didn't really care so much for, all of the inner workings of the thing, but I sure did know that I ought not to screw it up.<sup>142</sup>*

The creation of the Parks Advisory Committee in 1956 solidified the importance of well managed state parks to Oregonians. But figuring out what “well-managed” would look like—how the “rough gem” might be cut—was still very much a work in progress. The fight for the soul of the department (see Chapter 3) wasn't over. And the issues of the 1950s, namely rapid growth and insufficient funding, continued into the next decades, despite the administration's best effort to plan for the future.

The future, it turned out, was less about boats and more about the bureaucracies, internal and external, that would shape how park people did business. Federal programs, recreation growth, and a new focus on the ranger as a trained professional were designed to answer the concerns of the public in 1956. Debates over what it meant to be a “park man” defined the hiring and firing of a growing system, which incorporated more programs for preservation

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142 David G. Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” April 10, 1990 Interview with Lawrence C. Merriam and Elisabeth Walton Potter, 5 – 6, Folder: Administrative History – Oral History – David G. Talbot, Director, 1964 – 1992, Box: Staff Biographies and Oral Histories, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection, Oregon State Parks and Recreation, Salem, OR.

and conservation that required specialization. New layers of bureaucracy and accountability accumulated, to an extent that would have sent Sam Boardman into fits. Besides new bureaucracies creaking into place above them, park personnel had to reckon with the cultural shifts that were changing the country—and changing the parks right along with it.

Many of those who worked to expand the park system in the 1950s imagined “the people” only as the burgeoning middle class of the era. But this narrow notion of inclusivity would be challenged in the 1960s and 1970s, when new generations of park goers began to forge their own relationships to nature. Like Boardman, the superintendents that followed bristled at the supposed misuse of the landscape by the young, the poor, or the different. The places set aside during Boardman’s tenure as sites for future generations to commune with the natural world were also sites of generational conflict, sexual harassment, and battles over use. In some instances, parks operated at the cutting edge. In others, parks were ill equipped to handle the changing physical and social landscape. The 1960s and early 70s saw Oregonians trying to balance both recreation and appreciation, both use and preservation, both ambitious plans and budgetary realities—balances that remain hard to define and even harder to attain. Oregon State Parks took on a familiar shape in this era, with camping facilities, recreation, coastal management, and historical interpretation becoming part of its official scope. And many of the struggles of the era—struggles against sexual harassment and racism, struggles to keep up with demand and under budget—have persisted to the present.

### *We Were Spending... in Big Chunks:* **A Flood of Money and Bureaucracy**

While rangers in the field were reckoning with an onslaught of campers in the 1950s and 1960s, Salem staff dealt with new plans and unexpected expansions. The pivot to include recreation was made official in 1959, when (at the urging of William Tugman’s committee) the Oregon legislature added “Recreation” to the name of the Parks division. To Mark Astrup, who took over from Armstrong in 1961, this was part of the shift toward “people use” after the Boardman era. One of Astrup’s early steps was to develop the first Oregon Outdoor Recreation Plan, completed in 1962. This plan for the first time took a comprehensive inventory of park assets and suggested paths forward based on inputs across multiple agencies. A precursor to the SCORPs (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans) of later years, the 1962 plan was a defining feature of the rest of the 1960s. Boardman’s haphazard philosophy was being replaced by bureaucratic acronyms—and fact-based decision-making. Astrup came to a department where he saw “no organization,” and imposed at least the bare outlines of a plan. Looking back on the 18 months he had as superintendent before he was pushed out by Governor Mark O. Hatfield, Astrup saw the



*The Legislature added the word “Recreation” in 1959 to the Parks Division name, signaling a shift towards “people use.”*



*The National Register of Historic Places is funded through the National Park Service, but administered state by state. In Oregon, that responsibility rests with Oregon State Parks and its State Historic Preservation Office.*

1962 plan as one of “two outstanding things” he had accomplished. The other? The hiring of Dave Talbot, who brought political proficiency to his predecessors’ penchant for planning and professionalism.<sup>143</sup>

Just as the increased federal push for roads guided the state of Oregon to reconsider the role of parks in the Highway Department, state and federal pushes for environmental and cultural protections would shape the continued growth in responsibilities within Oregon State Parks. Federal money for nature conservation and historical preservation transformed both from niche goals loosely linked to parkland and recreation respectively to specific agency designations in need of trained personnel. The push for conservation gave Oregon parks

143 Mark Astrup, “Interview with Mark Henry Astrup, Third Superintendent of Oregon State Parks,” Interview with Elisabeth Walton Potter, May 9, 1981, pp. 1, 14 – 15, 19, Folder: Administrative History—Oral History—Mark H. Astrup, Superintendent 1961 – 1962, Box: Staff Biographies and Oral Histories, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection; Outdoor Recreation Resource Review Committee, “Public Outdoor Recreation Areas: Acreage, Use, Potential,” (United State Government Printing Office, 1962): pp. 97 – 101; Lawrence C. Merriam, *Oregon’s Highway Park System, 1921 – 1989: An Administrative History, Including Historical Overview and Park Directory* (Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept, 1992), pp. 44 – 45, 49; Thomas R. Cox, *The Park Builders: A History of State Parks in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p. 173.

a role in wetlands and waterways. Federal historic preservation initiatives added what became the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to the Parks and Recreation portfolio. These programs required the rapid growth and professionalization of a park staff that was already stretched to the breaking point. Oregon State Parks grew faster in the 1960s than any other era, but with this growth came confusion over the scope, mission, and very identity of the service.<sup>144</sup>

Federal initiatives may have brought national funds to Oregon problems, but they also strained state systems, sometimes without obvious benefit, and tweaked the anti-government sensibilities of some in Oregon. Talbot remembered that the Park Advisory Committee and Highway Department looked on the new programs of the 1960s with skepticism, because “we were starting to spend money in big chunks.” Just as during Boardman’s tenure, the Highway Department kept an eye on the bottom line, and new programs seemed to threaten the budget. Most brought in new money, but not necessarily enough to cover the costs. Though the highway people were nervous, these new initiatives were exactly what park advocates had been clamoring for in 1956. As Oregon State Parks and Recreation moved into these areas officially, they had to build expertise in areas unfamiliar to current staff. They also had to reckon with skeptics among their supporters—people not necessarily invested in the new directions the division had been mandated to follow.<sup>145</sup>

### *We Were Amateurs:* **Parks Tackle History**

Historical and cultural preservation had been a part of Oregon’s parks since before Oregon State Parks was created. From at least the 1900s, there had been movements to preserve Oregon’s cultural assets, the long-mythologized “pioneer” era of the state (see Chapter 1). Oregon State Parks initially fell into historic preservation and education through this legacy, outsourcing expertise to “Friends” groups or other interested parties. But the local heritage organizations that were tasked with historic preservation and education were too small and too sporadically funded to deal with the growing number of historic sites Oregonians wanted to protect. This issue had been brought to the attention of the Parks Advisory Committee in 1956 during public hearings, but it would take nearly a decade before the state of Oregon had a concise plan for the management of cultural resources.

In 1963, an act of the Oregon legislature gave the State Highway Commission the ability to acquire cultural, scientific, and historic sites with Highway Commission funds from tax revenue. No longer limited to the 1925 statute that had technically only allowed acquisitions of such lands to those adjacent to

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144 Elisabeth Walton Potter, “The National Historic Preservation Act at Fifty,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 117:3 (Fall 2016): pp. 378 – 401.

145 Merriam, *Oregon’s Highway Park System, 1921 – 1989*, pp. 73 – 74.





*More than parks and waysides: a 1963 Oregon law gave the State Highway Commission the green light to acquire cultural, scientific, and historic sites using Highway Commission funds from tax revenue. Today, there are dozens of historic sites in the system.*



highways, this amendment permitted state parks to add not just scenic areas, but educational and culture assets wherever needed in Oregon. Some of these heritage sites were new; others had previously been under a patchwork of local protections. The 1963 statute placed much of the burden of preservation on the Highway Commission.<sup>146</sup>

State park administrators had to build capacity in a hurry. Although there had long been a push for historic preservation amongst park people, from Robert Sawyer and Jessie Honeyman to Mark Astrup, Dave Talbot, and most of the 1956 committee, there was not yet expertise in the department on preservation, history, or any of the other specialties required. We “found ourselves playing defense with people who were very knowledgeable in the business,” Dave Talbot later recalled, “And we were amateurs, dealing with people who wanted us to do this or not do that.”<sup>147</sup> In 1966, the first professionally trained State

146 Oregon Chapter 601: “AN ACT Relating to acquisition and administration of historic sites by the State Highway Commission; Amending ORS 366.205, 366.345, and 366.350,” *Oregon Laws 1963*, pp. 1234 – 1236, found in Folder: Parks and Recreation Statutes, Box: Legislation and Statutes, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection.

147 David G. Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” May 16, 1990, Interview with Lawrence C. Merriam and Elisabeth Walton Potter, p. 60, Folder: Administrative History – Oral History – David G. Talbot, Director, 1964 – 1992.

Park historian was brought on staff.<sup>148</sup> Elisabeth Walton [Potter] would work closely with Dave Talbot on issues of preservation and protection of historic areas for most of the next three decades. She would work not only to develop historic sites under the state parks umbrella, but also to aid local museums and work on educational and public programming initiatives.<sup>149</sup> In 1966, the federal government passed the Historic Preservation Act and the following year, 1967, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was created to aid in managing the federal monies devoted to historic preservation. Talbot remembered inheriting the program:

*The Secretary of the Interior is writing the governor asking, ‘Who do you want to have handle this program? There is money, but there are also strings’. So it ends up that Parks enabling statutes has the word historic in it, and there is nobody else that does other than a university, and nobody wanted to do that... so it ended up in our shop.*

This was not, in fact, a coincidence. Those who had originally pushed for Oregon state parks and scenic roadways in the 1910s and 20s had wanted to preserve history as well as nature. Under the shadow of Boardman this part of parks legacy had languished, but when new laws spotlighted history these old intentions began to be fulfilled.<sup>150</sup>

But in this early era of cultural preservation in the park system, places of importance to dominant White narratives of Oregon history were highlighted. Sites important to Oregon’s Indigenous nations were neglected—or even damaged. A quarter century later in 1990, Dave Talbot noted, “the archeological side is still a problem. I don’t know how we’ll ever get it fixed.” Mythic pioneer narratives had developed alongside the story of Oregon State Parks, but the stories of the people who had lived in the region before colonization were largely ignored, appropriated, missing—or outright fabricated by White rangers. Numerous parks held cultural significance for Indigenous communities, and were filled with artifacts of Indigenous culture and life. No stated policy for these areas existed. Indigenous cultural objects and even human remains were regularly relocated, or worse, collected as trinkets by park staff. As parks began to incorporate education into the park experience, programs occasionally saw volunteers and rangers in “Indian dress.” Most of the time, these volunteers and rangers were not members of Indigenous communities sharing their own culture

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148 William A. Langille filled the role of historian during Boardman’s tenure, though he was professionally trained as a forester. See Box: W.A. Langille Articles—The Oregon Motorist, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection; Astrup, “Interview with Mark Henry Astrup,” pp. 18 - 19.

149 State Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, Dec 1, 1966, p. 4, Folder: State Parks Advisory Committee Proceedings 1956 - 1972, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection; Elisabeth Walton, “Historic Preservation Program” (1973), Folder: Administrative - Park Planning - Interpretation - Interpretive Planning, 1972 - 1987, Box: Planning - Interpretation and Bicentennial, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection. Elisabeth Walton Potter also shaped the history of Oregon State Parks itself; many of the sources used to build this history reflect her choices about what to preserve and what to discard.

150 Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” May 16, 1990, p. 61.



*Predictably, the places and stories that Parks deemed historically significant dismissed (or misrepresented) Indigenous history and culture.*

with visitors. Rather, they were dressing up in a mishmash of “authentic... Indian outfits,” meant as spectacle put on by and for White people. This was a continuation of a long tradition of redface in the Pacific Northwest, an assault on Indigenous culture that would continue with little comment into the next decades and beyond. Although the times were changing, Parks would take a while to catch up (See Chapter 7). There is no record of when White parks personnel realized they shouldn’t be playing Indian.<sup>151</sup>

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151 “DISTRICT IV” *Oregon State Park Times* 2:1, Dec.-Jan. 1964, p. 4 Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1963 to 1964, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection; “Office,” *Oregon State Park Times* 8:2[?], July 1969, p. 27, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1969, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994. Many of the newsletters preserved in this collection have multiple missing pages; [?] after the volume:issue numbers indicates missing pages somewhere in the document, which in turn mean that the cited page is likely to have been, rather than guaranteed to have been, in the issue indicated; “Office,” *Oregon State Park Times* 8:2[?], July 1969, p. 27, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1969; For use of redface by White-identifying parks personnel, see “DISTRICT II,” *Oregon State Park Times* 9:3, Dec 1966, p. 7, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; Phil Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), esp. chap. 4. Native people who choose to wear traditional dress while working in parks are, of course, categorically different. In 1964, Osage teacher (and future Osage Nation leader) George Tallchief donned elements of regalia when doing interpretive work at Wallowa Lake. The newsletter writers appear to have been unaware that he was an actual Native person. “DISTRICT IV,” *Oregon State Park Times* 2:6, Oct.-Nov. 1964, p. 3 Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1963 to 1964, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “Former Osage Chief and Educator George Eves Tall Chief Walks On,” *Indian Country Today* Aug 14, 2013; Vincent Schilling, “Boy Scouts ‘have been one of the worst culprits’ of cultural appropriation,” *Indian Country Today* Sept 14, 2019.



## *Private Property:* **State Parks Fight for Beaches, Waterways, and Trails**

Amidst a growing national movement for government involvement in environmental conservation, many organs of the state and federal government took on expanded roles. Most often, Oregon State Parks and Recreation ended up with responsibility for the places where nature and recreation met. Vast new spaces and places were put under the control of the division in the 1960s and 70s. The most famous of these places was where state parks began—the long, long ribbon of public land that was the Oregon beach system. Most of the coast had been set aside as a public “highway” in 1913 at the behest of Governor Oswald West. Whether or not this was originally meant in earnest (see Chapter 1), it became clear by the 1960s that most Oregon beaches were not and had not been automobile highways—but they were still presumed to be public. Debates over public or private ownership came to focus on the “dry sand” portions of the beaches, seldom used for vehicular transportation and not explicitly covered in any Oregon law. In some communities along the shore, “private property” signs and fencing threatened beach access that had always been assumed to be guaranteed. Many still-unfenced areas of the beach still legally allowed automobile traffic, which threatened the ecosystem and endangered those Oregonians relaxing on the sand. Starting in 1947 and continuing over the next decades, the Highway Commission began restricting automobiles to fewer and fewer areas of the beach. But where should Oregon Parks and Recreation fit in? <sup>152</sup>

Public outcry over the beach issue spurred the Oregon legislature to act. In her 1977 history of how parks came to manage Oregon beaches, Kathryn Straton wrote that “the law was a response from a gradually developing political conscience which places value on aesthetics as well as economics, preservation as well as progress, conservation as well as development.” It was also a way of catching the laws up to the customs. <sup>153</sup>

After a few false starts, the whole mess became a park responsibility. Legislation to turn the beaches from fictive highways to actual State Recreation Areas in 1963 failed. In 1964, the Parks Advisory Committee put their weight behind the proposal. In 1965, buoyed by new attention and support, new legislation made Oswald West’s “highways” into the protected areas he’d dreamed of. Although this move clarified the legal standing of public beaches, their boundaries remained vague. There was no clear understanding on where the beach definitively started and what exactly was protected—only a general sense of public ownership. Then a cluster of cloistered cabanas forced the issue. <sup>154</sup>

In the summer of 1966, the Surfsand Motel in Cannon Beach fenced in the shoreline adjacent to their establishment for a series of beachfront private

152 Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” April 10, 1990, p. 4; Kathryn A. Straton, *Oregon’s Beaches: A Birthright Preserved* (Salem: Oregon State Parks and Recreation Branch, 1977): p. 7.

153 Straton, *Oregon’s Beaches*, 2.

154 State Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, Dec 3, 1964, p. 3, Folder: State Parks Advisory Committee Proceedings 1956 – 1972; Straton, *Oregon’s Beaches*, 19.



*Playing on the beach was, and is, a “birthright preserved.” The Beach Bill also directed that the ocean shore be administered as a state recreation area*

cabanas, blocking public movement along the beach at high tide. Public outcry was swift, followed by private backlash among property owners who wanted to preserve exclusive beachfront for themselves. Some pushed for the abolition of public beaches altogether, arguing that their origin as “highways” had been a trick, and thus the whole enterprise was illegitimate. Parks and Highways leadership jumped into the fray, trying to find precedents for public use and work their way through the practicalities of defining a shoreline. In 1967, newly-elected Governor Tom McCall made public beaches his signature issue (with his signature flamboyance), and legislation prepared in part by parks staff was walked through the Oregon Legislature. The Beach Bill was passed in 1967, defended in court for the next few years, and affirmed and expanded in 1969. It confirmed that the vast majority of Oregon’s beaches were to be publicly owned and managed. The law was now clear, but getting the public to their beaches was an ongoing issue. Oregon State Parks would continue to grapple with beach access and accessibility long after the dust from the Beach Bill fight had settled.<sup>155</sup>

As Oregon State Parks pushed into the ocean, it was also thrown into the rivers. A nationwide movement for preservation spurred on state campaigns for Scenic Waterways (established in 1969) and Scenic Trails (established in 1971). “All of sudden,” Talbot dryly noted of the former, “I had a new baby born in the program.” And dealing with waterways was fussy, as Oregon State Parks had to

155 Straton, *Oregon’s Beaches*, 21 – 33; Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” May 16, 1990, pp. 66 – 72; Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1994).



*Scenic Waterways (established in 1969) and Scenic Trails (established in 1971) added more complexity and administrative work to a changing State Parks Division.*

zone the relevant rivers and inform property owners of certain limits to what now could or could not be done on their land. The goal of the program was to maintain a protected view from the river for those who used it recreationally. Most property owners, Talbot claimed diplomatically, had been quick to comply, as they were just as invested in the health and beauty of the rivers as the “dummies” in Salem that came in to enforce regulations. Many recreational users of the rivers, however, resented the new kinds of permitting and regulation. Especially in the early era of river management, waterways management was treacherous. Men could lose their careers if they were seen as too zealous or too lax in their regulation of rivers. Dave Talbot suggested that his role as a regulator of the riverways made him unwelcome in his hometown of Grants Pass, but that he was too soft for other members of his team, who saw any compromise with landowners as “selling the farm.” Disagreements led to resignations on more than one occasion. Talbot framed these outbursts as proof of the passion that his people brought to issues of conservation, and deemed the Scenic River legislation more or less successful.<sup>156</sup>

The Recreational Trails bill more noticeably lacked the teeth to be enacted as effectively as its boosters had hoped. The National Trails System Act of 1968 laid out an ambitious plan for long-distance trails criss-crossing the United States—with one of the first such trails, Pacific Crest, eventually running

156 Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” May 16, 1990, pp. 78 – 84.

through California, Oregon, and Washington. Many states crafted their own legislation to build trails past those in the federal mandate. Trail enthusiasts had passed a bill giving Oregon State Parks the ability to make scenic trails, but there was no roadmap within it to successfully negotiate land use or compel land seizure. Moreover, although rural property owners were at least somewhat acclimated to the notion of shared management in waterways, land use for trails was something new and threatening. Some worried that trail creation would infringe on property rights, or that the users of the proposed trails would harm the property and persons of those who lived next to them. The result of this initiative in the 1970s was the creation of numerous *plans* to create elaborate trail systems, but very few actual miles of trails.

The Willamette Greenway, one such ambitious failure (discussed at length in Chapter 5), was later seen by many as a dismal sign of hardships to come. These federal projects gave State Parks the clout and budget of a key state agency, but with them came strings. Federal and state involvement in private properties cost the park system political capital, sometimes for only small tangible gains. Some areas were protected, but others were necessarily ignored or abandoned as outside of the scope of the federal initiative. There was also a real concern of overreaching federal oversight on state issues. Just as Sam Boardman scoffed at CCC camp bureaucrats, Oregonians of the 1960s and 1970s were hesitant to put trust in the federal government when it came to state issues and assets.<sup>157</sup>

These public, and occasionally explosive, fights in the legislature over conservation and cultural issues placed the Oregon State park system at the forefront of land protections. What had begun as a small organization designed to acquire roadside viewpoints was now an advocate for land usage, heritage issues, and wildlife protections. The list of programs grew, and so did the park budget. But at the same time, campers demanded parks, the highway commission demanded a balanced budget, and the new roles expected of staff demanded new skills. A bevy of new hires and a top-down pressure for professionalization pushed many of the old guard from reluctance to the edge of revolt.

### *The One Who Meets the Public:* **Rangers Chafe at Salem Mandates**

As parks grew (but not fast enough) the roles and responsibilities of rangers also adapted to the new park system (but again, not fast enough). The role of the park ranger, formally the park caretaker, was one that in the 1950s, had scarcely changed from the role that Sam Boardman had defined during the 1930s. These were men with a love of the natural world and an eye toward maintaining park properties. As the complexities of the parks grew due to camping facilities, the role of the park ranger grew in scope. But the job remained geared toward maintenance. In 1957, the rangers at last got the uniforms Boardman had

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157 Talbot, "Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks," May 16, 1990, pp. 74 – 90..

urged, which were gray with green shoulder patches—but underneath the new uniforms, it was still a blue-collar job. The cosmetic change gave them an air of authority without altering the essentials. By the 1960s, as park management gained traction as a professional field wholly separate from maintenance or engineering, the role of the park ranger was revisited.<sup>158</sup>

Harold Schick, who took over after Astrup was pushed out by Governor Hatfield in 1962, made professionalization a priority. Schick was the first park administrator professionally trained in park management. Boardman and Armstrong had both come up through the Highway Department. Mark Astrup, Schick's immediate predecessor, had cut his teeth on National Parks, but his training was as a landscape architect. Like Astrup, Schick saw the park system as outdated, in need of modern natural resources practices administered by trained professionals if it was to live up to its potential as what Schick called the "playground of the nation." The men handpicked by Sam Boardman and brought up on a healthy dose of folksy reverence were ill prepared to handle larger and more complex parks. Prior to state parks, Schick had worked with the Salem-Marion-Polk Regional Parks department. Though the systems were similar, he noted that the scale he was operating on with state parks dwarfed his previous experiences. And the pushback on professionalization was categorically more fearsome. Schick lasted two years.<sup>159</sup>

Professionalization in the 1960s meant a movement away from maintenance and caretaker responsibilities and towards more polished, public-facing roles of visitor service and education. Under Boardman, the interpretive roles of a caretaker were present, but more nebulous. Boardman had no formal parks training, and neither did his staff. He may have dreamed of parks specialists with a wide suite of interpretive skills (see Chapter 2), but the primary role of caretakers had been protection and maintenance. Now, as more and more people flooded parks, caretakers were also tasked with the role of wildlife specialist, teacher, and Oregon spokesperson, a role some did not relish. At the same time, work once handled on the park level, like park planning and engineering, was now handled by the trained experts in the Salem office. The men that spent their careers in parks were suddenly answering to recent college graduates who had never dug a ditch.

Schick's educational background and desire for systems and order marked him as an outsider. And his shift in management style had reverberating consequences. The staff was becoming divided by education level, age, and priorities. Those who had worked within the Park system since its inception resented

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158 Merriam, *Oregon's Highway Park System, 1921 – 1989*, p. 44.

159 "Parks Chief Sure System Will Grow," 1962, Folder: Administrative History – Biography – Harold Schick, Superintendent 1962 – 1964, Box: Staff Biographies and Oral Histories, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection; Tom Wright, "State Parks Chief Switched to New Post in Surprise Move," *The Statesman [Journal]* March 23, 1962; "Schick Is Chosen as Parks Director," *Heppner Gazette-Times* May 24, 1962, p. 2:2; Elisabeth Walton Potter to Jo Ann [Cline] Schick, Feb 28, 2000, Folder: Administrative History – Biography – Harold Schick, Superintendent 1962 – 1964, Box: Staff Biographies and Oral Histories, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection.



changes in style and leadership, and the new folks coming in looked at the older staff with derision. The old guard, Talbot speculated, looked at the new college-educated young leadership with one thought: “those ‘idiots’ from Salem are going to screw everything up.”<sup>160</sup>

Schick, the head “idiot from Salem,” attempted to differentiate the park system proper, and its staff, from the maintenance crews of the highway department. Educational requirements and title changes (from Foreman to Park Manager) were only the most visible of these shifts. Schick also hoped that the work and the mindset of park employees would move with the times. He worked to place more interpretive signage, and to push the workers into embracing their role as educators. But he quickly found that although he could compel the men running parks to put up the signs, he couldn’t ensure that those signs would be maintained. Downed and neglected interpretive signs might not teach visitors any lessons, but they sent a clear one to the folks up in Salem.<sup>161</sup>

Undaunted, Schick worked to create information booths, slide programs, and nature trails, the success of which he touted in a 1964 staff newsletter. But however much Schick might frame these changes as victories, many on his staff remained rigidly opposed to the new order. Schick noted in a newspaper article, when comparing this job to his previous positions, that “it is also harder to keep contact with the man with the shovel, the one who meets the public.” This disconnect was certainly felt in both directions. The rangers and caretakers that cut their teeth in the Boardman and Armstrong eras did not appreciate or comply with the changes in procedure. Despite the friction, Schick saw the importance of a well-trained staff. “It is real [*sic*] important to have high quality personnel in such places as registration booths at parks and camping places. This is the first public contact some tourists have in Oregon and they ask such varied questions.” But these mandates fell on deaf ears. After fighting the tide for two years, Schick left Oregon for a position in Philadelphia. Schick’s successor Dave Talbot said his predecessor’s changes “raised holy heck, but... laid the foundation for a professional organization.”<sup>162</sup> The ground had been broken, but Talbot would still have difficulties fostering the growth of professionalism in the organization.<sup>163</sup>

Dave Talbot replaced Harold Schick at the end of 1964 and remained at the head of Oregon State Parks until 1992. Like Schick, Talbot had been professionally trained. Unlike Schick, he had worked regularly with both Oregon parks and the Highway Department as a recreation director prior to his new appointment. Officially, the Highway Department was looking for someone within their organization with five years of park administration experience and

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160 Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” April 10, 1990, p. 7.

161 Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” April 10, 1990, pp. 7-8.

162 Merriam, *Oregon’s Highway Park System, 1921 – 1989*, p. 71.

163 “WHAT WE’RE DOING,” *Oregon State Park Times* 2:5 [?], Aug – Sept 1964, p. 3, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1963 to 1964; “Parks Chief Sure System Will Grow.” On Schick’s preference for college-trained staff, see Don Cochran, interview with Margie Walz, Oct 16, 2008, found in “Three Rivers District Oral History Project” (Plymouth, MN: Three Rivers District Administrative Center, 2008 [ongoing?]); “One of Current Staff to fill Parks Post,” *Capital Journal* Nov. 27, 1964, p. 11.

a college degree. Unofficially, after Schick's tenure, there seems to have been a desire for someone who already knew the region and the workers. All three of the finalists were familiar names to the Highway Department. Talbot, ambitious, politically savvy, and young for the position at 31, got the job.<sup>164</sup>

Talbot's initial reaction to the Park staff was similar to Schick's. "When I looked at the kind of people, the structure, communications and lines of responsibility and all that, it was a total mess," he later reflected. Talbot was a young professional trained in the latest in parks policies, ready to make a splash in the world of state parks. He saw a lot wrong with the system as it was. But he also recognized that, however "wrong" it was, the parks system was working—"the output of the product was terrific." Talbot, like Schick, saw a lack of education, a lack of training, and holes in programming and interpretation. But he also noted a widespread devotion to the park system. So, Talbot decided that any changes would need to be slow. He remembered thinking "I ought not try to change the institutional personality overnight. The group would have to do it themselves."

Talbot knew he needed to find footing with the park staff, but he also had to convince the Highway Department that he could be trusted not to "go crazy and start spending a lot of money." Talbot, at least as much as Boardman, would have to fight for every penny from the Highway Fund. He noted that, for those that held the purse strings, "the money goes for roads, and the money goes for asphalt on new roads." Moving into the 1970s, Talbot would have to convince not only a reluctant staff but a skeptical series of bosses that the new complexities of the park system were necessary. And he would have to do so while also taking up the same battle for expansion that had been raging since the 1950s.<sup>165</sup>

## *Smile – Company's Coming:* **The Public Demands Growth**

In the 1960s, just as Armstrong's report had predicted, the tourist industry in Oregon boomed, and the strain on the campsites and parks boomed right along with it. In 1964, more than 210,000 people were turned away because the "full" sign was up at many campgrounds. Frustrated campers, taxed resources, and exhausted park personnel defined this era of rapid growth. In his first year as superintendent, Dave Talbot urged his staff to (cheerfully) brace for another summer season:

*The theme of Oregon's 1965 tourist promotion is 'Smile — company's coming!' While this is but a slogan and primarily intended for chambers of commerce, service station operators, and restaurant waitresses, I cannot think*

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164 Floyd McKay, "State Park Chief Search Narrows To 3 Assistants," *Statesmen Journal* Nov 26, 1964; State Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, Dec 3, 1964, p. 4, Folder: State Parks Advisory Committee Proceedings 1956 – 1972.

165 Talbot, "Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks," April 10, 1990, pp. 5, 11.

*of a more appropriate thought to convey to you as we enter our heavy-use summer season... The very people whom you seek to serve will be the greatest sources of frustration and disappointment in the months ahead, but their pleasure and appreciation are your constant reward.*

The concern among park employees, aside from their own frayed nerves, was how many visitors would even fit into the current system. By 1965, 17 million visitors were coming through state parks. Glenn Jackson of the Highway Commission cautioned that “20 million visitors was ‘about the limit’ – then the federal government must take over the cost of providing the public facilities.” Park staff felt the strain on resources, lamenting in staff newsletters the entitlement of some peak season campers. One woman was told that the campground was full at Cape Lookout, so she left her trailer parked in the roadway, blocking traffic, and started knocking on trailer doors until she found someone who was about to leave. Her success was met with irritation among park rangers. In 1967, a ranger complained:

*The more they get, the more they want, tourists are getting harder to please. One woman called Betty [Davis] asking the name of a park in Central Oregon which had hot and cold showers, a play area for the children, and a boat dock, and where her family could water ski and camp near the water.... Another insisted on being told what spray was used in Central Oregon parks to keep the rattlesnakes out.*

Tales of the latest unusual demands tourists had made of the “Betty Davis Telephone Service” became a regular feature of staff newsletters.<sup>166</sup>

More than the demands for amenities, campers called Davis demanding more access. In 1969, the *Oregonian* reported that five out of every six campers were turned away each summer weekend at more popular parks. The Oregon State Parks system was reaching a breaking point and the public was noticing. As Talbot later remembered,

*in the late '60s and early '70s we were turning people away in droves... I can't recall where or when, but I remember Glenn Jackson just made a decision... 'I think it's time to build some more campsites,' and in the conversation somebody said, 'How many?' And he said 'Well, How about a thousand?' And we did.*

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166 “Oregon Park System Known as Best in Nation, Campsites have Modern Luxuries” *Oregonian*, Sept. 5, 1965, 92; “Superintendent’s Note,” *Oregon State Park Times* 3:1, May 1965, p. 1, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “Private Park Concept Watched as Solution to Camping Crush” *Oregonian*, July 24, 1966, 25; “Cape Lookout,” *Oregon State Park Times* 4:2, Aug 1966, p. 4, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “NEWS FROM THE FIELD,” *Oregon State Park Times* 5:2, Aug 1967, p. 1, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1967 to 1968, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “DISTRICT I,” *Oregon State Park Times* 4:2, Aug 1966, p. 2, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994.

Jackson's 1,000 sites were the last major campgrounds built until the 1990s, but didn't even meet the ever-increasing demands of the 1970s. Faced with overflowing campgrounds and wanting to avoid the aggravation of turning people away, staff spearheaded a reservation system to avoid the gridlock of the first-come first-served system that had previously dominated campsites. This measure helped, but the park system in the 1960s and 70s simply could not accommodate the growing number of campers. This issue would only be compounded as funding began to dry up in the new decade.<sup>167</sup>

The call to "Smile" was a small part of a broader push toward more visitor-oriented work. After Schick's tenure, Talbot might initially have seemed like a welcome respite to staff who thought that they could return to the "good old days" when parks were about maintenance rather than education. But Talbot would orchestrate a fair bit of change, albeit slowly. Oregon State Parks and Recreation would now demand new skills and new standards. Talbot saw the toll professionalization took on the old guard, those men who could accomplish anything, who loved parks, but who lacked the education and long-range planning that would define the upper management of the 1970s and 1980s. He admired the old-timers in park positions as "self-made people for the most part who had risen in life through sheer determination, guts and native intelligence." But he also noted that they were, at their heart, "highway guys." Talbot echoed the fears of the Portland Chamber of Commerce a decade prior. Could men trained in highway maintenance be park men? As much as Talbot admired the work ethic of the staff he inherited, he also viewed them with skepticism. His solution was to infuse into the old staff more college-educated park specialists to slowly change the park system from the inside. But in moving toward a more educated staff, Talbot mourned the loss of the chummy, almost familial atmosphere woven through the old department, a "love affair with one another, the social group."<sup>168</sup>

This love affair can be seen clearly in the staff newsletters, started in 1963 during Harold Schick's tenure. Used as a means of tracking projects throughout the state, early newsletters also included news on families, banter between park managers, kudos from park visitors and Salem staff, and a fraternal tone among those who fit in with the "ranger" ethic. These newsletters were also a means of creating clear distinctions between the park staff and secretaries, rural and urban, young and old. Perhaps written in good fun, this "love affair" shared among those dedicated to parks was an exclusive club, not just based on education or outlook, as Talbot intimated, but on a wider notion of belonging that the rangers rigidly cultivated.

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167 "Oregon '69: The Future of Oregon" *Oregonian* Feb. 2, 1969, p. 53; Talbot, "Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks," April 10, 1990, p. 22.

168 Talbot, "Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks," April 10, 1990, pp. 10, 28.

## *The Girl with the Pretty Eyes:* **Women Forge a Path into Parks Careers**

This fraternity of rangers, so admired by Dave Talbot, was built and maintained as a boy's club. Women, long a part of the state parks system, both in the Salem office and the field, were mentioned in newsletters and correspondence as beautiful anomalies and were largely tasked with interpretation, a job that male rangers were loath to participate in. In 1965, there was one female employee working at Cove Palisades, and her presence was so notable that she was one of five news items mentioned by that park. "Only one feminine employe[e] will be at the Cove this year. She will handle the information and slide program." In 1966, female park staff, listed simply as "the girls," were charged with developing more interpretive programming at the Cove. The work of women as park advocates and park employees dated to the program's beginnings. Nonetheless, a hard line was drawn professionally between the work of women and that of men, especially in the field. They could run a slide show, or hand out brochures, but the "real" park work was for the men.<sup>169</sup>

The bemusement of male park employees at the presence of women in any labor capacity was unfortunately not new. Sam Boardman, writing to R.H. Baldock in 1939, noted in great detail the physical features of a woman hired by the highway department to mow grass along North Santiam Highway. He wrote,

*No, I didn't stop, but confessing to you – it was the first time that I actually enjoyed the "Curves" between Mill City and Detroit... If this woman mower is a new innovation in the highway department, I should like to make a suggestion on behalf of the traveling public. Pick them skinny and wrinkled. Perch the statue of liberty, and you will have everyone in the ditch.*

Though not as explicit, this "boys' club" mentality continues to the present day (see Chapter 7). Boardman was perfectly willing to have women on staff as his secretaries and eager to honor the work of women as lobbyists for the parks' interests. But he was also flabbergasted by women in caretaker or maintenance roles, and did not have any women working for him in that capacity during his tenure.<sup>170</sup>

Women were a more common fixture in office and park settings in the postwar era, and yet the distinction between men and women in the workplace was palpable. In an August 1966 newsletter, three new staff were announced in the Salem Headquarters: Jim Ramsden, Elisabeth Walton, and Laura Barrows. Laura Barrows was described as "the very attractive brunette opening the mail." Elisabeth Walton, in addition to her impressive credentials as an expert in historic

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169 "Cove Palisades State Park," *Oregon State Park Times* 3:1, May 1965, p. 4 Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; "DISTRICT III," *Oregon State Park Times* 4:2, Aug 1966, p. 7, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994.

170 Sam Boardman to R.H. Baldock, July 17, 1939. Folder: Correspondence, Box: Samuel H. Boardman Papers, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection.



preservation with an advanced degree, was referred to as the “stately blond historian.” Jim Ramsden’s hair color and level of attractiveness was not listed. Laura Barrow would later be replaced by a woman with an “attractive Southern accent,” joining a receptionist with “merry blue eyes.” In 1968, it was determined that husbands and wives could not work in the same Division, and many Salem staff (the women) were moved to new divisions or found other employ. The newsletter noted “We hate to lose two girls, who are not only congenial and attractive, but are excellent secretaries as well.” These women, even when—in the case of Elisabeth Walton—they were heads of complex federal programs, were consistently diminished in newsletters—described first, and sometimes exclusively, by their physical attributes and marital status.<sup>171</sup>

Although women made up a majority of jobs in reception and assistant capacities in Salem, they were still an anomaly in the field. The presence of young women in the information booth, or even on the sidewalk, was enough to throw male staff into fits, if one is to believe the staff newsletters of this period.

*We have wondered why there are so many men in the reregister line. Could it be the four young pretty new Park Aides in mini-skirts? If so, thing will soon be back to normal. It seems that a note was posted in the booth, stating that uniforms should not be mini. We’re not mentioning any names, but the party who posted it says that he doesn’t mind the view, but it is causing too big a traffic jam.*

Girl watching was a regular feature in the staff newsletters, as male staff and volunteers ogled visitors in bikinis, female staff, and even inmates at local penitentiaries.

*If there are any requests for binoculars or complaints about a sharp drop in work (male, of course) at the District II office, it may have something to do with those huge windows in the new East Salem Highway Building. There is an excellent view of the Women’s Correctional Institution where the girls are planting flowers and working on the lawn.*

Just as Sam Boardman had been unable to contain himself at the sight of a woman mowing grass, 30 years later the idea of a woman bending over to plant

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171 “OFFICE,” *Oregon State Park Times* 4:2, Aug. 1966, p. 22, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994. Amidst decades of newsletters wherein women’s physical features were noted constantly, we were able to find only one reference to the attractiveness of a male employee, in 1967—and even this spoke only of a “smile” that “melts... feminine” campers. See “DISTRICT IV,” *Oregon State Park Times* 5:2, Aug. 1967, p. 11, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1967 to 1968, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “Meanwhile, Back at the Office,” *Oregon State Park Times* 4:3, Dec. 1966, p. 16, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1965 to 1966, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “Meanwhile Back at the Office,” *Oregon State Park Times* 6:2 [?], Aug. 1968, p. 20, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1967 to 1968; Nor was the focus on physical appearance a function of youth. The redoubtable Betty Davis was congratulated at one point as having gotten “her trim figure back” after several children and was teased for “NOT modeling” a new bikini for staff. “DISTRICT II,” *Oregon State Park Times* 6:2 [?], Aug. 1968, p. 10, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1967 to 1968.



*More often than not, women rangers spent their time in informational booths. Collier Memorial State Park, c. 1965*

flowers ranked as important news for the park system. The tenor of the times was such that the editors of the staff newsletters, typically women themselves, thought it was humorous and appropriate to publish stories of co-workers ogling women or jokes (?) about a male ranger giving a female receptionist a spanking at an after-hours event.<sup>172</sup>

Despite the challenges, some women chose to continue with parks, working towards promotions out of the informational booth where they were regularly placed. In 1967, Vivian Hudson was transferred to head up Chandler Wayside after working at Tumalo. The newsletter noted a young boy, on sight of Vivian in uniform, exclaimed “Gee, a woman Forest Ranger.” A slide operator (essentially an early interpretive ranger) at Cape Lookout returned for the summer season and, as noted in the newsletter, “[staff] wonder if she knows that the first year she worked here she was tabbed “the girl with the pretty eyes.”” These women, excelling in their positions, fought stereotyping, sexism, and the potential (and assumption) of a career cut short due to marriage or raising a family. Park staff seemed more comfortable with traditional roles for women,

172 “DISTRICT II,” *Oregon State Park Times* 8:1 [?], Apr. 1970, p. 7, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1970 to 1971, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “DISTRICT I,” *Oregon State Park Times* 5:2, Aug. 1967, p. 4, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times, 1967 to 1968; “DISTRICT IV,” *Oregon State Park Times* 8:2 [?], July 1969, p. 18, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1969, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “DISTRICT I,” *Oregon State Park Times* 5:1 [?], May 1967, p. 5, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1967 to 1968; “DISTRICT 1,” *Oregon State Park Times* 5:2, Aug. 1967, p. 2, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1967 to 1968.

and, in 1967, gave out “Doll Awards” which were “presented to all the wives of the Park Managers because they are always so nice in taking messages and running errands.”<sup>173</sup>

The distinction between the men and women of the park system was apparent in the highest offices. The Park Advisory Committee, which guided the planning and purchase of park lands since 1956, existed for 20 years before the first woman was appointed, Lucille (Lu) Beck. Dave Talbot remembered that Beck’s presence caused great concern, largely due to the Advisory Committee Tours, a yearly event of touring parks in specific regions that had been punctuated by “raucous, joke-telling, good ’ol boy outrageous drinking bouts, among other things” (see Chapter 5). Talbot noted that the tone of these trips was required to shift, now that a lady was present. His concerns were perhaps misplaced. Remembering her first trip with the boys, he noted that “Lu could handle it.” And, Talbot noted with amusement and perhaps chagrin, “horrible racist, sexist stories” and “old jokes” continued to be an informal part of Parks Advisory Committee meetings well into the 1980s. In parks as in broader American society, sexist jokes were normal and harmful.<sup>174</sup>

Reflecting on his tenure, Dave Talbot was quick to say that affirmative action, specifically the hiring and promotion of women, had long been an important issue for him—but his actions told a different story. He prioritized perceived pragmatism over more proactive steps to address the rampant culture of sexism in the park system. He approached his role in affirmative action as largely passive. If women met the qualifications for management positions, he would happily hire them. But women rarely gained the experience in maintenance and construction that were essential for those positions, as they were more often than not relegated to the information booth. Many managers, Talbot thought, would be unwilling to put in the time to train women workers on tractors or construction work. Many men would be unwilling to take on roles that were associated with women’s work. And neither Talbot nor his managers were willing to create or enforce a policy that would ensure women had access to the training and experience they would need to advance. Fretting that promoting unprepared women would have “doomed them to failure,” Talbot did not seem to comprehend that he had a duty to prepare them for success.<sup>175</sup>

The boys’ club mentality of the rangers during this era relied on strict exclusions. Whether it was the professional, the college man, the woman, there

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173 “DISTRICT IV,” *Oregon State Park Times* 5:2, Aug. 1967, p. 12, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1967 to 1968; “CAPE LOOKOUT,” *Oregon State Park Times* 6:2 [?], Aug. 1968, p. 7, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1967 to 1968; “DISTRICT I,” *Oregon State Park Times* 5:3, Dec. 1967, p. 2, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times - 1967 to 1968.

174 David G. Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” June 6, 1990, Interview with Lawrence C. Merriam and Elisabeth Walton Potter, pp. 123 - 124, Folder: Administrative History – Oral History – David G. Talbot, Director, 1964 – 1992, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection; University of Oregon, *Oregana*, ed. Sue French (Eugene: University of Oregon Student Publications Board, 1956), p. 262; Julie A. Woodzicka and Thomas E. Ford, “A Framework for Thinking About the (not-so-funny) Effect of Sexist Humor,” *Europe’s Journal of Psychology* 6:3 (2010): pp. 174 – 195.

175 Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” June 6, 1990, 118.

was little room or tolerance for difference in the ranks. The “shared love affair” rangers treasured included a troubling commitment to stasis and sexism. But the staff newsletters also suggest a camaraderie that united parks in different parts of the state. These men held big retirement parties, met for summertime campouts, and saw themselves as stewards of an important job. Under Dave Talbot as under superintendents before him, the parks leaned on this scrappy group to function, however resistant they were to change. So, while the campsites grew and the sites were maintained, state parks started to fall out of sync with the rapidly changing world around them. For the rangers of the 1960s and 70s, the most frightening change came wearing paisley—or nothing.

### *It’s Hippy Time Again:*

## **Parks grapple with the counterculture**

One thing that it seemed the entire parks department was willing to agree on in the 1960s: hippies were ruining the state. Hippies, seemingly defined by most park personnel as any person with long hair, were deemed a menace to the park system and were regularly mocked in newsletters and monitored by staff. A distrust of spirited youth was a longstanding tradition in parks. In the 1930s, Sam Boardman had focused his attentions on the young vandals desecrating his trees. By the mid 1960s, there was an all-out culture war on the beaches, in the forest, on the plains and the hills: the buzz-cut ranger vs. the long-haired youth. Alongside miniskirts and campers behaving poorly, the antics of hippies were regular newsletter fodder. Largely jovial, the newsletters and later actions by park staff and the state government suggest an undercurrent of fear. A 1968 newsletter joked “Have you heard about the park manager who bought a pair of hair clippers? That is just in case the hippies come back this summer. He thought he should be prepared. Don’t you think a bath would be more apropos?” Pointedly, stories like these in the newsletter sat alongside mentions of those serving in Vietnam, either park staff or family members. The same 1968 newsletter noted that a long-time seasonal employee at Champøeg had just been made a lieutenant in the U.S. Army, noting



Officially sanctioned “uniform” at Rooster Rock, 1971.

“[w]hen he worked at the park, he had to call the park manager ‘sir’ and now I guess we will have to call *him* ‘sir.’” Park newsletters attempted to skirt controversy, but these two versions of American youth, one an unwashed parkgoer, the other a soldier, hinted at the political unrest of the era. When the park system of the 1970s was planned in 1956, staff had expected leisure time and family boat trips, not nude sunbathing and motorcycle races. The hippies were not the people parks had been built for.<sup>176</sup>

The complaints among the staff followed clichéd generational lines. They also revealed incessant voyeurism. One 1971 newsletter noted, “With the new camp and all, it has been pretty dull for Dennis – there haven’t been any hippies to watch skinny-dipping.” This was not a one-off; the newsletters often made light of opportunities rangers took to ogle naked hippies, sometimes without their knowledge. “Four hippies camped one night under Merlie’s watchful eye,” the news section of a 1970 newsletter read. “The next morning he observed them taking a shower under a stand pipe. With the aid of binoculars, he was able to determine the bare fact – two of them were girls.” Such showers notwithstanding, stereotypes about the unwashed nature of the youth were particularly fascinating to the highway men. “It’s hippie time again – different hippies, but the same problems with them – at least we think they are different ones, although the crew has agreed that they all look and smell pretty much alike. That makes it hard to tell for sure.” In addition to hygiene complaints, there was bemused bafflement at political actions. One newsletter noted,

*We hope that Bill Wright appreciates the extra attention he received at the park – a sprig of wild flowers and a peace note – left on his flashy red convertible. But you weren’t the only, Bill. Jerry Lucas’ pickup and a State Police truck received the same treatment.*

These cultural differences manifested in more than tasteless jokes about bathing or creepy instances of spying. Park personnel, especially those in management, feared that the presence of the hippie youth would destroy a park system that was meant for families. Parks along the coast, always the most crowded in the summer months, became a tipping point over the hippie issue.<sup>177</sup>

In 1970, rumors spread that Oswald West State Park, located south of Cannon Beach, was a hotbed of illegal activity among hippies due in large part to its proximity to Portland. This rumor was enough to attract the attentions of

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176 “DISTRICT I,” *Oregon State Park Times* 6:2 [?], Aug. 1968, pp. 3 and 7, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times, 1967 to 1968 [emphasis in the original]; see also “CONGRATULATIONS,” *Oregon State Park Times* 4:2, Aug. 1966, p. 1, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1965 to 1966.

177 “CHAMPOEG STATE PARK,” *Oregon State Park Times* 9:2 [?], Aug. 1971, p. 7, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1970 to 1971, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994; “FAREWELL BEND STATE PARK,” *Oregon State Park Times* 8:1 [?], Apr 1970, p. 19, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1970 to 1971, Box: Publications – Staff Newsletters, 1963 – 1994. Apparently the editors of the *Oregon State Park Times* used Volume 8 for the years 1969 and 1970 alike; “FAREWELL BEND STATE PARK,” *Oregon State Park Times* 8:1 [?], Apr 1970, p. 14, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1970 to 1971; “THE COVE PALISADES STATE PARK,” *Oregon State Park Times* 8:2 [?], July 1969, p. 18, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1969.



the *Oregonian*, who sent reporter Steve Erickson out to investigate. According to the resulting article, “straight” campers were forced out of the area “in fear or disgust.” The problem was so rampant that it was suggested the park should close. A lifeguard interviewed said, “I guess the state could close the park to campers, but that would ruin it for the decent people, too.” The line was clearly drawn: there were hippies, and then there were decent people.

Though the ranger on duty was unwilling to comment on the issue, he did point the intrepid reporter to the hotbed of hippie activity. Following a secluded trail, Erikson approached a hastily constructed shrine, built to honor “all religions — except Satanism” according to its creator, Ishmial Aliva. When told that the park rangers had labeled him a hippie, Aliva replied “they’re up-tight and paranoid about our long hair. They think we’re some religious sect. They’re very sad and have narrow little hearts.” Aliva proceeded to explain the shrine and his own spiritual journey, stopping only to marvel at his pet cat stalking and nearly eating a chipmunk. When Erickson asked the ranger on duty if this hippie camp posed an issue, specifically with garbage, the ranger simply replied, “their garbage is no worse than anyone else’s.”<sup>178</sup>

This somewhat innocent exchange between a reporter and an eclectic park user was enough to stoke the already-existing fear of the Salem parks administration, even if the staff in the field didn’t see much of an issue. Reports of hippies taking over Oregon State Parks, specifically Oswald West, trickled into Dave Talbot’s office. In June of that year, regional supervisor Cliff Lenz wrote to Dave Talbot asking that the camp be closed, “because of the undesirables that have been using the area for the past 3 or 4 years.” The exasperated supervisor noted that camps at Oswald West were “used mostly for wine or narcotic parties” and would surely impact the reputation of the whole system. To prove his point, Lenz attached local police reports to his letter to Talbot. These reports noted illegal camping, narcotics, and occasionally, fights.<sup>179</sup>

Lloyd Shaw, second-in-command at Highways, asked for a “hippie check” in August, which he received from Dale Hoeye, Park Manager at Oswald West State Park. Hoeye reported back with the written equivalent to a shrug. His men checked in on the family campers, and no one was reporting any issues with the “so-called long hair set.” He noted one noise complaint, but he also acknowledged that noise happened at all campgrounds from time to time. At the end of his letter, he called out the lifeguard at Cannon Beach, quoted in the recent newspaper article, as “giving us a black eye.” The problem that Lenz had complained of, Hoeye seemed to say, was a tempest in a teapot.<sup>180</sup>

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178 Steve Erickson “Let that Chipmunk Go’: Aliva’s Cliff Shrine Belies Hippie Appearance”

179 C[liff] H. Lenz to David Talbot, June 8, 1970, Folder: Oswald West State Park – Issue – Hippies, Box: Oswald West State Park, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection, Oregon State Parks and Recreation, Salem, OR; Walter C. Woolfolk and Claire McMillan, “Beach Patrol S[h]ore Sands Beach,” March 21, 1970, *ibid.*

180 Dale Hoeye to Lloyd Shaw, August 12, 1970. Folder: Oswald West State Park – Issue – Hippies. Hoeye’s son was likely a Marine in Vietnam, but this doesn’t seem to have led him into the reflexive anti-hippie stance often assumed for people of his status and time. Hoeye’s son is mentioned in “HONEYMAN STATE PARK,” *Oregon State Park Times* 4:3 [?], Dec 1966, p. 10, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1965 to 1966

Talbot found evidence that supported both Lenz and Hoeye. In July 1970, undercover police officers infiltrated hippie enclaves set up in coastal parks. They swept up one drug dealer and a handful of users, but found nothing of note in terms of violence or property damage. What Lenz had reported as a fight was, perhaps, the conclusion of a sting operation.<sup>181</sup> In the end, Talbot chose not to close the campground in 1970, noting that the nearby towns preferred hippie containment. “If we run them out of Os West,” the locals purportedly said, “they’ll just go somewhere else, and as it is now, we know where they are.”<sup>182</sup>

Warren Gaskill, Talbot’s second-in-command, kept a close eye on the situation during the 1971 season. He encouraged a focus on “the actual problem.” Was the issue “Drugs, Hippies, Not enough camping space? ‘Good’ people not using the area?” Regional supervisor Val Jones reassured Gaskill that “a good percent of park users [were still] older family people.” The problem was that “the park has been a stopping-off spot for traveling hippies and young people who want to do as they please without interference from anyone.” This created a frustrating situation for park staff, but Jones noted that it was getting better and that strict enforcement of the rules seemed to discourage the rampant drug use and partying of earlier years. G.R. Leavitt, the Field Operations Supervisor, agreed with Jones, writing “I believe, by everyone’s determination, we have nearly won the battle with the hippies.”<sup>183</sup> Park personnel, from rangers all the way to the top, defined the success of their parks by the “right” kind of visitors. The problem at Os West was not just the presence of “long haired brethren” but the potential absence of “straight” [“normal”] campers—the “Good” people. But Oswald West State Park was not the only, or the most conspicuous display of these anxieties. A month after a reporter for the *Oregonian* hiked to a hippie shrine in 1970, Oregonians all got a close look at the spectacle of the counterculture.<sup>184</sup>

## *Inferior Wine and Hot Weather:* **Vortex I**

In 1970, on a cool day in late August, tens of thousands of people streamed into a state-sponsored rock concert at Milo McIver State Park. The event, Vortex I, might have been remembered one of the largest rock concerts of the era—if anyone had been keeping track of how many people were in the cars backed up for miles or in the crowds arriving on foot, day after day, as the temperatures rose. But with free entry, free food, and a free pass from the governor when it came to nudity and drug use, the records kept by the organizers remained hazy. And as long as it was peaceful, state officials didn’t want to know anything about it. Except for Talbot.

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181 Holly V. Holcomb to Dave Talbot, Sept 29, 1970. Folder: Oswald West State Park – Issue – Hippies.

182 Dave Talbot, “Os West State Park Recommended Closure,” *ibid.*

183 G.R. Leavitt to Warren Gaskill, Oct 15, 1971. Folder: Oswald West State Park – Issue – Hippies; Val Jones to Warren Gaskill, Oct 8, 1971. Folder: Oswald West State Park – Issue – Hippies.

184 *Ibid.*



*Milo McIver State Park became a mini-Woodstock for a couple of days in 1970.*

Vortex I was meant as an idiosyncratic answer to a summer of violence. The cultural divide over the war in Vietnam had reached a point of crisis, and protestors in the streets were answered with batons and bullets from law enforcement. Portland was scheduled to host a parade of the American Legion, with a potential speech by President Richard Nixon. Amid a swirl of rumors and planned protests there were isolated threats of riots, violence against police, and other mayhem among possible protesters (amplified by FBI speculation). And there were threats from members of the American Legion that they would respond to disruption with overwhelming force. This was enough to scare the city and Governor Tom McCall into something drastic. In stilted meetings with local peace groups, McCall hammered out the free rock concert as counter-programming, hoping it would lure would-be rioters out of Portland and thus prevent political violence. It seemed to work. The free music festival was well attended, and the originally planned protest against the Vietnam War melted away. The American Legion marched and met Vice President Spiro Agnew unimpeded. Lambasted by many during the preparation phase as a surrender, the success of Vortex I became a triumph for McCall, who presented himself as a man who could maintain peace without jackboots and was swept into reelection.<sup>185</sup>

185 Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Nestucca Spit Press, 2004). The legacy of Vortex I is contested, with some authors proposing that it was a political touchstone, and many attendees arguing that it “wasn’t about politics... it was about listening to music for free.” Isabel Gautschi, “The price of admission was love,” *Estacada News* Aug 13, 2014. At the time, the American Legion gleefully used the inconsistency of the “ordinary hippies who like their pot and rock” to critique the anti-war movement as a whole. “The American Legion’s 52<sup>nd</sup> National Convention,” *American Legion Magazine* 89:5, Nov. 1970, pp. 23 – 25. In later decades, some participants celebrated the festival as a beautiful dream, others came to believe they had “inadvertently participated in a sellout.” Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I*, 225.

For Oregon State Parks and Recreation, however, Vortex I seemed like a nightmare in the making. Dave Talbot and other park administrators went on high alert, treating the concert as a potential invasion. Talbot noted during preparations for the event that “Intelligence reports show that hard-core &#%!@\*#!@\* want to have a confrontation with the American Legion. There will be intelligence people in the park while this is going on, but no uniformed police.” Talbot was tasked with keeping the peace in the park, a job he was loathe to take on, as altercations between park officials and the hippie groups of the 1960s and 1970s were regular fodder in park communications. But this was a political situation out of his control. Talbot noted that the “governor would just as soon sacrifice a park as downtown Portland.”<sup>186</sup>

To prepare for the festival, Dave Talbot reached out to Bill Crouch, head of parks in Nashville, Tennessee, who dealt with rock festivals on park property. When Talbot asked if there was any semblance of self-control within hippie enclaves, Crouch recommended that Talbot “keep an eye on their leader.” As was common among many at the time, Crouch differentiated a leftist leadership he was frightened of from the everyday hippie. “So many of those kids are good kids that are out for the thing they enjoy,” he warned, but the national news would be looking for the violent exceptions. “The news media will be your biggest problem.”<sup>187</sup>

But there were no reports of violence. Local media watched with fascination as the largely peaceful crowds filled the park. The *Oregonian* noted “the total amount of clothing being worn in the park would have failed to fill the back of a pick-up truck. Clothing has become more an oddity than nudity.” Another newspaper attempted to estimate the amount of sewage that would need to be hauled out in “honey trucks” due to the hippie invasion. The *Oregon Journal* placed the number at 250,000 pounds. Dave Talbot admitted that the toilet needs at the concert were really anyone’s guess, but noted the literal tons of food flowing into the kitchens—that would have to end up somewhere after it had flowed through the participants. Still, after reporting on the mud baths and long hair of the “youths” in the park, the *Oregonian* conceded that the park itself was being respected by all the concert-goers they spoke with, only one of whom had even heard of the American Legion protest that was supposedly going to destroy Portland that week. Many were just there for the music, a mix of a few niche national acts like the blues legend Charles Musselwhite and an array of local groups such as Jacob’s Ladder and the Portland Zoo Electric Band. Thousands

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186 David G. Talbot and Bill Crouch, transcribed telephone conversation, [undated], Folder: Milo McIver State Park - Vortex I Rock Festival, Box: Historic State Park Documents: Milo McIver State Park to Minam State Recreation Area, Oregon Parks and Recreation Collection. The underscores used to indicate swearing in the original text have been changed to more varied punctuation for clarity. For more information on the government planning for Vortex I see Brent Walth, *Fire at Eden’s Gate: Tom McCall and the Oregon Story* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1995).

187 David G. Talbot and Bill Crouch, transcribed telephone conversation, [undated], Folder: Milo McIver State Park - Vortex I Rock Festival; Timothy Tyler, “The Cooling of America: Out of Tune and Lost in the Counterculture,” *Time* Feb 22, 1971; Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990): 216.

gathered around a log stage built with donated equipment. Thousands more camped down by the river.<sup>188</sup>

And Talbot kept eyes on it all, as the parks collection of aerial photographs taken at regular intervals throughout the festival demonstrate. Reporting on the event after the fact, Talbot was pleased to say that drug dealing, vandalism, and other non-violent crime had been kept to a minimum, largely due to “Vortex-appointed ‘Monitors’” whose “policing was very effective.” He estimated the crowd at 30,000 - 40,000 each day and informed the Parks Advisory Committee that “the majority of the first-aid and hospital cases were reportedly the result of foot cuts, burns, inferior wine and hot weather” rather than drugs or violence. Vortex I organizers made good on at least part of the promise of what they had titled a “biodegradable festival of life.” There had been tens of thousands of those who Talbot labeled “‘people’” (in scare quotes) rather than the “visitors” label he typically applied to those who came to parks. But despite the unwelcome crowds, there was “no deliberate vandalism,” no extraordinary staff hours needed for clean-up, and no unusual damage reported that year. The hippies hadn’t hurt anything. “Apparently,” Lloyd Shaw wrote that October, “some reports of the activities of the hairy brethren were exaggerated or completely false.”<sup>189</sup>

Two decades later Talbot had come around on the concert, if not the concertgoers. He praised McCall for having avoided a “horrible confrontation of these hippies and young people coming from all over America to raise hell.” But at the time, Talbot claimed, the whole of state government had sought deliberate ignorance regarding Vortex I. Whether it was about attendance, cost, or another subject,

*nobody wanted to know anything. But more than that they didn't want to know anything. It was total silence. I'd say "well do you want to...?" "nope, get out of here" they got it behind them, and it was such a distasteful thing to the general public that they just heaved a sigh of relief when it was over, and to this day nobody wants to talk about it.*

Despite the fears of invasion and the enormity of the event, Vortex I quickly became a punchline for park staff too. “We’re in pretty fair shape after

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188 Leonard Bacon, “6,000 Flock to Park as Vortex Starts to Spin,” *Oregonian* Aug 28, 1970; David G. Talbot, “Summary: Vortex I, McIver State Park,” [undated], Folder: Milo McIver State Park - Vortex I Rock Festival; Isabel Gautschi, “The price of admission was love,” *Estacada News* Aug 13, 2014; Eric Cain, “Vortex I,” *Oregon Experience* S4 E403 (original broadcast: Oct 28, 2010). Oswald West State Park – Issue – Hippies. The fact that the Vortex I festival had occurred without issue between the time of Hoeye’s letter and Shaw’s response may have shaped the latter.

189 Vortex I Aerial Photographs. Milo McIver State Park Photographs. Oregon State Parks and Recreation Collection, Oregon State Parks and Recreation, Salem, OR; James Long, “15,000 Expected at Vortex,” *Oregon Journal* Aug 27, 1970; David G. Talbot, “Summary: Vortex I, McIver State Park”; “McIVER STATE PARK,” *Oregon State Park Times* 9[?], May 1971, p. 4, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1970 to 1971; Matt Love, *The Far Out Story of Vortex I* (Nestucca Spit Press, 2004); Lloyd Shaw to Dale Hoeye, Oct. 5, 1970. Folder: Oswald West State Park – Issue – Hippies. The fact that the Vortex I festival had occurred without issue between the time of Hoeye’s letter and Shaw’s response may have shaped the latter.

Vortex I,” staff from McIver Park wrote in 1971. “The deer and gophers are back, but we haven’t caught any of them using pot as yet.” Then they moved on to irrigation, and the new overnight campground that would soon finally be ready. After all, the hippies had only descended for a week. Fitting in the crowds of campers was still the pressing problem.<sup>190</sup>

The Oregon State Park system entered the 1970s with decades of expansion under its belt. For all the talk of having moved from an era of expansion to an era of development, expansion *and* development had been near-constant in the 1950s and 60s. As usual, the mission grew faster than the money. Although park budgets and projects had expanded, although the new Advisory Committee offered new legitimacy and expertise, coming up with the money for parkwide overhauls and even basic maintenance was growing difficult. Although park staff rose to the challenge in creating new campgrounds, they failed in areas of interpretation, cultural resource management, and allowing changing demographics within their ranks. Sexism went virtually unchecked, and racism virtually unnoted. And still, more and more people were coming into the parks. But in the 1970s and 80s, economic catastrophes and political convulsions would force Oregon State Parks into hard decisions amidst hard times.

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190 Talbot, “Personal Views on the Development of Oregon State Parks,” May 16, 1990, pp. 51-52; “McIVER STATE PARK,” *Oregon State Park Times* 9[?], May 1971, p. 4, Folder: Staff Newsletter – Park Times – 1970 to 1971.