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The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Sierra Club History Series

Doris Cellarius

SIERRA CLUB VOLUNTEER LEADER: GRASSROOTS ACTIVIST AND ORGANIZER ON HAZARDOUS WASTE ISSUES

Interviews Conducted by
Ann Lage
2001-2002

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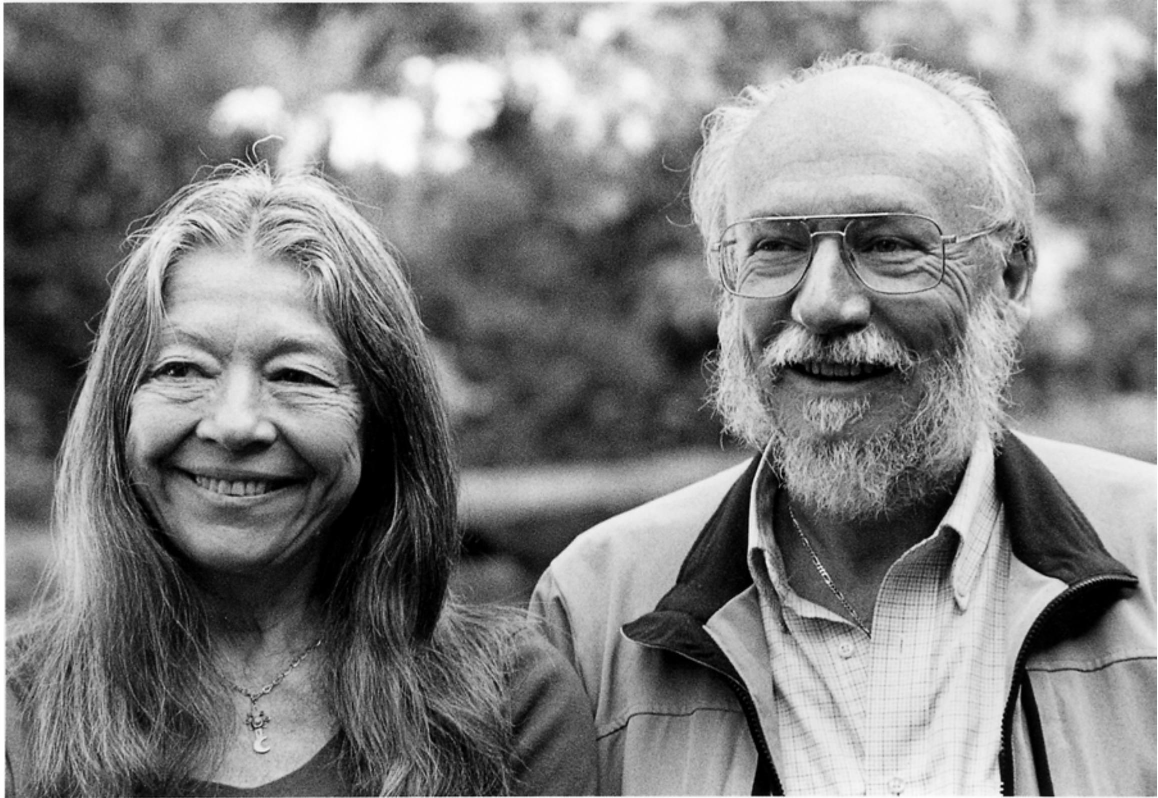

Doris and Richard Cellarius, 2003 *Photograph by Jim Cohee*

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PREFACE--Sierra Club Oral History Program to 1978

In fall 1969 and spring 1970 a self-appointed committee of Sierra Clubbers met several times to consider two vexing and related problems. The rapid membership growth of the club and its involvement in environmental issues on a national scale left neither time nor resources to document the club's internal and external history. Club records were stored in a number of locations and were inaccessible for research. Further, we were failing to take advantage of the relatively new technique of oral history by which the reminiscences of club leaders and members of long standing could be preserved.

The ad hoc committee's recommendation that a standing History Committee be established was approved by the Sierra Club Board of Directors in May 1970. That September the board designated The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley as the official repository of the club's archives. The large collection of records, photographs, and other memorabilia known as the "Sierra Club Papers" is thus permanently protected, and the Bancroft is preparing a catalog of these holdings which will be invaluable to students of the conservation movement.

The History Committee then focused its energies on how to develop a significant oral history program. A six-page questionnaire was mailed to members who had joined the club prior to 1931. More than half responded, enabling the committee to identify numerous older members as likely prospects for oral interviews. (Some had hiked with John Muir!) Other interviewees were selected from the ranks of club leadership over the past six decades.

Those committee members who volunteered as interviewers were trained in this discipline by Willa Baum, head of the Bancroft's Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) and a nationally recognized authority in this field. Further interviews have been completed in cooperation with university oral history classes at California State University, Fullerton; Columbia University, New York; and the University of California, Berkeley. Extensive interviews with major club leaders are most often conducted on a professional basis through the Regional Oral History Office.

Copies of the Sierra Club oral interviews are placed at The Bancroft Library, in the Department of Special Collections at UCLA, and at the club's Colby Library, and may be purchased at cost by club regional offices, chapters, and groups, as well as by other libraries, institutions, and interested individuals.

Our heartfelt gratitude for their help in making the Sierra Club Oral History Project a success goes to each interviewee and interviewer; to everyone who has written an introduction to an oral history; to the Sierra Club Board of Directors for its recognition of the long-term importance of this effort; to the Trustees of the Sierra Club Foundation for generously providing the necessary funding; to club and foundation staff, especially to Michael McCloskey, Denny Wilcher, Colburn Wilbur, and Nicholas Clinch; to Willa

Baum and Susan Schrepfer of the Regional Oral History Office; and last but far from least, to the members of the History Committee, and particularly to Ann Lage, who has coordinated the oral history effort since 1974.

You are cordially invited to read and enjoy any or all of the oral histories in the Sierra Club series. By so doing you will learn much of the club's history which is available nowhere else, and of the fascinating careers and accomplishments of many outstanding club leaders and members.

Marshall H. Kuhn
Chairman, History Committee
1970-1978

May 1, 1977
San Francisco
(revised March, 1992, A.L.)

The Sierra Club Oral History Program since 1978

Inspired by the vision of its founder and first chairman, Marshall Kuhn, the Sierra Club History Committee continued to expand its oral history program following his death in 1978. In 1980, with five ROHO interviews completed or underway and thirty-five volunteer-conducted interviews available for research, the History Committee sought and received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a major project focusing on the Sierra Club of the 1960s and 1970s. In a four-year period, NEH and matching Sierra Club funds made possible the completion of an additional seventeen major oral histories conducted by the Regional Oral History Office and forty-four volunteer-conducted interviews. Oral histories produced during and following the NEH grant period have documented the leadership, programs, strategies, and ideals of the national Sierra Club as well as the club grassroots at the regional and chapter levels over the past thirty years. The work of the club is seen in all its variety--from education to litigation to legislative lobbying; from energy policy to urban issues to wilderness preservation; from California to the Carolinas to Alaska, and on the international scene. The Sierra Club oral history program, together with the extensive Sierra Club papers and photographic collection in The Bancroft Library--a collection of 1325 linear feet of archival records, more than 34,000 photographs, films, tapes, and publications, all recently processed and catalogued--help celebrate the Sierra Club centennial in 1992 by making accessible to researchers one hundred years of Sierra Club history.

Special thanks for the oral history project's later phase are due Maxine McCloskey, chair of the Sierra Club History Committee 1988-1992; Ray Lage, co-chair, History Committee, 1978-1986; Susan Schrepfer, codirector of the NEH Sierra Club Documentation Project; members of the History Committee; and most importantly, the interviewees and interviewers for their unfailing cooperation. The Sierra Club and the Sierra Club Foundation, as well as special donors to individual interviews, have generously provided funding to continue the oral history project.

Ann Lage, Director
Sierra Club Oral History Project

Berkeley, California
November 2005

November 2005

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Interviews conducted by the Regional Oral History Office,
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Berry, Phillip S. Sierra Club President, 1991-1992: The Club, the Legal Defense Fund, and Leadership Issues, 1984-1993. 1997, 126 pp.

Brower, David R. Environmental Activist, Publicist, and Prophet. 1980, 320 pp.

Cellarius, Doris. Sierra Club Volunteer Leader: Grassroots Activist and Organizer on Hazardous Waste Issues. 2005, 111 pp.

Cellarius, Richard. National Leader in the Sierra Club and the Sierra Club Foundation, 1970-2002, Sierra Club President, 1988-1990. 2005, 213 pp.

Colby, William E. Reminiscences. 1954, 145 pp. (An interview with Sierra Club secretary and director, 1900-1946.)

Fischer, Michael L. Sierra Club Executive Director, 1987-1992. 1997, 192 pp.

Leonard, Richard M. Mountaineer, Lawyer, Environmentalist. 1975, 482 pp.

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Wayburn, Edgar. Global Activist and Elder Statesman of the Sierra Club: Alaska, International Conservation, National Parks and Protected Areas, 1980-1992. 1996, 277 pp.

Wayburn, Peggy. Author and Environmental Advocate. 1992, 193 pp.

Zierold, John. Environmental Lobbyist in California's Capital, 1965-1984. 1988, 202 pp.

In Process: David Brower, update; J. Robert Cox, former club president; Laurence I. Moss, former club president; Michele Perrault, former club president; Douglas Scott, wilderness advocate and former Sierra Club staff member; Denny Shaffer, former club president and treasurer.

Multi-Interview Volumes

Building the Sierra Club's National Lobbying Program, 1967-1981. 1985, 374 pp.
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Tupling, W. Lloyd. "Sierra Club Washington Representative."

Pacific Northwest Conservationists. 1986, 281 pp.
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Goldsworthy, Patrick D. "Protecting the North Cascades, 1954-1983."

Sierra Club Leaders I, 1950s-1970s. 1982, 433 pp.

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Litton, Martin. "Sierra Club Director and Uncompromising Preservationist, 1950s-1970s."

Sherwin, Raymond J. "Conservationist, Judge, and Sierra Club President, 1960s-1970s."

Snyder, Theodore A., Jr. "Southeast Conservation Leader and Sierra Club President, 1960s-1970s."

Sierra Club Leaders II, 1960s-1970s. 1985, 296 pp.

Futrell, J. William. "'Love for the Land and Justice for Its People:'" Sierra Club National and Southern Leader, 1968-1982."

Sive, David. "Pioneering Environmental Lawyer, Atlantic Chapter Leader, 1961-1982.

SIERRA CLUB HISTORY COMMITTEE ORAL HISTORY SERIES

Interviews conducted by volunteers for the Sierra Club History Committee.

Single-Interview Volumes

Clark, Nathan. Sierra Club Leader, Outdoorsman, and Engineer. 1977,
147 pp.

Moorman, James. Attorney for the Environment, 1966-1981: Center for Law
and Social Policy, Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, Department of Justice Division of Lands and
Natural Resources. 1994, 168 pp.

Robinson, Gordon. Forestry Consultant to the Sierra Club. 1979, 277 pp.

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The Sierra Club Nationwide I. 1983, 257 pp.
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Chapter, 1957-1969."
Van Tyne, Anne. "Sierra Club Stalwart: Conservationist, Hiker, Chapter
and Council Leader."

The Sierra Club Nationwide II. 1984, 253 pp.
Amodio, John. "Lobbyist for Redwood National Park Expansion."
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Steadfast Sierra Club Volunteer."
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Turner, Tom. "A Perspective on David Brower and the Sierra Club, 1968-1969."

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Walker, Diane. "The Sierra Club in New Jersey: Focus on Toxic Waste Management."

The Sierra Club Nationwide IV. 1996, 207 pp.

Avery, Abigail. "Nurturing the Earth: North Cascades, Alaska, New England, and Issues of War and Peace."

Ives, Robin and Lori. "Conservation, Mountaineering, and Angeles Chapter Leadership, 1958-1984."

Reid, Leslie. "Angeles Chapter and National Sierra Club Leader, 1960s-1990s: Focus on Labor and the Environment."

Reid, Sally. "Serving the Angeles Chapter and the National Sierra Club, 1960s-1990s: Focus on Wilderness Issues in California and Alaska."

Sierra Club Reminiscences I, 1900s-1960s. 1974, 212 pp.

Farquhar, Francis. "Sierra Club Mountaineer and Editor."

Hildebrand, Joel. "Sierra Club Leader and Ski Mountaineer."

Robinson, Bestor. "Thoughts on Conservation and the Sierra Club."

Rother, James E. "The Sierra Club in the Early 1900s."

Sierra Club Reminiscences II, 1900s-1960s. 1975, 177 pp.

Bernays, Philip S. "Founding the Southern California Chapter."

Bradley, Harold C. "Furthering the Sierra Club Tradition."

Crowe, Harold E. "Sierra Club Physician, Baron, and President."

Dawson, Glen. "Pioneer Rock Climber and Ski Mountaineer."

Hackett, C. Nelson. "Lasting Impressions of the Early Sierra Club."

Sierra Club Reminiscences III, 1920s-1970s. 1984, 264 pp.

Clark, Lewis. "Perdurable and Peripatetic Sierran: Club Officer and Outings Leader, 1928-1984."

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The Sierra Club and the Urban Environment II: Labor and the Environment in the San Francisco Bay Area. 1983, 167 pp.
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Steele, Dwight C. "Environmentalist and Labor Ally."

Sierra Club Women I. 1976, 71 pp.
Bade, Elizabeth Marston. "Recollections of William F. Bade and the Early Sierra Club."
Evans, Nora. "Sixty Years with the Sierra Club."
Praeger, Ruth E. "Remembering the High Trips."

Sierra Club Women II. 1977, 152 pp.
Farquhar, Marjory Bridge. "Pioneer Woman Rock Climber and Sierra Club Director."
LeConte, Helen. "Reminiscences of LeConte Family Outings, the Sierra Club, and Ansel Adams."

Sierra Club Women III. 1983, 173 pp.
Christy, Cicely M. "Contributions to the Sierra Club and the San Francisco Bay Chapter, 1938-1970s."
Goody, Wanda B. "A Hiker's View of the Early Sierra Club."
Horsfall, Ethel Rose Taylor. "On the Trail with the Sierra Club, 1920s-1960s."
Parsons, Harriet T. "A Half-Century of Sierra Club Involvement."

Southern Sierrans I. 1976, 178 pp.
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Jones, E. Stanley. "Sierra Club Officer and Angeles Chapter Leader, 1931-1975."
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Searle, Richard. "Grassroots Sierra Club Leader."

Southern Sierrans II. 1977, 207 pp.
Amneus, Thomas. "New Directions for the Angeles Chapter."
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Marshall, Robert R. "Angeles Chapter Leader and Wilderness Spokesman, 1960s."

Southern Sierrans III. 1980, 250 pp.
Bear, Robert. "Desert Conservation and Exploration with the Sierra Club."
Johnson, Arthur B. "Climbing and Conservation in the Sierra."
Poland, Roscoe and Wilma. "Desert Conservation: Voices from the Sierra Club's San Diego Chapter."

Volunteer Leadership in the National Sierra Club, 1970s-1980s. 1995, 181 pp.
Fontaine, Joe. "Conservation Activist, Consensus Builder, and Sierra Club President, 1980-1982."
Gill, Kent. "Making the Political Process Work: Chapter Activist, Council Chair, and Club and Foundation President."

Southern Sierran interviews conducted by students in the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program.

INTERVIEW HISTORY—Doris Cellarius

The oral history of Doris Cellarius is one of a series of nearly 125 oral histories documenting the history of the Sierra Club. Interviewees have been drawn from the top ranks of national club staff and volunteer leaders—club presidents and executive directors, longtime directors, committee chairs, lobbyists and attorneys—and from local and regional environmental activists, outings leaders, and chapter officers who exemplify the grassroots nature of the club. Doris Cellarius straddles both these worlds: she has been a grassroots activist and organizer since Earth Day 1970, and she has headed local and national committees focused on empowering people in campaigns for a healthy environment.

Doris came of age in the 1950s and showed an early interest in nature and in cooking (she was the Betty Crocker Homemaker of the Year in 1955). She trained as a biologist, receiving a master's degree from Columbia University, but left the field when her professor expressed disdain for women graduate students and failed to share her interest in investigating chemical causes of birth defects, an interest that was perhaps ahead of the times. She left academia but found ways to put her scientific understanding to use years later when she became a leading activist, organizer, and educator on hazardous waste clean up and solid waste management.

Along the way, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Olympia, Washington, Doris founded an Ecology Center, started school and community gardens and farmers' markets, lobbied for bottle bills, wrote Superfund legislation and citizen handbooks, and organized community groups to fight for toxic sites clean up, all while raising a family of two girls. She was a member of numerous Sierra Club national committees, serving as chair for ten years of the Hazardous Waste Advisory Committee, always with an emphasis on grassroots organizing and involving volunteers. Her oral history reveals her as an energetic and thoughtful activist, who reflects on community, religion, family, gender, and civic involvement.

The interviews took place on November 14 and 15, 2001, and February 22, 2002, in San Francisco at Sierra Club headquarters when Doris and her husband, Richard, were in town for club meetings. Richard was also being interviewed for an oral history during this time. In May, she joined Richard in a videotaped one-hour interview, discussing key influences and reflecting on important issues and new directions in the club and the environmental movement during their long involvement. Doris was open and thoughtful during interview sessions, and she made minimal changes during her review of the interview transcript. The audiotapes and videotape are available for listening/viewing in the Bancroft Library.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the

UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Richard Cándida Smith, and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, the James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, at the University of California, Berkeley.

Ann Lage, Interviewer
Director, Sierra Club Oral History Project

Berkeley, California
November 23, 2004

INTERVIEW WITH DORIS CELLARIUS

I CHILDHOOD IN ILLINOIS AND OREGON, COLLEGE EDUCATION, GRADUATE STUDY, AND FIRST JOBS IN NEW YORK, 1938-1965

Family and the Lure of the Outdoors

[Interview 1: November 14, 2001] ##[1]

Lage: Today is November 14, 2001, and I'm interviewing Doris Cellarius. After having listened to Richard [husband and former president of the Sierra Club] now for five hours, you get your turn. You really have separate careers in the Sierra Club, it seems.

D. Cellarius: Well, that's true. I think I've done a lot of things of my own personal interest that I might have even done if Richard hadn't been so active, but certainly I would never have had the opportunity to do it with the Sierra Club without his role there.

Lage: We have a few prominent husband and wife teams in the Sierra Club, but we're not going to start there. We're going to start with your own childhood. From your upbringing or early interests could one have foreseen where you were headed?

D. Cellarius: I think that especially my father had an influence on the things I was interested in as a child, because he was a recreation director. In the town where I lived, Highland Park, Illinois, he ran the day camps in summer, and he organized things like nature walks for families, and so we got to know several naturalists who took us on both bird walks and just general walks. Going out on walks like

1. The symbol ## indicates that tape or a tape side has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

that when I was four or five years old, I didn't know why we had to get up so early in the morning and look for birds. We lived in a city, so we would go out to the forest preserves on the edge of Chicago.

Lage: When would that have been? When were you born?

D. Cellarius: I was born in 1938, so this would have been about 1942.

Lage: So '38, in Chicago?

D. Cellarius: Highland Park, Illinois.

Lage: Which is what kind of a community?

D. Cellarius: It's a small community just north of Chicago, on the train--lots of people take the train into work, to Chicago. So my parents had a very urban life style. They both moved out of downtown Chicago when I was born, to raise their family there, but they had always loved the out of doors. My mother made scrapbooks with pictures of her honeymoon and all the other trips. They went to Glacier National Park on their honeymoon. They were married in '35 and did a lot of trips to the national parks and trips down into southern Indiana.

They tell me I was taken in a basket down to Turkey Run Park. I can't remember too much about it except I can remember woods and cliffs, and I liked being in places like that. When I was a little girl, I used to go on walks by myself to find woods to walk in. I have no idea why I like to walk in the woods. Once I took several other children with me. We didn't get back till after dark, and I was in a lot of trouble. But I really don't know why I liked going to the woods, except it was enjoyable times. We took our vacations in northern Wisconsin, Door County.

Lage: Did that set you apart from other families, or was that fairly common?

D. Cellarius: I don't know of other families that did as much outdoor things, but I wasn't really aware of other families and what they did. Working with the Parks Department--and my dad ran summer camps in a number of parks up and down the north shore of Chicago--

Lage: Were they day camps?

D. Cellarius: Yes, day camps. I think that he was very interested in the outdoors, and then he decided that we should move out West, so when I was in first or second grade, he started making trips out West, looking for a place to live. It took quite a few years. We then just picked up when I was in third grade, and we went out to Oregon. My father, who had been sort of an academic--he had a master's degree from Northwestern University--he couldn't find a job as a teacher, so he became

a butcher and ran small mom-and-pop grocery stores, so that's what my parents did my entire life with them until I got married. I worked in the grocery store. We had successive small stores in four different towns in Oregon.

Lage: Did you get a sense of what it meant for him to move out West?

D. Cellarius: He liked it. He liked it, and on the one day we would have off we'd get in the car and we'd take mountain roads, looking at things, and sometimes we'd get stuck--more than once, but he liked it a lot. And my mother did, too. They weren't in any organization, but they just liked to be out in the woods.

Lage: Did you have siblings?

D. Cellarius: I had a little brother. I actually tried to get some of the kids in Oregon, when I was in fourth grade, to go hiking with me because I had discovered a trail where you could get to a logging camp and see all this logging equipment, but none of my friends would go walking with me, so I used to do those walks alone.

Lage: Was seeing the logging equipment a shock to you? Did you have any awareness that the woods were threatened?

D. Cellarius: I had no idea that the woods were threatened. We were in a small logging town called Coquille, on the southern Oregon coast, and most of the customers at my parents' grocery store were loggers. My mother was pretty horrified at the life that these loggers had because they were often getting hurt, and they were often getting drunk. She sort of wondered why we were living there, because there wasn't much culture out there. To go from Chicago to really rural Oregon, she wasn't a hundred percent happy, but--

Lage: Did she prepare for a career or go to college?

D. Cellarius: She had been an executive secretary for E. R. Squibb & Sons, which is a pharmaceutical company, and she was pretty high up in the company because she had a lot of responsibility, so when my parents ran the grocery store, she kept the books, and she also worked. Throughout my childhood, she was a working mom, and I cooked, so I had that kind of a life. Many mothers were stay-at-home mothers, but my mother was always busy. Maybe that's why--.

Lage: Did you work in the store, too?

D. Cellarius: And I worked in the store.

Lage: What were you saying?

D. Cellarius: Maybe also because my mother was so busy, maybe that's why I did things like going on hikes by myself. I don't know. Because my parents didn't participate.

Except for the rides in the country, they didn't go hiking with me. An old man there in Coquille used to tell me a lot about the woods. Again, I was a very little girl, and one day he told me any berries that the birds eat won't poison you. I developed a lot of sort of strange ideas about the safety in the woods there.

Lage: Did you have any bad experiences with berries?

D. Cellarius: No bad experiences. I had a fort way up in the woods and stored some of my stuff there. I guess I acted a little bit like a boy.

Lage: It was a lot more fun in those days.

D. Cellarius: Kids could go just off and be gone all day, and there was a pond--. When I was very little, I used to catch frogs, to look at them at lakes, and when I went to Oregon I started trying to catch frogs, and they scared me to death because they had long tails like snakes. I'd never seen a salamander before, but I guess I was pretty fearless about the animals. I used to love ponds because there was more wildlife around ponds.

Schooling and the Importance of Books

Lage: Was science an interest in school, biology or other kinds of science?

D. Cellarius: In high school?

Lage: Yes.

D. Cellarius: In high school, I liked biology very much. First I wanted to be a forest ranger, and then that goal shifted to becoming a veterinarian, and then people told me, "Women have a horrible time in veterinary school, so don't try to be a veterinarian unless you like to suffer." So I said, "Okay, I'll be a doctor because I like medical things," and so I entered college as a pre-med student. I was very lucky in going to college. I got scholarships from most of the colleges in Oregon.

But Reed College, where I went, happened to have a very good biology department, and the professors spent a lot of time individually with the students, even undergraduates, and so I, instead of being a pre-med major, became a biology major and did my thesis on salamanders and then went on to graduate school in zoology, where I developed my interest in developmental biology.

I had really liked embryology in college, which is the study of how different organisms develop their parts of their bodies, and so that whole area has continued to interest me ever since.

Lage: Long-term interests have carried through.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Were there people in high school that mentored you? This is the fifties, and girls really were not as encouraged to get into careers or become doctors.

D. Cellarius: My physics teacher was a really great guy. He was a friend. There were not too many girls in the physics class, but I liked physics. I wasn't that good at it, but I managed to do physics pretty well. I don't remember my chemistry teachers that well except that I did get very good grades, and I absolutely adored chemistry because I liked the reactions. I liked learning about molecules and how you can put molecules together and create new things, and I was just fascinated by chemistry. And I think I'm quite interested in chemistry. But I wasn't really mentored except by this physics teacher, who was very supportive of me.

Lage: Were there any role models in your life that made you think, "Okay, I can become a doctor" or "I can become a scientist?"

D. Cellarius: Well, I was a big reader. I read from early times. I read books of all kinds, and I read so much science fiction in high school, I never want to read any more again, and I don't. But I think that in my reading, I read a lot about the history of science, and I think I was--there's Madame [Marie] Curie, and when I was quite young, in Coquille--that would be in the fifth-grade--we had a speaker come from a foreign country--I think Denmark--to our high school, and for some reason he told us a lot about the threat of nuclear war or the threat of bombs. I developed an interest right then in the nuclear problem, and I read John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, and that would have been fifth-grade.

Lage: That was pretty early to be aware.

D. Cellarius: Some of those things were printed in the *Ladies Home Journal*, which my mother got, and so I read a number of scary books when I was fairly young. I just found that science was interesting.

Lage: And public policy, it sounds like.

D. Cellarius: Yes. The other thing I discovered was something I had written there in fifth-grade. I discovered that there was such a thing as dog racing and that when the dogs can't race anymore, that they destroyed them, and I wrote an editorial. I didn't know it was an editorial. I just wrote a long essay about why it was terrible, and I still have that. I don't know. I found it later, and I realized that I guess I had some idea that people should speak out when something happens that they don't like, and I really love dogs.

I guess that sort of started me getting suspicious of grownups, because grownups do some things that just seem wrong to very idealistic kids.

Lage: Yes, that's true. So, you graduated high school in '55.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Politics, Choosing Reed College, and the Betty Crocker Homemaker Award

Lage: Was your family political at all? Did they have political opinions or discuss current events?

D. Cellarius: My parents worked so hard after we moved out West that I don't really remember them having many friends, or they weren't political at all. I know that my dad was a Republican. When I would try to get him to explain the difference between a Republican and a Democrat, he mostly explained that the Democrats meddled too much in the affairs of small businesses like our little grocery store. He seemed to want to be free to run the store without a lot of rules.

I was very unpolitical, and I was unpolitical in college. Some of our students at Reed College went downtown and were protestors, and I thought that was the oddest thing in the world, to not do your studying, because all I did was study.

Lage: Reed has a reputation for being a very liberal college.

D. Cellarius: It did.

Lage: Did you know that when you went there?

D. Cellarius: When I wanted to go there, I wanted to go there because I took my college boards there, and I just loved the campus. It looked like where I wanted to go to college.

Lage: So did you live nearby?

D. Cellarius: At that time, I lived in McMinnville, Oregon, which was an hour away, and I went up there and visited it. My minister was furious. He came over and tried to convince my parents that it was a hotbed of communism. My father didn't care. It was fine with my dad. And Reed gave me the best scholarship. And I had another scholarship. I'd been the Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow for the state of Oregon.

Lage: Oh, my. Tell me about that. How did you get that honor?

D. Cellarius: In my senior year, they said, "If you want to take a test, you can test a chance to win a Betty Crocker scholarship," and so I took the test, and--

Lage: Was it just for girls?

D. Cellarius: In those days, in 1954 and '55, it was just for girls. This was the first year they had a Betty Crocker homemaker award and so I was the winner for the state of Oregon.

Lage: Was it about homemaking?

D. Cellarius: The test was on homemaking questions: Which of these ingredients would you not put in baking powder biscuits? Or you need to move a chest, and you do not want to hurt yourself; how should you move this large object in the room? Your boss called and said--your husband's boss is coming home to your house for dinner; how would you prepare for this? Those are the kind of questions I can remember, and then we had to write an essay about why being a homemaker was important.

So I won for the state of Oregon, and I got a $5,000 scholarship and a trip to Washington, D.C. I got to meet Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher and those people.

Lage: Oh, my. What else did you do in Washington?

D. Cellarius: We went to the capitol, and I liked that a lot. I really wasn't interested in politics, but I enjoyed seeing Washington, D.C., and they took us to Williamsburg, and then they took us to Philadelphia. It was a fantastic trip for these forty-eight or fifty girls. We all got good scholarships.

One homemaker, a lady from Alabama, was chosen the homemaker for the United States. We all had an interview with a psychiatrist before they selected the winner, and I thought that was very interesting. Later, the psychiatrist told me that she knew I wouldn't win, because I was too ambitious. That didn't bother me at all. It just didn't faze me. I had no idea I was more ambitious than other people. She said I had much too much of an academic interest and that just would not be the typical homemaker.

So I had the good scholarship to go to Reed, and I enjoyed studying biology there. I met Richard there at Reed. I guess he was in the Sierra Club and the Outing Club, and I wasn't too interested in those kinds of things, although we did go hiking.

Lage: Did you join the Outing Club to do some hiking?

D. Cellarius: Everyone who was a Reed student was in the Outing Club. I went once or twice to the events. We really didn't associate in college with people who were particularly outdoor oriented, and it really didn't come up in our work that much.

Lage: You were studious.

D. Cellarius: We were very studious, and even after we both moved to New York City, I didn't pay a lot of attention, certainly not to political things, but we did go on outings. Richard probably told you about doing things with some of the people in the Atlantic Chapter.

Lage: Yes, but the Sierra Club didn't enter your life until this Atlantic Chapter?

D. Cellarius: Correct, yes.

Marriage to Richard Cellarius, Graduate Studies at Columbia University, 1959-1960

Lage: So you got married. Any stories there?

D. Cellarius: [no immediate response]

Lage: Was there an assumption that by the time you left college you should have a husband? I remember that mindset.

D. Cellarius: I did not particularly--I think we wanted to get married. I wanted to go to graduate school, and we decided that would be fine because he would be in graduate school in New York City. I was accepted to Columbia [University], yes. Although there were some people who felt this pressure to be married, it really didn't seem to happen that much anymore.

I had a wonderful graduation from Reed. Linus Pauling was my graduation speaker, and we got together with Mrs. Pauling and bunch of other professors and got to speak with them, famous people. I always loved meeting famous people.

Getting married was very nice, and then we went to New York City. I wanted to have a job. Oh, I went to school, but then my professor at Columbia did not like women graduate students, and--

Lage: How did he let you know that?

D. Cellarius: He told me so!

Lage: Just straight out.

D. Cellarius: Yes. He said, "We invest all this time in you, and we help you write a thesis, and then you have some babies, and you're gone." So I was really insulted at that, and also he didn't like my idea about connections between--I was mostly interested in nutrition and the development of babies before they're born, embryology, because I saw some links between poor nutrition leading to things that were like birth defects. This was just when thalidomide had been identified as a drug that was causing birth defects.

And then there was another pesticide that might be causing birth defects, used on cranberries.

Lage: Was that something you heard about in the Northwest?

D. Cellarius: No.

Lage: In the literature?

D. Cellarius: It was in the literature, and my professor at Barnard College--I did some teaching at Barnard with a very good--I can't remember exactly the field he was in, but he was--endocrinology; that was his field, was endocrinology. I was really interested in the links between endocrinology and development and wrote a big paper about it, and just--he wasn't interested.

Lage: It sounds like you were a little ahead of your time.

D. Cellarius: Well, I still think it's a very interesting subject. We discovered that there are some birth defects caused by chemicals that you can reverse by providing enough of certain vitamins, and they even think that the chemical blocks the ability of the vitamin to be used in proper development and so if you give sort of an excess of that vitamin, you overcome that. So I still think it's an interesting subject.

A New York Job in Publishing, Working at the Bronx Zoo

D. Cellarius: But I left graduate school also because I was very tired of studying, so I got a master's degree and then got a job in book publishing because I wanted a job you could only have in New York.

Lage: Now, why is that?

D. Cellarius: Because I knew I would not live in New York forever.

Lage: I see.

D. Cellarius: So I wanted to get into the publishing business, and that was very interesting.

Lage: That was a big departure from your science.

D. Cellarius: Yes, but I was in the college textbook division, so this was a job--I actually got the job with an agency that helps you find a job, and I guess they decided I was suited to this kind of a job. I edited college textbooks of all kinds, every subject. After several years of that, I was very tired of reading manuscripts.

Lage: I'll bet!

D. Cellarius: Seven times. But I learned a lot. The experience was perfect for being in New York because we were in that little world of publishing, and then I got a job at the Bronx Zoo because I was looking in the paper for something else to do, and it said, "New York institution needs person with biology degree." I went out to the zoo, and they hired me that day. I had a wonderful boss.

Lage: And what were you doing?

D. Cellarius: I did education. In education, I was actually hired by the New York Zoological Society, and we had to educate the public about animals, give talks at schools about animals. We would take three animals, a reptile, a bird, and a mammal, and spend the entire day with whatever school in the area wanted to send a car to the zoo to get a speaker. For several years I did speaking in the public schools.

A lot of conservation entered into our descriptions of the animals, their role in nature, and that's one of the first times I started thinking about the importance of saving animals, saving habitat. In addition, I made films, which I don't know if they do this anymore, but we spliced long strips of film together. Let's say you would splice together cheetahs and then you would splice together other animals and pretty soon you had a movie, and that was fun.

We made movies for some of the scientists who worked for the zoo. We had a woman who studied lemurs in Madagascar and a man named George Schaller who studied mountain gorillas in Africa. We also worked with some people who studied the white whales of Bristol Bay, the beluga whales, and then the Galápagos tortoises. We had a man who went to the Galápagos and shot a lot of films.

So we made these films for the Zoological Society to give away.

Lage: It must have been at a fairly professional level.

D. Cellarius: Well, we did the information and--we didn't put it all together.

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D. Cellarius: Someone else put the whole thing together. They packaged it into a nice film, but it was very exciting to be mailing videotape and films to scientists all over the world. I was getting a taste of these scientists who studied animals in their natural habitat. We were always talking about how sad it is, these animals cooped up here in the zoo, and then we'd say, "Well, but we're hoping to save them. We're learning about their lives and developing advocates. If a child loves a tiger in a zoo, he's going to say people shouldn't shoot tigers; they should save the lands where tigers live."

Lage: Do you still feel that way? You seem a little uncertain about whether zoos are a good educational institution.

D. Cellarius: I think they are, not just to have an exhibit, but educationally to create the constituency for saving both habitat and animals. We have a little zoo in Prescott, and it only takes rescued animals. It rescues animals that other zoos would destroy or animals just found in the woods that are injured and have to have a home. I think that's probably better--that's a real reason to have a zoo.

But I think it was just a big part of my life to learn about that. We also taught classes to people like Girl Scout leaders, and there we had to prepare the class and talk about the role of birds in the environment, and why they do what they do. I really enjoyed that and might have thought of going on into teaching, but then we moved. We had a couple of children, and we moved to Michigan, and so I never went into teaching.

II THE MICHIGAN YEARS, 1965-1972: A GROWING AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Ann Arbor's Teach-In, Earth Day, and Concern about Pesticides

Lage: Did you read Rachel Carson during this time? *Silent Spring* was published in '62, I think. Was that in the public eye as far as you were concerned?

D. Cellarius: It was in the public eye, but I didn't read *Silent Spring*. I just heard about it. I did become very concerned about pesticides, though, because that was one of my first interests. Soon after we moved to Michigan, my best friend--the lady who lived in the next building and I both had children the same age, and so they used to play together. Her husband was a biologist. Their name was Todd, John and Nancy Todd. They have gone on to do some wonderful work for the environment. They have a place at Woods Hole. They've done a lot of environmental work there, but we were just students then and talking about the environment.

We used to spend an awful lot of time together, and one of John Todd's friends was a fairly famous biologist, and John was trying to get him to join the environmental movement, get concerned about things because John Todd was doing some work in Santa Barbara in southern California. They were discovering all these pelicans were dying and had PCBs in their eggshells, and they weren't reproducing.

I was really spending a lot of time talking with scientists who were concerned about the environment. Earth Day came as a great shock to me because it had never occurred to me that the environment didn't clean itself. I thought that water that flows along in a creek was purified by sunlight, and I guess I didn't know a lot about where pollution came from. When I learned at the time of Earth Day how much pollution there was and how bad pesticides were, I instantly became very active in the pollution area of the environment.

Lage: It was specifically Earth Day that made you aware?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Was it the teach-ins?

D. Cellarius: It was the teach-in. We did a teach-in. A very active Sierra Club member in Ann Arbor, in the Huron Valley group, was Doug Scott. He was a student, and he was one of the leaders on the teach-in on the environment at Michigan. That was the first teach-in. It preceded Earth Day. It was just a little before that. We had very good speakers on environmental issues. I met quite a few people. I met Dave Brower, and we started working with the faculty.

Lage: Dave Brower came out for that Earth Day also?

D. Cellarius: Yes. It was the first teach-in on the environment. It wasn't the Earth Day celebration. It was Ann Arbor's teach-in, but it was just about the same time. We should find out exactly when it was.

Lage: I think it was earlier in the year by a couple of months.

D. Cellarius: It was. They needed somebody to drive Dave Brower to another meeting that night after he spoke, so I'd drive him back to his hotel, because I was willing to drive. In the car with Dave, I told him how much I had enjoyed articles in *The New Yorker* by someone named [Thomas] Whiteside about defoliation, and Brower said, "Yes, we're going to publish that in a book. It's going to be called *Defoliation*." It was about how they sprayed Vietnam with pesticides to destroy the trees and how it destroyed the soils. We have only recognized now how many people became ill in Vietnam from all that spraying.

That was a very interesting conversation with Brower because I think reading that article, "Defoliation," about spraying was when I first really started worrying about pesticides.

Lage: How interesting. That's when you were in Michigan?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: And you were already involved in the Sierra Club?

D. Cellarius: Just for hiking.

Lage: Was the Sierra Club in Michigan an activist conservation group, or was it more of a hiking--

D. Cellarius: It was more hiking. They were saving little woods around the town. That was the most important thing, was saving Bird Woods. I began to find pollution much more interesting than that.

Lage: That's interesting because so many people have a hard time--especially people who come out of this love for the natural area, as you did, have a hard time shifting into pollution.

D. Cellarius: Yes. Well, I'm afraid that having lived in Oregon in the mountains, I had no recognition of how important a small woods in an urban area is. I do now. I shouldn't say this, that I didn't appreciate it then, but I was spoiled.

Lage: Yes, I think that's understandable.

D. Cellarius: Oregon went on to be ruined by logging, and when I went back to Oregon it looked horrible--much worse. When I first went to Oregon it was more beautiful than when we went back.

Lage: Oh, I see. We'll get to that.

The Bottle Bill and the Ecology Center

D. Cellarius: Yes. I started not so much with the local Sierra Club, though I tried to get them to support me. I worked on the bottle bill, because I really didn't like waste.

Lage: Now, what drew you to that cause? When you say, "I really didn't like waste."

D. Cellarius: I just was really thrifty. I liked to buy things in refillable bottles and get my money back, and I was concerned about health. I was worried about waste, but I didn't know why. Then I read that a town in Maryland called Bowie had passed a law that all the bottles had to be returned and refilled, and so I wrote the Bowie, Maryland, city manager, and they sent me the bill. I took it to the mayor of Ann Arbor, and we worked on the Ann Arbor bill for several years before they finally passed a city bottle bill. It was several more years after that when the state of Michigan passed a Michigan bottle bill, which is one of the nation's best bottle bills because it's a ten-cent deposit.

Lage: And you worked on that also?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: I have in the notes here that you were a founder or involved with the Ann Arbor Ecology Center in Ann Arbor? Did you work on the bottle bill with the ecology center? Or was this more of an individual effort?

D. Cellarius: The bottle bill was more of an individual effort. The ecology center--I had been reading a little article about the Berkeley Ecology Center, and it seemed to me--because I was having a hard time getting enough people working on environmental things together. I said, "That's what we need in Ann Arbor. We need an ecology center." So I asked a few of my friends whether we could just have a meeting. These were often professors' wives because Richard was a professor, "Let's have a meeting and see if we could start one."

The first thing we did was invite Cliff Humphrey from the Berkeley Ecology Center and Mary Humphrey. We invited them to Ann Arbor, and we paid their way, and they told just how you start an ecology center. We had a meeting at the Y. Then we just proceeded to get more people interested, and we found a building. I think it must have been donated at first. And then we had a little office and a library, and we would sit and man the phone and talk about the environment.

Lage: What was the focus of the ecology center?

D. Cellarius: Pesticide spraying and--the ecology center could not get a good--the city just wasn't interested in glass recycling, so the ecology center started a glass recycling center out at the landfill, and it was so successful that finally the city wanted the credit for it, and so they took it over so that they could get the praise for successful diversion of waste from the landfill.

Lage: Did you get an executive director or hire staff, or was this all volunteer?

D. Cellarius: It's strange that I don't remember how we got the money, but we hired an executive director rather early on. The first one was Bill Copper, who went on to be something important in the city of Davis, California. When he got older, he was a city councilman in Davis, but he was our first director. And we had another person, Mike Schechtman, who as a young person was our ecology center director and now is doing something for the environment in his older years. So we had directors, yes.

Lage: Did founding the ecology center proceed Earth Day or follow it?

D. Cellarius: It just followed right after it.

Lage: So the energy of Earth Day went into this.

D. Cellarius: First there was Earth Day. Some of the young people that worked on Earth Day--I remember them coming over and helping with starting the ecology center. After we had the ecology center we worked with some professors at the Univer-

sity of Michigan and started having monthly discussion groups with the professors to talk about environmental issues. We decided to have a lecture series, which I got to title "Man Adapting to a Small Planet."

We had some very fine lectures. We had Frances Moore Lappé, who wrote *Diet for a Small Planet*, and we had John Todd from the Ocean Arks Project, and we had Alan Watts, who was a philosopher. Have you heard of Alan Watts?

Lage: The poet?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Zen.

D. Cellarius: Yes. One of my friends said, "Let's have Alan Watts," and I said, "Who's he?" They convinced me he would do a good thing for the environment, and he was an excellent speaker. Again, I don't know where we got the money. I invited several people. I invited Donella Meadows, who had written *Limits to Growth*, but she couldn't come. And I invited Rene Dubos, who had written a lot of books, and he couldn't come. But I saved their letters because they were famous people. It was nice, at least, to invite them.

Lage: Were these taking place on the campus?

D. Cellarius: Yes, they were, at the University of Michigan. For about seven months we had famous speakers.

Lage: Was this through the ecology center, or was this a separate entity?

D. Cellarius: It was through the ecology center.

Lage: It sounds like quite an organization you got going.

D. Cellarius: You know, it was very timely. People were very interested. We always had a big party after the talk, so we would get to know the speaker. Then it became time to leave Michigan.

Lage: Well, I have a couple of more things I want to ask you about Michigan.

D. Cellarius: Okay.

Community Gardens

Lage: The community garden?

D. Cellarius: One of the projects with this faculty group that used to meet and talk--

Lage: Now, tell me more about the faculty group.

D. Cellarius: Well, I invited any faculty at the University of Michigan that wanted to get together and talk about the environment to be in a group.

Lage: I see. You got that going?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: And what fields did they come from?

D. Cellarius: One was a really interesting guy. He was an anthropologist. I can't think of his name, but he was very interested in all of this. He had written a book called *Pigs for the Ancestors [Ritual in the Ecology of New Guinea People]*. I can't think of his name [Roy A. Rappaport]. He was in it. There were six or seven faculty that were very interested in the environment.

Lage: Were they people you knew through Richard's connections, or did you simply broadcast the appeal?

D. Cellarius: I think I knew through organizing for Earth Day that they had been involved in that, so we sort of said, "Let's keep in touch."

I was getting very interested in gardening, because I had read about the [University of California] Santa Cruz college gardens, which were organic, ecological gardens. I was always copying somebody in California, the ecology center. [laughter]

Lage: How did you happen to read about that?

D. Cellarius: I just read about it in a magazine.

Lage: Now, what was his name? It's slipping my mind. The famous British man who started those gardens at Santa Cruz.

D. Cellarius: I don't remember.

Lage: Alan Chadwick.

D. Cellarius: We didn't have a speaker come or anything; we just decided we wanted to set one up so that any professors that wanted students to do gardening, or any student that lived up there that wanted a little garden plot could do some gardening.

Robert Zahner was a professor who was really interested in gardening. I think he helped a lot in that area in getting the university to give us some land, and then various professors did. If they wanted to grow something and see what happens, they would do that.

One of them, I remember--the Caplans were studying the energy consumption of manual agriculture compared to plowing with a plow and things, and I can remember they had little kind of energy-measuring packs on their backs. They would measure how much work they did while they worked in the garden. The garden was very beautiful.

Lage: Did it produce food?

D. Cellarius: Oh, yes. It was a vegetable garden. And then I also started an organic vegetable garden at my children's school, Northside Elementary, and I did it by working with the children, the latchkey children who had nothing to do after school, so we gardened. I can remember my daughter being really jealous. The school was across the street, so we had quite a nice garden across the street, and the principal absolutely loved it. He was from the inner city of Detroit, and he said, "These kids have to learn how to grow food. When I grew up, we had nothing to eat but the cabbages that were out under the snow in our garden, and kids have to know where food comes from." So we had a school garden there at one of the Ann Arbor schools.

Then I went on to do a lot more community gardening things in Washington state after we moved there.

Organizing: "You Couldn't Just Do Things Alone," and Early Involvement with Sierra Club

Lage: So you were getting a very broad vision of the environmental movement.

D. Cellarius: Yes. but I think I sort of dabbled, going from one thing to another. I realized that you had to have people. You couldn't just do things alone. You had to both have a group of people that you worked with, and then you had to do educational programs, too. And I'm sure that all the people I worked with did most of the work.

And, you know, we shopped at the food co-op in Ann Arbor, and there were people at the food co-op interested in gardening and in getting away from pesticides. There was one professor, in our group of the professors, who I really enjoyed talking with. He was one of the major professors of toxicology that many students have had.

He wasn't nearly as concerned about chemicals as I was. One day I called him up, and I said, "I just received a plastic bag in the mail, and I'm supposed to put my turkey in there and roast my turkey in a plastic bag?" I said, "Aren't there chemicals in the plastic that would get in the turkey?!" and he said, "Oh, don't worry about it. I got one of those bags, too. That's how I'm cooking my turkey this year. Don't worry about it. You worry too much."

He had given one of our pesticide talks, and he was a really important professor. You know, talking about my skepticism for what grownups do sometimes, it turns out that there are things in plastic that are harmful. *Consumer Reports* magazine had an article a few years later: Don't microwave food in plastic; certainly don't bake in plastic.

Lage: Did you feel a lot of anxiety about this? Were you driven in part by a real sense that there was an immediate danger?

D. Cellarius: No. I think I just thought if something was possibly bad for your health, you should find some other way to do it, and it seemed like--I really wasn't worried about things like that. I mean, besides thinking it was just not a good idea.

Lage: Yes. You didn't lie awake nights.

D. Cellarius: No.

Lage: It was more intellectual, in a way, do you think?

D. Cellarius: Well, I think that I thought people ought to do whatever was best for their health and the environment. I was very health conscious. I'm afraid it was sort of intellectual. I mean, I wasn't paranoid at all about it; I just thought that--as I said, I learned at Earth Day there was pollution, so I think, having learned there was pollution, I decided that people should find out ways to stop creating that pollution.

Lage: Were you able to bring many Sierra Club people in on these activities?

D. Cellarius: They were supportive. They were supportive, and I'm sure they let me give some talks, but the local group was still very much of a natural history and urban planning--well, the big issue then was growth in the city and trying to stop rampant growth.

Lage: And then there was Sleeping Bear.

D. Cellarius: Sleeping Bear. Again, that's largely our Richard project because Doug Scott was working very hard on Sleeping Bear, and the chapter was working on Sleeping Bear, so we had a nice, really great outing up at Sleeping Bear, and Phil Berry

came. We took him up to Sleeping Bear, when he was president [of the Sierra Club].

I did hours and hours of newsletter mailings and addressings in our house. I mean, we were active in the local group as participants, and we had group meetings at our house, and people came, and we decided what to do about the issues and addressed newsletters, but I--

Lage: You had your own separate agenda, things you were doing.

D. Cellarius: I think so, and I think I didn't even think that was something the Sierra Club did. Yes. I thought that it was--I loved the Sierra Club. I remember one day I was home alone at night and got a call and he said, "This is Brock Evans. We need you to call your congressman because there's this Timber Supply Act, and it's gotta be stopped." Richard was away in California, and so I just said, "Okay, Mr. Evans, I'll make my call," and I called up. I didn't know what he was talking about: "Timber Supply Act that's gotta be stopped?" So I was a good Sierra Club member. [laughs]

Lage: How did this part of your life sit with being a mother, raising children? Did having these young children help motivate you more?

D. Cellarius: Yes, I was very concerned about them. I was very concerned about nutrition. I tried really hard to buy organic food when I could, and I always was interested in cooking, so I was trying all these vegetarian recipes that I learned about. The children--I did things with them. There were some nice woods near our house, and we used to go on hikes there, and I really enjoyed doing things with the children. We did Sierra Club outings and trips, and we did lots of things with the children and got them used to camping, and they both still love camping. They became far more outdoors people than I ever dreamed they would. But I think growing up in the Northwest--

Lage: That's what set them on that track?

D. Cellarius: Yes, it did that for them. They have a great love for getting out in the woods, in the mountains.

III OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON, 1965-1999: A COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

Involvement at the State Level: The Department of Ecology, Lobbying for the Washington State Bottle Bill and Hazardous Waste Laws

Lage: Shall we talk about moving west?

D. Cellarius: Yes. We were getting tired of Michigan, so when Richard had a chance to get a job at Evergreen, we moved immediately to Olympia.

The one thing I can say about Ann Arbor is my great friendship with the Todds, who were also environmentalists. The Todds had a grant from Mr. Rodale to do some of their early work, and I was very impressed with the good work that the Todds did. We had such fun just being friends for many years, and so we stayed in touch with them after that. I think that was one of the biggest environmental influences I had.

And then I had another friend who was really funny because she used to say to me, “Doris, you know so much about the environment and all these chemicals. You should be telling other people. You just shouldn’t just tell me.” I wasn’t really into writing articles at that time, but I was looking for ways, I guess. She really encouraged me to do a lot of those things, to get other people to know about and be concerned about things.

So then, when we moved to Washington state, I learned they had a Department of Ecology in the state. We lived in the state capital. So I went over, and said, “I’m interested in ecology. That’s what I’ve been doing for many years. Tell me all about what you do,” and they explained who they were. They were a bunch of state agency people, and they had to--

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D. Cellarius: And the people at the agency were kind of amused by me coming over and wanting to know all about their programs and be involved. I learned about what the state laws were, and they explained to me that there was a new federal law called RCRA [Resource Conservation and Recovery Act] that was being developed at the federal level, and they were writing a solid-waste law at the state level at the same time and were addressing many of the same things, and they said, "We think if you're interested in this, you can help us on this."

And so I just became very active with the people who were writing the regulations at the state, and I, myself, was lobbying on the bottle bill, which we never were able to pass. I found out some things about what was happening in my own town. It was a state inspector who was one of many people that started calling me up from the state and saying, "There are so many people down here, like in Chehalis, who are concerned about dumping and things going on in the neighborhood. We don't know what to do about citizens who are concerned. Would you go and meet with them and figure out what to do about them?"

They used to think I was with the League of Women Voters.

Lage: It's very interesting. They were calling on you.

D. Cellarius: Yes, because I had gone over there and had all this citizen interest. I got very involved for many years with this waste, PCB dumping, but I realized that it was one of quite a few projects where someone from the state was asking me to or telling me something good to get involved in.

Lage: So they saw you as an ally, it sounds like, not a troublemaker.

D. Cellarius: I think they did. I became very good friends with all of them. I went through about six different directors of the Department of Ecology, and I wasn't important, but I was someone they talked to, and I got to know most of the directors. We met with them a few times, and--

Lage: No official capacity?

D. Cellarius: Well, the state had many advisory committees, and they put me on as a citizen representative on these, as public participation. They would have one or two citizens on committees helping them write the regulations and develop their programs, so I was on many advisory committees. The most important was the Solid Waste Advisory Committee because it dealt with both solid waste and garbage and toxic, hazardous waste.

For a couple of years, I was even the chair of that committee because they rotated the chairmanship and pretty soon it got to be my time. We would tour

steel mills and dumps, and we had sessions on the development of rules, so I learned a lot about--

Lage: Who were the other members of the group?

D. Cellarius: Representatives of industries and representatives of local government. Gradually, more and more they started getting more citizens. In fact, I worked very hard to require that citizens be required to be on local solid waste advisory committees. I had attended my local solid waste advisory committee for about five years, and then one of the people said, "Doris, you come more than anybody, and you have more institutional memory. We think you should be a member," and I said, "That's fine."

And then when the state heard that I'd become an official member of the local solid waste advisory committee, the state said, "Why don't we make all the solid waste advisory [committees] have citizens?" So they wrote a law and said that there had to be citizens on those committees, in all the counties, all thirty-nine counties.

I just went to those solid waste advisory committees because I was interested in recycling, but then I learned how the hazardous waste was managed in the county, and I learned about the various schemes--people come up with new things to do with garbage, especially if they can make money on it, so I learned how to evaluate sneaky projects.

And that's why, when Jim Cohee called me about this Cato Institute project for burying garbage I was just able to point to the flaws in the project because we'd been doing that a lot in our county. People would come with this "magic black box," and all you'd have to do was send your garbage there, and they'll take care of it, and you just pay them.

Lage: Was this a service offered to individuals or to cities?

D. Cellarius: Cities. Our city could pony up millions of dollars and pay these people to do these things. That was just very interesting to me because of my interest in waste and in the bottle bill and in recycling, because you couldn't get anybody to pass a bottle bill.

Lage: So you seemed to have influence on these small committees, but there wasn't enough overall influence to get a bottle bill passed. I'm kind of surprised.

D. Cellarius: Well, the bottle bills--we could not get--the legislators in most states, at least part of the time, are under heavy influence of industry. The industry lobbyists are there, walking the halls constantly, so it's very hard. Industry lobbyists will say terrible things about bottle bills. They say it means we're going to go back to

glass, and it's going to break, and children are going to be cut and hurt, and it's just better to have this plastic stuff.

Then they would talk about the expense. They often lied in testimony. Sometimes I--I was never too effective with the bottle bill, but we did get a very good solid waste law passed.

Lage: At the state level?

D. Cellarius: Yes, and we did this fairly early after I moved there, because it also addressed hazardous waste. We got language in there that made the hazardous waste law twice as stringent as the federal law that applies in almost every other state, except California and Washington have pretty weak hazardous waste laws. But we had a really strong hazardous waste law. The reason it was so strong is-- and [in] the final negotiations on the bill, I said, "You have to put those words in there, that things are toxic if they are mutagens, carcinogens, or teratogens."

And so it was a pretty broad definition of what could be toxic, and once it was in law, it was there. They did all kinds of sneaky things to not have to comply with it, like saying, "Oh, there has to be a lot of it before we worry about it." But still, we ended up regulating in Washington state twice as much waste as if we had just had the federal law.

Lage: How does the federal law read?

D. Cellarius: It is categories of waste. It's not that every single chemical would have to be held up to a standard. It's like waste from the automotive industry, waste from this, waste from that, waste from--

Lage: More of a chance for industry lobbyists to get a handle on it.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: When did you get that bill passed? Do you remember?

D. Cellarius: In the late seventies, '76.

Lage: And who helped push that forward? Was it the Sierra Club or some other organization?

D. Cellarius: Once I moved to Washington state, I always represented the Sierra Club. So we were able to get Sierra Club people making calls. I also worked very closely with our local health department, and in passing that--actually, it passed while we were living in Maryland, and I called the local health officer, and I said, "Would you please go down and testify on this bill and testify that local government needs this strong definition of hazardous waste? Because this stuff--the

more it isn't regulated, the more it becomes a problem of the county. It ends up in our dumps." He was a very good local health officer, and he had taught me everything I know about ground water and pollution from landfills and everything, so he said he would, and he did go and testify.

Somebody said that we were successful because the health department was there, besides the environmentalists--and he got the whole state health association to support the bill. That's a long time ago. I think it's harder to pass things now. In most of the states it seems things have gotten worse. I mean, Michigan got really worse. They got a terrible governor about twenty years ago, and things have been really bad. Michigan was a really good environmental state for a while.

The Role of Corporations and Legislation

D. Cellarius: Washington is still pretty good, but the influence of the wise use movement and all the big chemical companies, and then, because of Superfund, all the industries began to be bad guys because it was discovered that they all had waste sites that were polluting towns. All these industries start showing up at the legislature, not wanting any laws. I worked very hard on household hazardous waste. They wanted it to be illegal, practically, for any state or local agency to discuss the problems of consumer products. The chemical industry started doing incredible things once it was discovered that household chemicals could be toxic and were part of the problem; landfills are polluted.

That was actually a bill; a bad proposal that came out of somebody like Procter and Gamble that we were able to stop. But in all that lobbying on bills and trying to write good programs, I learned how much money the industries all spent trying to stop good legislation and cover up what they'd done.

Lage: Did you become more cynical about industry than you had been in the past?

D. Cellarius: Oh, terrible. My parents' friends when they lived in Chicago worked for places like Abbott Laboratories, Squibbs, and Morton Salt Company, so I thought that big business was just how families earn a living. There were some good industries, but basically in the lobbying, I learned that sometimes a few industries would be good, but they would have a national industry group, like the soft drink association, and the big associations would just be really bad. I worked on paper recycling, with the paper mills. They would explain to us why they couldn't do the good things we wanted them to do.

Lage: How did you respond? Did you meet with them on a face-to-face basis?

D. Cellarius: Well, yes, because I was on all these advisory committees.

Lage: Yes, that's what I was thinking.

D. Cellarius: I started meeting with them, getting to like them. I wasn't the toughest guy in the world. I was always able to be very civil to people, because I liked them as people. I had a good friend who I finally convinced to start doing a lot of this with me, and pretty soon she was even doing more of this than I was because I got her to go on the Solid Waste Advisory Committee when I went off. She'd been a League of Women Voters leader. That was her main organization always.

The Cascade Chapter did a lot on pollution because it was a very well organized chapter. They were a great help in all the work, the issues I worked on.

Lage: I just want to go back to that point about how you related to the industry people and how you got quite cynical. You said you could see them as friends--

D. Cellarius: Oh, yes.

Lage: --and people you could communicate with.

D. Cellarius: I thought we had to work things out for everybody, you know.

Lage: And when did that change?

D. Cellarius: One thing I learned was in addition to going to the meetings, they were over at the state offices every day, sitting in those guys' offices, telling them how they wanted the rules written. I thought that was really sneaky.

I tried doing a little of that, but I didn't have the time to be there all the time, and no one was paying me for anything. There was a Washington Environmental Council and also a Washington Toxics Coalition, so there were other environmental groups that did a lot of work. It grew with the discovery of pollution. There weren't that many people doing it in the late seventies, but in the eighties there were a lot of organizations.

I was on the board of something called Washington Citizens for Recycling. We worked on recycling because we couldn't get a bottle bill.

Lage: A bottle bill would have been to return every bottle sold?

D. Cellarius: Yes. As we realized how corrupted the industries were then--and are, right now. For two years I've been chair of the Sierra Club's Corporate Relations Committee, and it's very hard to think that these industries are doing anything more than beautifying their image when they do good things. Some, if they're not terrible

polluters, we take their money. It really made me interested eventually in chairing this Corporate Relations Committee.

The last thing I worked on, which is still an active issue, was the issue of making toxic waste into fertilizer. I served on the governor's fertilizer committee. You know, you think of Scott's Turf Builder, Scott's fertilizer--these fertilizer companies are just so evil! So we're still working on that. The Cascade Chapter of the Sierra Club eventually sued EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] to get better rules over what can be in fertilizer. That's just being finalized right now. And I've stayed active in that issue, even though I moved away from Washington state.

I'm waiting to see if some of these industries really are doing better, but they are never very nice when you're in a lawsuit against them. We sued EPA because EPA did not do a good job over fertilizer regulations, and in the lawsuit process the industries get really mean. I think that's lawsuits, and lawyers talking to lawyers. I never enjoyed a lot of that.

I started out thinking you could win with facts, and then I began to realize, especially now, that we need these campaigns such as the Sierra Club has, the CAFO [Confined Animal Feeding Operation] Campaign; campaigns where you mobilize everybody in society. You find your friends among the hunters and anglers, and you go to shopping centers with your ironing boards and hand out literature, because that's what really works.

Lage: But are you mobilizing with facts?

D. Cellarius: We're mobilizing with political pressure. We're mobilizing with facts and getting people to put their legislators to shame.

Lage: I see. You have to work with the elected officials.

D. Cellarius: Yes. Sometimes we send cards to EPA, but usually we send cards to congressmen.

Lage: And you worked so closely with, for example, the Department of Ecology, and that seemed, if I understood you correctly, to work well. But you haven't had the same experience with the EPA.

D. Cellarius: No, and that's because it's harder to work with EPA. It's far away. We had a really good relationship with a few people in EPA in Seattle. We had a really good director when I moved away. He had moved up. I had known him when he was just the head of a state agency, and then I think he went to Vermont and became the head of their state agency, and then he came back to EPA to be the head of EPA in Seattle--which covers Alaska, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. But he was a good person, and we actually had some good work with him.

I think at the top level of EPA, there is so much pressure from industry. In the lower levels in an agency--it got harder and harder because industry seemed to be putting on more pressure. It was easier to get good language in the early eighties, and it just got progressively harder as these corporations are competing with one another, and they don't want this regulation, because we were coming up with more and more stiff rules for where you can dump things and what you can actually use. I think it was the growing recognition of how much pollution needs regulation.

I think most of the people who are environmental professionals and work for state agencies and EPA, young people like my own children, get a professional education and want to work on environmental science. You go to work; you think you're working for an environmental agency. Most of them do the best they can, but there's the pressure from industry.

Lage: And from part of their agency, perhaps.

D. Cellarius: And the head of the agency was always saying, "They're going to go to the legislature and cut our budget. I'm going to have to fire 500 people if the cuts that are proposed this year go through." It was direct deals with the major industries that work together: Weyerhaeuser [forest products company], Boeing--those are the big guys, big paper companies. If we pass this stricter law, they're just going to go and make the legislators cut the agency budget. They will think of arguments.

I was lobbying for several years on reducing pesticide use in the schools and notification of parents. Who would be against that? And this nice woman said, "You think I can get my fellow legislators to pass that?" She said, "We can't get them to pass money for schools, for education. Why should they adopt a program to deal with the chemicals used in the schools?" You just don't know what the pressure is on legislators.

But, again, the Sierra Club, at the state level--Paula Carrell's program--is doing exactly the right thing. A lot of the things that happen first, happen in the states. It's the same story that you have to head off these crazy ideas, and you have to head them off by making Sierra Club members become friends with their legislators, and the legislators know they're going to hear from Mary Jones, and you know Mary Jones is not going to vote for you next time and she's going to tell her friends not to vote for you, and so voting records and all that--

Lage: Is this one of the lessons you've learned?

D. Cellarius: Yes, this is a lesson I've learned, that the political pressure that the Sierra Club uses is right on, putting political pressure right up there alongside information and what they call payback, like "We're watching you, and you're not going to have a job next year because we are able with our political program to get a lot

of people out of office." It's just not facts; it's not even the threat that your children's health will be worse that really means anything to some of these legislators, because the industry comes in with some, not necessarily threats, but really distorted facts that--the legislators will change their mind.

So I guess we just have to--I keep wondering what the next bright invention will be, because I think this grassroots lobbying to put pressure on the legislators and on the Congress, and then, not only that, but targeting. Targeting elections, targeting issues. You can't work on every issue; I've learned that. I still try to work on every issue. Right now the Environmental Quality Strategy Team, where I am right now--we have to work on everything, but we try to not spread ourselves too thin because you really only win when you hit them really hard, and you have lots of people involved. That's why phone banking, all these things that put the pressure on, are what make the difference.

And it's interesting to think about the good issues; how many things we could win if we had more money and more people.

Lage: More people that got actively involved.

D. Cellarius: More people who are interested. I think that I have really learned a lot. Right after Earth Day I decided, "I'm going to be a recycler and also not use strong soaps." The big deal in '70 was the stuff in soaps, phosphates in detergent. Remember that?

Lage: I remember that.

D. Cellarius: Now it's other things, but I was getting rid of phosphates in detergents by using just plain white soap, and then I realized that just one person doing something good was not enough, so then you have to--

Lage: So you started out with lifestyle changes.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: For yourself.

D. Cellarius: Yes, and then I started telling my friends, and then I realized just us good ladies couldn't clean up the world. And then there was a man, actually a Sierra Club member in Urbana, Illinois, named Bruce Hannon, who wrote a big article on the bottle bill, returnable bottles versus the recycled stuff. He put it in the computer, and he had analyzed that if every single bottle in the state was recycled, refilled rather than in some way recycled, how much energy it would save, how much garbage you would save. He had these massive numbers, and then he did this with other things. He did it with throw-away utensils. Actually, he had students do this. They did it with some of the products you buy, like detergent in a

roll-on container versus--he did what I guess his students wanted to study. He let them just calculate--well, one person makes a good choice. Let's see what happens when five million people make the good choice, and then you have these--

So I really believe that you have to work for laws that regulate things. We can't all just say, "I'll read the label on the fertilizer, and I won't use toxic waste-made fertilizer." You'll have to pass a law to get rid of it.

Lage: Has that taken you time to come to, or has it been a relatively quick process?

D. Cellarius: No, it took a while to figure out that--just my family doing things right or my friends is not enough. You really have to change the system for how you do things. We have made some changes since Earth Day. You can probably think of them. Like, we've stopped using those chlorofluorocarbons, yes. They're gone.

Lage: That was a law, too.

D. Cellarius: Yes. But we have passed some laws. We got rid of PCBs. We passed a law against some of the worst--

Lage: DDT.

D. Cellarius: Yes, pesticides. And--

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D. Cellarius: When you can actually pass a law, then suddenly everyone [says], "Of course we do this!" People accept the fact that this is what they're going to do, and they brag about it. The industry takes all the credit it can get for doing what the law required them to do. There's quite a bit of debate now about how far regulation can go, and the industry is just making hay with this. It's called regulatory reform. They're saying we need to "create new ways," these command and control laws--it's maxed out. Well, it isn't maxed out. We just haven't passed enough laws.

Lage: You don't think there's a point where it creates backlash? You were implying earlier that the stronger the environmentalists get, then you get kind of a backlash from industry.

D. Cellarius: Well, yes.

Lage: Where they bring their troops in.

D. Cellarius: Yes. It created backlash that lobbies against more laws, but I don't think that that's any reason to not pass laws that are protective of the environment. If there are certain things that we should not be using, putting down our drain, putting in

the air, then we shouldn't. Because now health professionals are really backing up the things people have said all along, that if you pump all this stuff into the air cumulatively it's taking a real toll on people's health. Some of the people who are really worried about this are the people who worry about children and them getting ADD [attention deficit disorder] and other neurological--

Lage: Asthma.

D. Cellarius: Yes, and asthma. The little kids are the ones who are getting the worst from this soup of chemicals that people breathe and the soup of chemicals that people bring home from the supermarket and spray all over their house. And they still do that! I think that's something that still needs work.

Personal Choices Regarding Environmentalism, an Aside on Church

Lage: How do you defend your household? What do you do differently from your neighbors?

D. Cellarius: I try not to buy a lot of consumer products. My house isn't as clean as other people's.

But I have to tell you a funny story. In the days in Ann Arbor, in the seventies, I had given a talk at our church about things, and I had said, "It's probably better to go out and do some environmental work and do good things than to make sure you wash your sheets every week and have this routine of using all these things to keep your house looking as good as your neighbor's."

And a woman told me quite a while after that, that that made the biggest impression on her because she was turning herself into a slave to her house and cleanliness--a nice church lady--and she said that she relaxed about that, and she decided to spend more time doing things she thought were important. I was happy that she said that.

I'm very concerned about bacteria and the fact that bacteria are becoming resistant to antibiotics, so I really wash a lot with soap and water, and I wash fruits and vegetables when I bring them home from the store. I'm really concerned that there's a real importance for cleanliness, but to the best of my ability, I try not to use too many products. We have a little soda machine in our kitchen. To make soda water for a soft drink we just make it out of tap water when we want a drink, so we don't have bottles and cans.

Lage: Oh, I didn't even know such a thing existed.

D. Cellarius: Yes. It lasts about three months, a little canister of carbon dioxide, and you just go "pshhht" into your cold water, and then you can have lemonade or bourbon and soda. We make our own soda water.

Lage: Do you buy organic food?

D. Cellarius: I buy organic some of the time. I think it's really important to support the organic industry. I did a lot of work when the Organic Labeling Act was up before the Department of Agriculture. I wrote fact sheets and tried to get the Sierra Club really involved in that. I worked with others in the Sierra Club who worked on that, but I was one of the major people working on organic labeling, because I think there again, programmatically, the organic movement needs legislative help.

I have a garden. I shop at the little farmer's market in Prescott. So I do try to buy organic and locally grown food. We try not to eat much meat. I like being retired because we can walk everywhere. We don't have to go in the car unless we're going to the airport. But our lifestyle is better because we can walk a lot of places. Richard's ridden his bike to school for over thirty years. He's been a bicycle commuter.

Lage: So you're at one with your environmental policies.

D. Cellarius: Well, we try. But we are far from pure, because it's hard. I don't use paper products; I use towels and wash them, not paper towels or paper napkins. It's nice to see that the kids, our children, try to do that, too.

Lage: They didn't rebel against it.

D. Cellarius: They did when they were teenagers. Barbara would say, "I'm not going shopping with you if you're carrying that great big bag with you." And now she's the one who remembers her bag every time we go to the store. But when she was in junior high school, she thought it made her mother look like a bag woman.

Lage: It's so typical. [laughter]

D. Cellarius: So that was kids for you.

Lage: What about your church? You mentioned being a member of a church.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: How does that fit with environmentalism? I've often heard people talk about their environmentalism as almost a religion.

D. Cellarius: At the time of Earth Day, the church I was going to was very excited about being part of the Ann Arbor environmental movement, and they invited me to give a talk. I was doing the teenager class, and we talked a lot about the environment. The churches in Ann Arbor got quite involved in Earth Day. I can remember, because they got involved in Earth Day, it was sort of a spiritual thing, that we spread it as far into the community as we could, and probably because the minister I worked with was active in the Council of Churches.

After that, the Ecology Center would always invite the churches to be sponsors of things and sort of was accessible. I think that its reverence for life just reaches over. Now we have the environmental justice movement, and we work with the churches nationally, and the Sierra Club is starting to do even more work with the churches--

Lage: Were you involved in a church in Olympia?

D. Cellarius: In Olympia we weren't involved with any church because we had gotten so involved in the Sierra Club. It was a funny thing to have been very involved in churches all our lives and then move somewhere and stop going to church. But it hasn't changed our feeling of being religious. I think a person has only so much time.

Lage: Yes.

D. Cellarius: I often thought that, because you have only so much time to work on things. I've since then developed a much greater appreciation for a lot of other religions.

Lage: Since you stopped being so involved.

D. Cellarius: Yes, because a lot of things you do in church are the same things you do in the Sierra Club. You have discussion groups, and you do things for the poor. Olympia--there were several articles about me in the newspaper, and after that people started calling me up. "Hello. We heard that you help people. I need help." And I just got involved in a number of people's lives who had environmental problems.

Lage: I'm going to stop you right here, because I have to go. Can we start this up tomorrow?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Organizing Community Activism

[Interview 2: November 15, 2001] ##

Lage: It's November 15, and this is the second session with Doris Cellarius. We ended yesterday with a discussion--I don't remember how much we got on tape, but talking about how your work with hazardous waste got you involved in communities. I wanted you to elaborate on that and also talk a little bit about what women bring to the environmental movement that may be a little bit different from men.

D. Cellarius: Okay. I had mentioned that people in the government started referring questions to me about problems that citizens had where there was a pollution problem or a toxic waste site in their neighborhood, and so I got involved in working with several of these community groups. As a result of being involved in those issues, we had to create publicity for the problems of the citizens at these sites. In some of this newspaper publicity, my name and also the name of the Sierra Club became more known to the general public.

After that, people would just call me up and say, "I see that you help people. I need help with something." I considered every new question an opportunity to learn because I didn't know about all of these things, but I had a science background, and I also knew, because I was a Sierra Club member, basic organizing strategies, and I knew that our goal in the Sierra Club was to help community groups build their own strength.

I even helped write a handbook about this later, a handbook for empowering citizen groups at local sites, because there are some basic things that we know in the Sierra Club, but people who have never faced a community problem don't think about these things. We always told them it's important to be an organization and have a name, even if it's just "Mary Jones at Her Kitchen Table." You're going to have a name, and you're going to welcome new members, and you might even make yourself some letterhead for your letters. We told them a variety of things to make them seem much more powerful.

Lage: And you were taking, it sounds like, strategies that were developed to save natural places.

D. Cellarius: Right.

Lage: And applying them to these new issues.

D. Cellarius: Yes, to the new one--either "clean up our water" or "clean up the neighborhood dump site."

Chehalis and the Threat of PCBs

Lage: Let's ground this by saying what issue you were working on when this began to happen, and what time period was it?

D. Cellarius: Well, this was certainly around 1980 because it was just when PCBs were becoming known to be a problem and also dioxin. I knew from reading information from Sierra Club people in Indiana--I was living in Washington state--Bloomington, Indiana, had had a bad PCB problem with Westinghouse. I knew that PCBs, when burned and heated, created dioxin, and these were both dangerous chemicals.

So using these articles that I had from Indiana, I started learning about the problems they were having near my community in Olympia, Washington. Chehalis was twelve miles south of us, and people were burning old transformers to get the copper out of them, and sometimes they were open-burning them in pits and sometimes they had a little incinerator the size of an icebox.

The PCBs would burn, and dioxin was formed and went into the air. When I heard that these things were happening and also that these PCBs were leaking into streams, where they would--

Lage: How did you hear about that?

D. Cellarius: Oh, this was something that the Department of Ecology told me. "The citizens don't like this. Why don't you go talk to them?" So I went and looked around and found out that the Department of Ecology was looking for ways to get them to clean up and issuing orders to them. They did everything that was in their power, telling them not to do these things.

Lage: What was the company that was doing it?

D. Cellarius: The name of the company was Ross Electric. Then other employees from Ross Electric would go off into the woods and do it on their own, to make money by selling the copper. And so there were probably more sites than we knew about in this county, in the woods, where people were--and they were taking transformers from industry because it was more expensive for industry to dispose of them some other way, so they just gave them to these haulers, who took them off into the woods.

As a result of working with the community which wanted this cleaned up, I remember telling them that they should go test for dioxin at a few places, and they did, and it was in the air and going onto neighboring properties. I had learned about this from other sites. Eventually many more people became involved.

The state of Washington--EPA said they couldn't do anything about it. These pieces of PCB equipment, electrical transformers, had such a low amount of PCBs that they weren't regulated. I guess they were regulated at fifty parts per million. Most of these transformers had, oh, just around fifty. I did look at the shipping data.

We eventually worked with a legislator from that county, and Washington state passed a more stringent law than the federal law. We regulated PCBs down to one part per million, and that meant that these people had to close up their operations. We hear they moved to Montana, and I hear there are still problems in Montana with people who are helping dump transformers.

The manufacture of PCBs was outlawed in the seventies, when they found out they caused cancer and developmental problems, but they were still used everywhere throughout the United States, mainly in electrical transformers.

And there are still PCBs. The Sierra Club still has a PCB task force. We're working on dealing with Canada on issues of shipping PCBs back and forth for treatment. The goal of the PCB issue is to dispose of them in a way that doesn't create more pollution. They've learned how to do that. You don't burn them; you chemically treat them. The goal is to get everyone to be treating them in a safe way. So that's still an issue that we're working on.

Lage: Did you help get a citizens' group going at that site?

D. Cellarius: Yes, we started a citizens' group, and they had a name. There were some newspaper articles. That problem sort of solved on its own. Some of the sites were cleaned up, and the state passed a state Superfund, and we worked very hard on that. Even my kids helped, working on the state Superfund law. Actually, we felt it was the best state Superfund law in the nation.

Cascade Pole Toxic Site

At the time we were working on a state Superfund, I was asked to be on a local government committee for the cleanup of a toxic waste site in downtown Olympia. That site was a place where telephone poles made from trees from out of the woods were dipped in pentachlorophenol. The pentachlorophenol was just poured over these long poles to treat them so they wouldn't rot, and then they could be used for telephone poles and pilings on wharves. No one really knew how bad that penta was at that time.

Lage: Was this the Cascade--

D. Cellarius: This was Cascade Pole.

Lage: Right in the middle of Olympia.

D. Cellarius: Yes, right in downtown Olympia. Olympia is on Puget Sound, on the water, and people were seeing oily leaks going out into Puget Sound at the edge of this place where the poles were being treated. They started testing it, and they found that there was not only pentachlorophenol but dioxin in the sediments. They've been working on this site for over ten years, and it is not yet cleaned up, because whenever you have a toxic waste site, it takes years to write a cleanup plan, get permits to do everything that's needed in the plan, get government and the citizens to agree on it and appropriate the money, and then to start digging up the bad stuff and cleaning up the site.

We had many public meetings. People became aware that I was working on this, and I always said that I represented the Sierra Club because I did, and because that really gives you more power and stature, especially with government. They really like to feel that they were working with important people.

Lage: You mean they respected you more when you represented the Sierra Club?

D. Cellarius: They did.

Lage: Or were they afraid of you more?

D. Cellarius: Well, both, because I think that they knew that there was something behind a single Sierra Club member, that we would do publicity, we were politically active, we would go to county commissioners, and we could help them, or hurt them, whichever we felt was necessary.

Lage: Did you have a special committee within the chapter that you were part of?

D. Cellarius: I was called the toxics coordinator for the Cascade Chapter, and then I was a member of a local group there in Olympia, Sasquatch group. I worked closely with Sheri Tonn, a chemist at Pacific Lutheran University. She was a member of the Sierra Club's National Water Committee, and she was a lot of help on these things. She was the main person that I worked with in Washington state.

Lage: And then did you work with the community, like people who lived near Cascade Pole?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: What kind of people were they? What social background?

D. Cellarius: Back to Chehalis, those people had been farmers, and almost everyone in that group was a woman. When we were working in Cascade Pole, most of the people on the committee were either business people in the community--because, as I said, it was downtown Olympia--and there were several old-timers, older guys who had worked around the site twenty, thirty years ago--and with many Superfund sites it's important to find out what happened at the site when it first started, because they could tell us, "Yeah, they used to haul things outta here, and they went up so-and-so road to those woods." You learned a lot from old-timers.

One of the men on the committee lived right on the beach near the site and talked about how many clams he used to eat. He got cancer, and I think he died before the committee was through. It was frightening. There was one man who lived near the site who was a doctor, and he was very worried, and he actually had cancer, too.

Lage: Did they do any studies to see if the cancer incidence was remarkable?

D. Cellarius: We couldn't get the state to do any studies. We had an awful lot of problems with health departments. Health departments will always tell you, "There's not a large enough population here to get statistically valid information," so we just shouldn't waste our time. At this Cascade Pole site, we could not get any old workers to talk. It closed down just about the time they discovered it was polluting the bay.

We heard that there were workers with health problems. These were people who had worked around hot pentachlorophenol steaming off these logs, and then they would float the logs into a lagoon and out into Puget Sound and carry them away to put up for telephone poles. So it was one of those disasters in the making before anyone knew that pentachlorophenol was toxic and that when you heat pentachlorophenol, you create dioxin.

Lage: You tried to get to the workers, and you couldn't--

D. Cellarius: The workers wouldn't talk. I never had any luck. But I would ask, "What are the prevailing winds? What houses would have been in the prevailing winds of the air pollution from the site?" I wanted to go into house-dust studies and dirt in yards, and nobody wanted to do that. I think--

Lage: When you say "nobody," you mean the residents?

D. Cellarius: By "nobody" I mean we could not get the state health department involved; they just would say we really wouldn't learn anything from that, so as far as I know, we don't know about any health problems. But the pollution at the site was so bad that it was determined it had to be cleaned up, and the Port of Olympia had

to work with the company called Cascade Pole, and they had to put up the money to start some cleanup.

I was really interested in better technologies, and I used to bring information--call up people in EPA and try to find out how do you clean up this sort of thing. We actually got some good cleanup methods adopted there. They're using bacteria to destroy the waste. They will actually consume the PCBs and break them down into simple compounds. The pollution control we got there was really very good and very new. It's partly because the state agency, the toxic cleanup department at the Department of Ecology was excellent--excellent staff and committed to cleanup.

Just as it was very hard to regulate things like paper mills and other air pollution, it was easier for the Department of Ecology to make people clean up their toxic waste sites in communities because it's an ongoing activity. The business says, "Don't mess with us; we're part of the economy." But when they've actually created pollution and broken the law, obviously it's easier to force them. Their cleanup plans were relatively good compared to anything else in the United States that I knew of.

American Crossarm Superfund Site

D. Cellarius: Then another site in Chehalis cropped up, and it became a federal Superfund site, an NPL [National Priority List] site. It was called American Crossarm. Again, it was treating poles with pentachlorophenol. In this site, the dioxin had entered the neighborhood. It most often entered the neighborhood because it was along the Chehalis River. When the river flooded, it flooded into the low-income neighborhood across the street where there were low-income apartments and little houses. In some of the floods they had leaking tanks on the site across the street. The penta and other contamination in the flood water went up as high as tables and the tops of sofas in the houses.

Lage: Because of these floods?

D. Cellarius: Yes, because of floods. In one bad flood, they had to burn all of the sofas and furniture, and they just took it out and burned it. People began to realize that this was a bad place because this was the era of Superfund. They started testing and found the dioxin.

Lage: What date would this be?

D. Cellarius: Early eighties. Some of the same people who had worked on some of the other pollution problems in that area got together, and they invited me down to talk to the women. I remember the mothers were concerned about the fact that they felt that there were health problems immediately following the worst flood. One woman had actually gone door to door and done a health survey and noted down the dead kittens, the sick children, that followed the pollution. I worked with those people for quite a while. Another woman from another waste site nearby was really their leader. We tried to get a federal grant to help the citizens, called a technical assistance grant. We were never able to get one. We worked with EPA because once it was identified as a very polluted site, EPA came in and started doing more testing.

Lage: Were they responsive to this community? You often hear that low-income communities kind of take the brunt of the toxics, especially minorities.

D. Cellarius: To me, this was a very typical--It was an environmental justice site because the EPA was treating the people sort of casually. They put down this woman's survey of the health problems--they called it "folklore." They used really derogatory words for her work. I suggested that we get them an environmental justice grant because these people were terribly poor, especially in these apartments. The EPA said, "No, environmental justice grants are for people of color, and these people are all white."

Lage: Did they use this tone of voice that you're indicating--

D. Cellarius: Yes. Yes. I mean, I was just furious. I really sort of started investigating this EPA officer, and I found out that he just wasn't really with it. He didn't understand environmental justice. I asked for the environmental justice grant when they kept turning us down for an technical assistance grant. It turned out it's just very hard to get technical assistance grants in our EPA region. A few people finally got them.

But a technical assistance grant was a good thing. It would be $50,000 for the citizens to write newsletters, fact sheets about the pollution, and hire scientists to give independent help to them in evaluating the cleanup plan. Often these independent scientists would say, "Oh, that's not clean enough" or "They should do more houses" or "They should clean the dirt under the houses, not just in front of the houses."

Lage: So even when it's been identified as a Superfund site and the EPA comes in, the citizens have to be vigilant.

D. Cellarius: At every site, at every site, because people want to get things done quickly. The responsible party wants to get things done cheaply, and the responsible party and the EPA people meet frequently and get to know each other, and they want to get this done, get a good record for EPA, and the citizens are a thorn in their side. I

think there are many books now written about how citizens have been very important in getting good cleanups. They still are. It's just like the PCBs in the Hudson [River in New York].

Lage: How does the Sierra Club work with these groups that are outside the Sierra Club's membership? Traditionally Sierra Club members tend to be middle class, college educated, and all that? How does that coalition develop?

D. Cellarius: Sierra Club, I think, has always had really good sense about this. Any club member I've worked with in the United States who's working with people at toxic waste sites goes there to be helpful. We don't go there to make them be members. We've never--this is just something Sierra Club does to be helpful. We want a clean environment, and we love to work with you. That's continued to be the tradition of our environmental justice work.

Lage: To get back to that site, did they welcome your assistance?

D. Cellarius: Yes. Oh, especially, you know, women with children who are scared. Their children have gotten health problems. Babies were born strange soon after the waste became a problem. Darryl Malek-Wiley has done a lot of this in Louisiana, and I've learned a lot of this from him because he was working on these kind of things in the Cancer Alley area of Louisiana. Maybe he taught me this. He said, "You just go and help them, because these people are so poor, and they've got many more things on their mind."

Now, in Chehalis, several people joined the Sierra Club, and they proudly told me, "Doris, I joined the Sierra Club." These were farmers' wives. I imagine they didn't keep up their membership because I imagine the Sierra Club was not something that really they had time for in their daily lives, but they were really sweet about joining the Sierra Club.

A Department of Ecology Grant

Lage: Did you help them form an organization?

D. Cellarius: They formed an organization around the American Crossarm site. They had to form an organization to apply for the grant. It wasn't Sierra Club applying for the grant; it was--I forget their exact name, but it was a group there in the Chehalis area. When this happened we passed the state Superfund. We created technical assistance grants in that Superfund. We taxed industry, who caused most of this pollution, and we had some grants to citizen groups written into the bill.

I mentioned help of the Sierra Club in lobbying for the state Superfund, probably a couple of weeks before the vote on the state initiative. It was passed by voters. Carl Pope came and spoke at the Cascade Pole site and talked about the Sierra Club and cleanup of toxic wastes. He'd written a big book on toxic waste, and so that was really exciting. That's an example of bringing in the national big guns to help.

The Superfund included these grants, and so one of my friends suggested that she and I go together and get a grant specifically designed for going around the state to all the toxic waste sites identified in the state and encouraging local groups to start their own citizen groups. So we got the grant. The Department of Ecology was very happy to give us $50,000 to do this because they needed someone to go around the state and get citizens interested in starting their own groups and participating in the cleanup plan.

So we went all over the state, and we started about twenty citizen groups. My friend--

Lage: Who was your friend?

D. Cellarius: Her name was Betty Tabbutt.

Lage: Was she a Sierra Clubber?

D. Cellarius: No, she wasn't a Sierra Clubber--I don't know if she ever joined the Sierra Club, but--the biggest laugh of our life was at one of the last sites we created. She got up to introduce our program to the people. We usually met in the library. She said, "Good evening, everybody. My name is Doris Cellarius, and we've come to--oh, I'm sorry, I'm Betty Tabbutt." [laughs] We had just become one force doing the same thing over and over in all these little towns. We went everywhere. We went to Spokane, and we went to Yakima.

Lage: And how did you get the groups of people together?

D. Cellarius: To get groups of people together, we put ads in the newspaper, with interesting stories about the toxic waste site in that town and the fact that Doris and Betty were coming to help them get organized. We did not proclaim ourselves as Department of Ecology. We just said that we were helping citizens organize and learn about how other citizens get involved in good cleanups for their communities and that also the Department of Ecology helped us to get the publicity out locally.

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Lage: This sounds like a very cooperative venture with the Department of Ecology.

D. Cellarius: They were really good. That program with the Department of Ecology was very good. We also worked with the Department of Health. We would have speakers from the Department of Health, too, because what the people wanted to know is, "What do we know about what happens to people who live near toxic waste sites"? We soon learned there were common questions that people always asked. We asked them what else they needed to know, and then about two times a year we would put on a conference. By now we had about twenty sites, and two or three people would come from every site, and then we would have important national speakers.

Lage: Did you fund these people's trips?

D. Cellarius: Yes. From our grant. And they would then apply for grants because everybody could apply for the $50,000 grant, which would go pretty far when you're citizens, and you'd get free meeting rooms and free publicity. We had three or four really interesting state conferences with speakers on issues that were of concern to all the people. Then when our grant ran out, it was over.

The Sierra Club lobbyist and I in Washington state applied for another grant to keep doing this, and we didn't get it, but Sierra Club had been a major player in lobbying for the state Superfund.

Jolene Unsoeld and the Superfund Bill

Lage: Who writes this bill? It looks like you were really looking ahead, whoever put these technical grants in.

D. Cellarius: The bill was written by Jolene Unsoeld, a state legislator who eventually became our congresswoman.

Lage: Is she related to Willi?

D. Cellarius: She's the wife of Willi. When Willi died--Jolene had been an activist while Willie was alive, and she wrote a book that struck fear and terror into the heart of lobbyists in Washington state because it was called *Who Gave How Much to Who*. She made this big--large book, not a little book--with pictures! It told who gave all these different legislators all this money.

I remember seeing her in the halls of the legislature one day, and these men were pointing at her: "That's her! She wrote that book!" and I thought, "Wouldn't it be nice to be that powerful, to be feared?" And that was when she was a citizen. So I think she was probably one of my role models, just as a feisty woman. College professor's wife turns activist.

Lage: Yes, and did you know her as the college professor's wife?

D. Cellarius: Yes. Well, Willi helped Richard get the job.

Lage: Yes, Richard told me that.

D. Cellarius: Our kids were friends, so we were faculty wives together. Jolene--actually, one of the toxic issues I got involved in--Jolene came to me one day and said, "I think you should go and get involved with this garbage issue because there is a real problem, and this man needs help." It was one of the first issues I got involved in. It was because Jolene told me to go and do it.

Jolene said she feared that a big company was going to buy the small recycler and then put him out of business by--the recycling was going well, and the man who ran the garbage dump wanted to buy it out, and Jolene said, "I'll bet he's going to buy it and let it die," so that everything would go back to the garbage dump and garbage would make more money because there wouldn't be recycling.

I got to know the garbage people who did buy him out, but recycling did not die. I think it's because we really watched this garbage company. That's probably why I got involved in county solid waste cleanup. It's probably all because of Jolene Unsoeld. She knew I was interested in recycling.

When we moved to Olympia, we wanted to have an environmentally sound yard, so we weren't going to have grass; we were going to have native plants. We got newspapers and spread them on the ground heavily, and then we got sawdust to spread on top of the newspapers, and then as this all decomposed, the weeds would die and just a few little native plants like oxalis--nice plants, were in our yard. We never had any grass, which our kids were sad about because they didn't have a lawn to play on, but--we got a lot of our recycled newspapers from the Unsoelds because they were big recyclers, too, so that was their contribution to our yard.

But back to Jolene. Jolene tried to pass a Superfund bill in the legislature, and the industries always came in in the last hour and killed it. By industries I mean the big guys--Boeing and Weyerhaeuser. It would always shock me because the papers would say, well, it was the small business association, that eventually their power killed the bill. But then people would say, "I was there in that room the last days. It was the big guys. They hide behind the little guys."

So Jolene got people who had supported her bill to support an initiative to the people. There was a team of people from the Washington Environmental Council and the Sierra Club. I was in and out of that committee. It took a year to write and then it took a year to lobby, to campaign for it.

Citizen Handbooks and the Importance of Grants

Lage: Do you know when that was passed?

D. Cellarius: [pause] Oh, I think it was passed in the early eighties. We wrote three booklets. I wrote a handbook for citizens, with my friend Betty. We wrote it together. A handbook for citizens, like how to get organized, how to get incorporated as a nonprofit corporation.

Lage: Did that come out of your tours around the state?

D. Cellarius: Yes, and then I eventually wrote a handbook on safer technologies, which I think is still useful because it told why you need to look for the safest technologies and who is researching them and how to get pilot projects at your site so that you can get something tried safely that might be better than the old way that wasn't so good. I've still got a couple of those books, so they would have the dates.

I had worked with our D.C. staff when the federal Superfund bill was passed--I have to give Sierra Club credit for lots of training because I went to D.C. a couple of times to lobby on the federal Superfund, and this was in the days of Doug Scott's lobby books. We had this great big lobby book that we would take to every congressman's office, and we would show him the good Superfund bill and the bad Superfund bill and why the good one was better.

Lage: Tell me more about the lobby books. I don't think I've heard them described.

D. Cellarius: We still have lobbying material, but bills change so fast right now that it's usually several separate little booklets on a bill or an issue, but there was a time when there were single books, like, on the farm bill they had a great big lobby book. It was nice. On the Superfund we had a very long, narrow book because you laid out in kind of like a spreadsheet format the provisions of the good bill and the provisions of the bad bill.

Lage: To make this easier for the congressmen to understand.

D. Cellarius: Yes, and we could sit right down beside him and point to this and point to that. It was, of course, a much bigger book than any of the other books on his desk, so it just had to flop over the edge of the desk because there was a big Sierra Club lobby book. And so it would be easy for him to find and look at. I knew why there were technical assistance grants in the Superfund. I also knew why there was a big community right-to-know section, because we'd been involved in helping to write that.

After the federal Superfund amendments in '84, so it must have been right after that that our state Superfund--[pause]--I'm not sure about the dates.

Lage: You know you modeled some of this legislation--

D. Cellarius: Yes, yes, we modeled the TAG grants-- Actually, the Sierra Club for a year or two had a TAG grant program nationally, where we were trying to get every local group of the Sierra Club, if they had a Superfund site, to start a group--because you had to have a group that would apply, so we knew that Sierra Club or another group would apply for a TAG grant. Ron Good worked out of an office here in San Francisco. He had been Sierra Club staff in Ohio. He was brought here to San Francisco and for a couple of years he ran our TAG grant program.

I worked very closely with Ron Good in trying to write a cookbook of how to get a TAG grant and what to do when you get it. He even went around the country, trying to talk people at big Superfund sites into getting TAG grants.

So Sierra Club was very active on Superfund then, and it was partly because we had lobbied to pass the federal Superfund, and this was part of our implementation was having a staff person trying to get local people involved. I was very familiar with the TAG grants, and so I helped write the TAG grant section. I think I was at one time on a committee helping the Department of Ecology select people to get TAG grants. That might have stopped once we got a TAG grant to do outreach.

At first we found it really hard to get citizens to even realize why they want to put time into this. People who have never done this, who have never been an environmentalist--it takes them a while to realize it would be worth getting organized, getting a nonprofit status with the Secretary of State's office and applying for the grant. Applying for grants is intimidating to people who have never applied for grants.

Lage: What drove these community groups? What moved them to do these things which were outside of their purview?

D. Cellarius: It was always fear.

Lage: Fear.

D. Cellarius: I think we were very effective. I remember going up to Sub Base Banger. Quite a few of the Washington state sites were old military sites.

Lage: Sub Base?

D. Cellarius: Sub Base Banger was the name, nuclear subs.

Lage: Oh, I see.

D. Cellarius: A lot of our Superfund sites were old active military bases. Some of them had several Superfund sites. But I remember one man. We went to the meeting at the suggestion of [the Department of Ecology], actually, because they said, "It's going to be hard. We have to help the citizens who live around these military bases because military bases are very closed communities." So we sat with these people, and this lady was talking about how all the junk from the base was getting in their well and running down the hill toward their place.

I decided, "These are the people we're going to work with," and sure enough, we worked with them for years. They were wonderful people. We used to have big meetings at their house on the water. They would make a great big pot of minestrone, and we'd have people from EPA and scientists, and they would go around and put fliers in everybody's mailboxes, and then the neighbors would come.

Lage: Had they been activists before?

D. Cellarius: No.

Lage: Were they military or just living there?

D. Cellarius: They just lived there. It was a beautiful place. I mean, Puget Sound, right on the water.

Lage: What kind of socioeconomic group were those particular people?

D. Cellarius: I wasn't quite sure what this guy did. His mom was wonderful. They had officers in their group. The meetings went on for several years. They eventually got a triple TAG. I don't know if any other Superfund site in the United States got $150,000, but they combined three military bases on what was called the Kitsap Peninsula of Washington state. They had $150,000, and they had a lot of very difficult-to-clean-up sites, and they got technical help, scientists.

Once you get a grant, then you can contract out to a scientist to analyze the cleanup plan because some of these chemicals used at Department of Defense sites are rare. Hardly anyone has ever heard of RDX. You ever heard of RDX?

Lage: No.

D. Cellarius: It's a chemical, and I don't know if it's a chemical weapons thing or just something that blows up. These chemicals are very hard to find out information about, because it's kind of secret. You know, what the government uses for weapons is secret. But we got information, and eventually EPA provided this information, because they had to, about these chemicals found at sites.

So we used that information, and then pretty soon every site we worked at had a committee, and we developed a handbook which listed every group, the officers, the type of contamination, the way they were going about organizing for cleanup, and the progress on the cleanup, and how to contact them.

Let's say you suddenly have a site, and you wonder, "What am I going to do?" Well, the first thing we would suggest that people do is look through the book and see if any of the other sites in Washington state are like yours. We had several pole treatment sites and several other sites that were similar, and so those people would share a lot of information with one another, and then eventually people would create their own group, and we'd add them to the list.

Not everybody in our book got a TAG grant. I guess we weren't spending our money because we started giving out little grants of $5,000 to community groups that wanted to explore starting up or get a consultant for one thing. Everything was on a reimbursement basis to the Department of Ecology, so we were able to write over to them the authority to spend $5,000 on a consultant.

Lage: It sounds very effective, this whole effort.

Hanford Nuclear Clean-up Site, Aside on the Usefulness of E-mail

D. Cellarius: It was good networking. Some of the people we worked with went on to national conferences. Department of Ecology staff in charge of citizen participation in cleanup were excellent. After we stopped being active--I mean, our grant ran out, and we had other things to do--she and I tried for a couple years to get a few of us together for lunch at a central place, for a few hours--oh, about six times a year we'd get together and just talk about the progress of the sites and anybody who needed our help. This wonderful staff person at the Department of Ecology who kept this alive was Chris Hempelman.

One citizen who always came was a lady who went on to be very active nationally with military sites. There's a national network of people who work all across the United States on the clean up of Department of Defense sites. I still hear from some of the groups. They're still working on their cleanups.

Now that I've moved away and it's fifteen years, I still hear about some of the clean ups. One of our clean-up sites was Hanford. We worked with people in the Hanford area.

Lage: The nuclear power plant.

D. Cellarius: Yes. State activists worked with people who were downwinders, who had illness from all the different bad things that have happened at Hanford. I still write letters about Hanford because--you know, if you get e-mail it's pretty easy. They say, "Send an e-mail to EPA and say, 'Don't do this. This is a bad plan.'"

They've been trying to convert some of the sites at Hanford into making new weapons. Not weapons, plutonium, taking plutonium waste and making more plutonium, and the Sierra Club is opposed to that. Whenever I have a chance to write an e-mail opposing it I try to do this. Because something as big as Hanford--everyone in the United States cares about it.

But it's a nice thing about e-mail. We started long before e-mail was dreamed up. Now I hope a lot of those sites are communicating on e-mail. There are several that I was very involved with, and they still let me know on e-mail how things are going.

Lage: Has that changed? Has e-mail and the Internet changed the way you do your work?

D. Cellarius: Oh, yes.

Lage: I found well over two hundred hits for Doris Cellarius on the Internet.

D. Cellarius: Really? Wow.

Lage: Some of them are e-mails that have been posted. You should try it sometime.

D. Cellarius: I've never done that.

Lage: Here's one I printed. [Shows her printout.]

D. Cellarius: Oh, for goodness' sake!

Lage: This is the subject: "re: Your role in Sierra Club nuclear work."

D. Cellarius: I remember that.

Lage: An e-mail to you.

D. Cellarius: That's interesting.

Lage: It sounds like you were doing a very similar thing, this networking.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: And writing your how-to book. Now it might go up on the Web.

D. Cellarius: Yes. It would have been on the Web. There's nobody maintaining that network. The people are still active at the sites, but there's nobody coordinating them right now. We actually tried to get the Washington Environmental Council to do it, but they didn't, though they do support the work; but they don't do the networking, the setting up the meetings.

Lage: Now, did you earn any money from doing this? Was this a job, or was this a volunteer?

D. Cellarius: This is hard to remember. I believe it was just reimbursements for travel, though I think I got some hourly wages for writing the booklets. I think writing booklets and speaking at meetings, we put in hours for that. We didn't get very much money, but I believe there was reimbursement for that. And if we had other speakers, we would pay them, so I think that we did that. But I remember we got travel money to go to those towns.

Lage: It just seemed like women's work in that generation.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Maybe a generation of women that was not so career-minded.

D. Cellarius: Yes. My friend was very smart, Betty, who started it with me. I was always impressed that her dad worked for the Bureau of Standards in Bethesda, and she helped him calculate the atomic weight of some element once while she was a kid. She was trained as a chemist and just brilliant, but I don't think she did much teaching after she raised her family. She had a wonderful family.

I had known her for a long time because her husband taught at Reed when I was graduating from Reed. He came on as a new professor just as Richard and I were graduating. Then they went to Evergreen, and so we both had similar scientific backgrounds.

We both had much greater interest in things like sewing and cooking and gardening. We used to really laugh about that. We'd sit there at a meeting and kind of think, "How did she knit that sweater? You can tell it's hand knit." Betty was a big knitter, and I was a big sewer, so we enjoyed being together. I don't think I could have ever done it without her to go to meetings with, but our interest in toxic waste was very strong. Sometimes we would drive home from a meeting--it would be a three-hour drive--and we would try to see how long we could go without talking about toxic waste. "Let's change the subject." "All right. Okay, we're going to talk about our gardens." Pretty soon we were right back to, "How are we going to make those guys do the right thing?"

Gender and the Environmental Movement

Lage: What are your thoughts about how gender fits into the environmental movement? What is different about what women bring to it?

D. Cellarius: Well, I think women just seem to care a lot more about--in the pollution area--about what happens to people, what happens to children. They think more of the long-term consequences of things, and I think they get more outraged that it's all these men in the corporations that really just enjoy creating these chemicals and building these things that are problems. But I think they have more of an outrage that these things shouldn't be done to the environment or to people.

I think of our wetlands leader, Robin Mann. She has worked on wetlands forever, and I don't see how she does it. You know, it's not really something that's hurting people, but wetlands destruction hurts places, and it hurts animals, and it's very destructive. I think it's the destruction that probably drives Robin and keeps her doing this for years and being so good at it.

Lage: What about the people in your community groups that you were organizing? Were they more women than men?

D. Cellarius: They were always almost all women. We had some women who worked during the day. A lot of them were mothers. At a few of the sites, some of the leaders were really older women, and in some cases they didn't make it. They passed away before the issue was done. But there were some really feisty older women that either had the time now that they were retired or for some reason just got concerned about the children in the neighborhood and things that were happening that weren't good.

For the broad environmental activism, I think that in the Sierra Club men and women kind of work side by side and with equal passion, but at the toxic waste sites, I think it's women because they care about the children and their own health. We've learned that women's health is--for some reason, it's much more affected than men's by the typical pollutants at these waste sites. They're just starting to realize that some of this is because a lot of these chemicals are endocrine disruptors, and they both create developmental abnormalities in children, and they make women's health worse.

Dioxin is linked to endometriosis, and some of these other things, like pesticides, really do have, if not a direct effect on health, they contribute to generally poor health. Maybe men don't recognize it or talk about it. I've had a lot of people call me from the East Coast about pesticide spraying. They'll say, "All the women are sick, and we don't know what to do, how to stop the spraying." It just seems that women get sicker, and there are studies now showing that the kinds

of low-level ailments that women get are linked to these chemicals that sometimes come out of waste sites.

I think that women feel the pain, they don't like it. When I started noticing how many women were active, I asked a few of them how it changed their lives. There became a common theme that they really felt--

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Lage: Will you please repeat the story about your friend? I don't think that we caught it on tape.

D. Cellarius: I asked my friend about dealing with, in this case, her poisoned well and the fact that she couldn't drink her water and that her whole street became a state Superfund site when they discovered all the wells along her road were polluted by EDB [ethylene dibromide], which is a fumigant used on strawberry fields. She said that it was amazing because she'd been a meek little mouse, and then when she realized they'd been drinking poisoned water for several years and her neighbors had, and her husband wasn't well, and she started going down to the county and talking about it and people wanted her to shut up, she said, "But I didn't shut up. I went and I read about it and got on the county groundwater committee," and people started paying attention to her, and actually things started happening. She said, "It made me strong. It made me realize that I could do things." She had been, I believe, just a housewife. It just turned her into a tiger.

I started asking other women, and [they] said the same thing. This lady who had recently separated from her husband--she said that her husband, who--maybe he left home because she was so busy fighting the toxic waste site, but she said, "He has this new respect for me. He came over the other night, and he asked me how things are going, and he gave me some money," because she was going with me to a hearing in Seattle. She said, "He gave me some money because I was going to the big city and might need some money." She said, "My life in some ways is a lot better."

One was on welfare, and she told the welfare people she didn't want the money anymore. They started requiring welfare mothers to go to school. She said, "I'm going to go to work. I'm not going to go to school." I'm sure she's gone on to do something really good now. She was the one who had written the survey of all the sick people in the neighborhood.

Lage: That they thought was folklore?

D. Cellarius: Yes, but several other women said approximately the same thing, that it just changed them. They were compelled to speak out because something was really wrong. They spoke out even to the point of knowing their husbands would be upset, and even then they found their husbands had more respect for them, and other people listened to them, so it was empowering in kind of a sad way. I think it would be interesting to write a collection of stories.

I recently spoke to Wilma Subra, who got a "genius grant" for helping people at toxic waste sites--she's a chemist--

Lage: That was one of those MacArthur grants?

D. Cellarius: Yes, she got a MacArthur grant. She told me that they're doing an event to honor all the Louisiana women who had become fighters for cleanup of communities, and there are so many there. There in Louisiana, in Cancer Alley, they discovered some of the earliest recognition that the pollution was truly making people sick. They got the studies done by the government and found that people are sick in those communities in Louisiana next to all those petrochemical plants. But she mentioned that they're having an event to honor the great many women, just in Louisiana, who are doing that. I think that that's a really good thing.

Lage: We'll have to turn you into an oral historian, and you can collect the stories of these people.

D. Cellarius: Well, that would be the thing to learn! Have you ever heard of Judy Bari? There's a lady here in the Bay Area that does oral histories of women. I think her name is Judy Bari. [Judy Brady] She's also a breast cancer activist. She once asked me if she could interview me, and I told her no. [laughs] I couldn't imagine--she said, "Oh, well. Someone just said you'd be interesting."

Lage: You would be. Now we're getting it.

D. Cellarius: Yes, but I think maybe that would be the way to do it in an organized way. Another lady that this happened to was Peggy Grandpre. The national Sierra Club got involved in New Orleans because the Delta Chapter decided to help Peggy. I got to know her. She's a very concerned mother in a very polluted community. Their pollution was the Agriculture Street landfill, and their neighborhood was low-cost housing built on top of the Agriculture Street landfill. All the stuff in the landfill came up into their homes, and people started getting sick, and so she started fighting.

She became a great leader of that group, but I'm sure she hadn't been that way before the pollution started to scare her. There was a lot of sickness in the neighborhood. You can't help but be afraid for your children, and you can't help but not care who you offend when you realize that it's caused by things that other people have done.

Lage: It makes you feisty.

D. Cellarius: Yes, it does! Yes. It's really nice to know that people do that. But it's also nice to know that it adds something to their life because I think some of them get so worn out that their health is affected, just from the stress.

Lage: You mean worn out fighting the battle?

D. Cellarius: Yes, worn out fighting the battle because I think that--except for men who have been ill, men are so tough that they tend to discount some of the things when women talk about--in the old days, didn't they used to accuse women of "having the vapors" or something? "Oh, I'm going to faint!" or something. It's something that men don't take as seriously, and yet I've seen men who have had bad health problems become activists. I know a number of them. You have to experience some of the suffering before you realize that this is real, and that it's unfair to do this.

In Olympia there was a group of sufferers of multiple chemical sensitivity. I gave a talk to them about the common job that the Sierra Club and people with chemical illness had, because it's taken years for people to recognize that chemical illness is real. Someone who told me about this years ago was Sam Hayes. His wife works on air pollution, Barbara Hayes.

He recognized that there was this doctor in Pennsylvania, Randolph, who was one of the early pioneer doctors. I've met people who traveled across the country to go to Dr. Randolph, because Dr. Randolph believed that some of these illnesses were linked to exposures. They don't know how it happens, but some people--their whole body is impaired from a heavy dose of a chemical, and then when they get around chemicals again, it just is triggered. It is not in people's mind. Especially men have thought that this was in people's minds, and it isn't. There's low-level things about chemicals that we still have to learn about.

Lage: You're an interesting combination of the scientist and the activist.

D. Cellarius: Yes. Well, I feel lucky to have been able to be an activist because I think I didn't want to just be a scientist in a laboratory, partly because I didn't want to be around all those chemicals.

Lage: Even back in the early days?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Did you ever consider when you moved, say, to Washington and your daughters started getting older, going back to work as a biologist?

D. Cellarius: No.

Lage: You did work--

D. Cellarius: Oh, I worked in a store, because I'm interested in cooking. There was a small store that sold beer- and wine-making equipment, and gourmet foods: cheese and coffee and good wine. One day I went in to the owner, who was a friend--because I'd been told to look him up when we moved from Michigan by a friend who knew of him--and I had always shopped there. I said, "I'd sure like to work here," and he said, "Get your apron." It was a nice job because I got to help people plan fancy meals. I had a lot of work to do because I had to order thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of food and coffee every week, and I was not supposed to let us run out of things.

Lage: What was your job?

D. Cellarius: It was like a manager.

Lage: Was it full time?

D. Cellarius: It was part time.

Lage: Because this was the same years, '79 to '89, that you were doing all this work for--.

D. Cellarius: Yes, it was part time. It was interesting because there was a lot of networking going on. Our customers were some of the most important people in town, because that's who has the money to buy wine and gourmet food, paté, and fancy mushrooms, so I was able to stay in touch with lots of interesting people through working there. I didn't feel that anyone looked down on me for working in a food store, weighing all their cheese or telling them what was something good to put in a fancy dish if we didn't have the thing they needed.

It was also interesting because my boss decided to start selling espresso. We were the first out-of-Seattle place to sell Starbucks coffee, so people from Starbucks bought us an espresso machine and trained us to use it. They're very expensive. An espresso machine can cost $6,000 or more. We were told we couldn't break it. We were not supposed to do anything wrong to it and had to clean it up every night.

We were really into the coffee business. Then Starbucks stopped letting us sell their coffee because they said they were going to start stores around the country. I was just thinking here in San Francisco there's about a Starbucks in every block, and there are Starbucks all over the world at all the airports.

Lage: So this was early, when they were just starting.

D. Cellarius: We were their first store. We were the first Starbucks coffee outside of the Starbucks in Seattle. They created another name of coffee, produced in the Starbucks manner, called Caravelli, and then that's what we sold. They said, "We won't let you sell Starbucks; we'll let you sell our affiliate, Caravelli," so it was still terrifically good coffee.

I don't buy Starbucks coffee now. I buy only a coffee called Cafe Mam, which is from a collective in Chiapas. They help the small farmers in Mexico raise organic, shade-grown coffee. We buy it by mail and proceeds from the sale of this coffee go to pesticide activist groups. It also helps the farmers in Mexico have a good crop that is not monocultures but coffee grown in the shade of other trees and protecting the birds. I really am interested in coffee, but, you know, I'm not the Starbucks lady; I'm the Cafe Mom.

Farmers' Markets and Community Gardens

Lage: That leads us back to farmers' markets and community gardens. We didn't talk about that in the Northwest.

D. Cellarius: Right. I had liked the idea of organic gardens. I'm sure that the Santa Cruz garden made me think we should have a garden at Michigan. We had the garden at the school in Michigan, so I started a garden at my children's school when we moved to Olympia.

Lage: Did they welcome it? Did you have to do any talking to get them interested?

D. Cellarius: I talked to the principal, and he said, "I'll think about it." Then he gave me a call some time afterward, and he said he had just driven by my garden, and he was impressed. He said, "If you want to do one at the school, write a plan for how you're going to do it." I gardened with the children at lunchtime, children who wanted to give up part of their lunch hour to help. In the winter we planned the garden in the library and had little classes on crops and organics and bugs. We'd have speakers, beekeepers, and things, and I did programs for the PTA.

Then as spring came, we planted our garden, and kids did digging. The teachers really liked the garden because they said there are some kids that are hyper and they can't wait till noon to go out and dig and "we're building a fence, Teacher. We're doing real work." The best kids were fourth and fifth graders. The sixth graders were getting a little too sophisticated for gardening.

Lage: And how old were your girls at this point?

D. Cellarius: They were just about that age. It was an elementary school. They didn't garden with me at school. We had a garden at home. But I lived around the corner from the school, so I could spend a lot of time on the garden. After two years of having the garden at the school, we would take our produce to a farmers' market that was starting.

Lage: You had that much produce that you could actually go and sell it.

D. Cellarius: Yes. We sold to the teachers, too. I would take the kids to the farmers' market that was starting out, and that was my first experience of a farmers' market. I heard there was one. I became friends with the people starting the market. We didn't do that much with the school kids there, but I became one of the people helping the people at the market. We were in an A&W parking lot, and it was terrible, so we kept looking for better sites. Most of the people in the market were senior citizens who gardened and wanted a place to sell. They couldn't eat all that food. They had had a market in front of the senior center, and that didn't work.

We found several sites in downtown Olympia that were good. We went around asking local farmers to come and sell, too, and got farmers from other towns to come. Soon we had about forty vendors, and then we were able to put up a great big market with a shelter.

There had been a big city market in Ann Arbor, so I wrote to Ann Arbor for the plans for the market and got them, and we copied that market plan in Olympia at one of our bigger markets. The City of Olympia was not too welcoming to it. The paper would not put notices of our meetings in the newspaper because the grocery stores objected. They didn't like competition. They felt the farmers' market was going to be competition. The city would not even put signs on the interstate for how to get to the Olympia farmers' market.

Lage: Was it only one day a week?

D. Cellarius: It was both days of the weekend. We started having them on Wednesday, also.

Lage: What was your motivation? Was it to help the farmers or to help the consumer?

D. Cellarius: We wanted the consumers to have more choice of organic food because almost every farmer was organic. Actually, there were times when the rules of the market were that there could be nothing that wasn't organic. Then the market started to grow, and they decided to rebuild the port of Olympia, because the town was getting so big, so they offered us a site out on the side of town, still downtown, the end of the main street. There's the capitol of Washington at one end, and there's the farmers' market at the other end, and you can look down Capitol Way to the market. The market is a great big market. They built a beautiful market maybe five years ago.

Lage: Is it an indoor market?

D. Cellarius: Indoor. Well, it's indoor but rather open air, very much like European markets. It was built so they could have a second floor if they need it. So it's very tall and has a huge flying pig and a weather vane at the top. They commissioned local artists, and there's art around it, so it's a real showplace of Olympia now. It did grow into a wonderful market.

There was a time when we didn't want crafts. I was president of the market one year and on the board other years, and we decided to allow crafts; we also decided, I think, to allow non-organic food. We ended up with lots of food vendors and several bakeries and jewelry, but all locally produced and from the area. At one time, *Sunset* magazine wrote us up, while we were little, as, next to the Pike Place Market [in Seattle], we were supposed to be the best market in Washington state. But now it's clearly--I think it's more gorgeous than the Pike Place Market, because it's a great big beautiful market.

Lage: Are you happy with the direction it's taken?

D. Cellarius: Oh, yes. A local architect did all of the design of the market for free, and it's an elegant building. They have a garden with herbs and things on the edge. It's really contributed to the revitalization of that part of town. I would say for about ten years I worked very closely with the board and with all the farmers, and it became like a family. Many of the farmers were old. At least three of them died, and we attended funerals for them, and that was very sad.

My children sold at the market sometimes. They took plants and things down and sold at the market. They liked the market. Richard liked the market. [laughs]

Lage: It was a community.

D. Cellarius: Yes, well, it was really good friends. I think they are some of the people I would go back to see if I went back. I know I would definitely go to the market first thing. At one point, to raise funds for finishing the market, they let people buy bricks and inscribe them, so Richard bought me a nice brick. It's one of the first bricks you step on when you enter the market, and it says, "For Doris Cellarius, Market Founder." That was nice.

Lage: Yes.

D. Cellarius: You always have unsung heroes. We had one guy who was really an unsung hero of the market. He helped us a lot. He was the guy at the Department of Ecology that first told me about all these toxic waste laws, and a lot of these people just sort of interconnected. I was always going to buy a brick for him, but I never did. I should have.

We did fund-raisers for the market. We used to have strawberry festivals. The main reason we needed money for the market was for having a manager, because pretty soon we needed a manager to manage all these vendors. We would charge them, like, ten dollars a day to set up their stall, and then we had to build some of the equipment. People had to bring their own scales.

We had to obey the law, and we had to have a lawyer. One of my friends was our lawyer. When I was working on the market, that was an intense time, and then when the market work stopped I started the Superfund work and the toxic waste site--

Lage: So the market work was in the seventies?

D. Cellarius: Yes, that was fairly soon after we moved there. I had loved the market in Ann Arbor, because Ann Arbor had--have you ever been to Ann Arbor?

Lage: No.

D. Cellarius: Ann Arbor had a really good farmers' market, because it's in a farming area. The Ecology Center at Ann Arbor was right next to the market, so sometimes we did things at the market. Once someone gave the Ecology Center an orchard, and we had to take care of it. We had to go out and prune the trees and rake under the trees, and then we'd pick the apples. We would have a cider-making--we'd sell cider and make money for the market off of that. I think that's sort of how the Ecology Center and the market were connected in Ann Arbor, and then I was also into gardening.

Another thing we started in Olympia, after I moved there, were community gardens all around the town.

Lage: Now, who's "we"?

D. Cellarius: I guess just a few people I worked with. I had the garden at the school, got them to start a garden at another school, started having gardens in empty lots with the concept that if the neighbors could all get permission to use the empty lots and garden there, they could garden. They started a nice garden at Evergreen College for the community and the faculty and the students, and that's still a big garden.

Lage: Were you involved in that?

D. Cellarius: I really didn't start that. That idea came out of--probably, you know, maybe like the Santa Cruz garden. Maybe it was something that was starting in the colleges, to have gardens. I went to some of the meetings.

Lage: What about the community gardens? Did you work with people?

D. Cellarius: I think we must have had a community garden association because we were linked up with the school gardens, the garden at Evergreen. We had gardens in empty lots in some neighborhoods, especially sort of run-down neighborhoods where there were poor people. We got permission to put in a garden and let people come and have plots.

Lage: Did that go over well?

D. Cellarius: It didn't last too long. It was kind of like after Earth Day. You know, Earth Day was about '70. It happened in the seventies. The college still has a big garden.

But another thing we did in the community--it must have been a community garden association because we had college students who were willing to go help senior citizens garden. If a lady says, "I have a nice piece of land in the back, but I'm crippled now," then a college student would go and put in her seeds and go once a week and check the garden and then help her harvest. They did that for seniors. I remember that. We were just desperate to have everybody gardening.

But when I stopped doing that, I started doing the toxic waste work. I remember my friend Betty. Her mother loved to go to the market. Betty used to bring her to the farmers' market. Betty knew I was active with the market. She dreamed up this idea that we would start going around forming citizen groups.

Response to the Women's Movement, Daughters' Accomplishments

Lage: A lot of things you're interested in are traditional women's things: the cooking, the gardening, Betty Crocker. Have you related to the women's movement over the years, or responded to it?

D. Cellarius: Well, I think I've been busy, so that I haven't been in any women's groups. I certainly support women's things.

Lage: Have you been affected by any of the women's literature, like, for example the *Feminine Mystique* [by Betty Friedan]?

D. Cellarius: Well, no, I really haven't.

Lage: You had a nasty professor who didn't want women to get graduate degrees.

D. Cellarius: Yes, I think I accepted that. I don't think I was ever a militant feminist. I think I did things that interested me, and I think I was very concerned about pollution. I never went to a meeting, but there was a group in Ann Arbor opposing the Vietnam War called Women Strike for Peace, and my friend, Nancy Todd, was active

with that group, but I never wanted to go to that group. I never wanted to be involved--

Lage: You didn't get active in the antiwar movement.

D. Cellarius: No, except I had very good friends in a group called Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and I had other friends whose husbands were Vietnam veterans. I had one friend who was a disabled vet, so I certainly supported the antiwar movement and the efforts of those people, but I just don't think I had the time or the real interest in women's things.

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Lage: It sounds like you were in a family that was supportive of your endeavors.

D. Cellarius: Yes, my husband was wonderful. When we lived in New York, I had been treated very well by all of the men scientists at Rockefeller, and I didn't feel any need to go out and arm myself as a militant feminist. My graduate school experience was very good; my work at the zoo was great. I think I was busy, and I had very little experience with women who had problems, so I just wasn't drawn to the women's movement.

But I really began to feel it when I worked with these women at toxic waste sites and saw that it was mostly women. I saw how the people from the agencies were mostly men, and they didn't take the women too seriously. It never made me feel it was a gender thing, though; I thought it was more government oppressing the citizens and treating them like something in the way of getting their job done.

I was always hoping for good things for women as far as jobs and careers because I wanted my daughters to be able to do whatever they wanted to do. Barbara went to Bryn Mawr, and there her role model was Katherine Hepburn, who had gone to Bryn Mawr, and so Barbara became a feisty woman. My other daughter went to Georgetown and did wonderful things.

Lage: What did they go into? What kind of studies or work?

D. Cellarius: Barbara was in geology and archaeology at Bryn Mawr, and Karen was in language and linguistics at Georgetown, and then she went off to Honduras to build an orphanage. What did Barbara do? Barbara went to work, and then she went back to school. But they both got to do lots of exciting things and things I would have never done when I was a young woman. I was glad that women do these things now. Karen went in the Peace Corps and had adventures in Hungary, and Barbara is now working in eastern Europe, learning all about eastern Europe. They both became academics, really.

After Georgetown and the Peace Corps, Karen got a master's in public administration from Columbia University. That was a job, actually, a real exciting thing to be in New York City, doing projects. Now, Karen is doing lots of work for women and children. She's working on projects that aid families and children at risk. She works at something called the Child Welfare Project. She does all kinds of research on methods of assisting families that are at risk. I think that that's really wonderful.

She's also doing a lot of things related to her Peace Corps work, because she's head of the returned Peace Corps in the Northwest, in Oregon and southern Washington. They are helping refugees from other countries that come here, often political refugees, people who had a hard time.

Lage: She seems to be carrying on in your role.

D. Cellarius: Yes, she's quite an activist, and they're Sierra Club members and still able to do a lot of hiking, so they both really have enjoyed the same kind of Sierra Club life that I have had. Barbara, for a while, because she was an anthropologist and archaeologist, served on the Native American Sites Committee. That's a committee that doesn't exist anymore.

Lage: A Sierra Club committee?

D. Cellarius: Yes. She had a good experience working on that committee, and probably some of the work on the Native American sites has evolved into the environmental justice projects which we do now, because we do a lot of work with the Native Americans, in protecting their sites. But she's not active in the Sierra Club right now.

Lage: I think we need a break and maybe even a long break.

Religion, Conservation, and the Roots of Social Activism

[Interview 3: February 22, 2002] ##

Lage: Today is February 22, 2002, and this is our third interview with Doris Cellarius. We're going to start out with some talk about religion and conservation. I don't believe that when we talked about your background and upbringing we discussed religious upbringing. I want you to talk a little bit about that, and then how your connection to church has changed or grown over the years.

D. Cellarius: My mother came from a German Lutheran background. Her ancestors had come and started the Lutheran church in America, and she was very proud of that. And

she was proud of how many of her relatives--her dad and her grandfather and her brother were all Lutheran ministers, so my brother and I were raised in the Lutheran church and confirmed and went to confirmation class and learned all about the church. I was very accustomed to going to church and learning about the church.

After I went to college, I remember, I went to Reed College, and our minister came over and he pounded on the table, and he told my parents that that college was a den of iniquity, and there were communists there, and I shouldn't go to that college. But I went to Reed College and met quite a range of different kinds of people there. I still went to church. I was married in the Lutheran Church.

Lage: Had Richard been raised in--

D. Cellarius: Richard joined the Lutheran Church when we were married. We went to a wonderful church in Manhattan. We had this terrific minister who was-- And of course, that's where our first child was born, so we were happy to have her baptized in this beautiful church. I was very active in the church; I worked on the newsletter. I drew pictures for the newsletter.

Saint Peter's Lutheran Church became the ministry to the inner city, the poor, and street people, and I liked that. Our ministers were very good at that. I remember once, one of our two ministers married a criminal and his bride before they hopped on a plane to South America. The minister felt that it was important for them to be married, and I thought that was cool.

Lage: You mean, they were escaping?

D. Cellarius: Yes, [laughter] but we were the ministry to the poor, and also probably some of the other kinds of people in New York City. We were at Fifty-fourth and Lexington, right near the Waldorf Astoria, a nice neighborhood.

Lage: Was it your neighborhood?

D. Cellarius: Yes, we lived right near there at the Rockefeller University at the time, so we went to that church, and we stayed active in that church even after we moved to the Bronx.

Lage: Was there a social life connected with that?

D. Cellarius: There was quite a bit of social life. I really enjoyed the newsletter committee. There were very interesting people who were members of the church. This is not that life has to be so exciting but Tippi Hedren was one of the members of the church, and she brought her little daughter Melanie Griffith to church with her! Everyone knows who she is now!

There were some very talented people who worked on the newsletter, and there was social action in that church. Then when we moved to Ann Arbor we were in another Lutheran church that had quite a bit of social concerns.

Lage: Was that the Peace Lutheran Church? I think you mentioned that.

D. Cellarius: Yes. It was the Peace Lutheran Church. Richard was an official in the congregation. When we left Michigan to go to Washington state, we didn't ever join a church, but Richard had become very active in the Sierra Club. I was becoming equally active. We were very busy on weekends, with him going to board meetings. We just never found the time to join a church. I think our children probably missed it, because they went regularly to Sunday school when they were very little. Once we went to a Unitarian church to hear a talk, with the children downstairs with the kids, and the woman came upstairs, and she said to me, "My goodness, your children know an awful lot about religion." I thought, well, sure, you know, they've been to Sunday school.

Lage: Was it a meaningful part of your thinking and belief system?

D. Cellarius: I think it was. I think there are a lot of hymns about the beauty of the earth and stories of Christ going into the mountains. The fact that I can always remember the stories about healing the sick and being sympathetic and forgiving to sinners, like Mary Magdalene-- I really liked that, and the social action in the church in Ann Arbor was just around Earth Day. I remember the minister asking me to give some talks to the group about the environment, because this was right about Earth Day.

The minister got very interested in the environment. I remember him even telling me, "You know, I took the kids camping." He took a lot of kids camping. "We thought about it all the time. We've got to save the water, and we should not damage the earth. We should clean up our campsite." He just felt that there was such a good marriage between religion and the environment, especially when you were camping. Of course, that was a good thing to do with kids.

I taught a Sunday school class, and I can't remember doing particularly environmental things, but I got involved a little bit with the Council of Churches in Ann Arbor, because the environmental groups had Ann Arbor Green and Clean Days, and I was sent to the monthly meeting of the Council of Churches to talk about environmental projects. It made sense to me for there to be a good connection, yet we were so busy after we moved to Washington state that we sort of spent our time going hiking in the mountains on weekends and doing Sierra Club meetings.

Then when we were in Olympia, Washington, I became involved in a lot of environmental projects that were not necessarily Sierra Club. They were my own interests, the farmers market, working on the bottle bill. It was partly just realiz-

ing that we didn't have time to do everything, and there was a lot of the same kind of commitment. You come to understand in the church that you are not here just for yourself, and you need to have a reverence for life and for creation and for your fellow man.

A lot of those things seemed to the kind of things that the Sierra Club bases its work upon. Especially the stewardship ethic. We were very big on stewardship in the church, and it was very easy to transfer the idea that if you give--when you start tithing, you just always plan to give a portion to the cause you're committed to, it's easy to do. We used to say in the church, give ten percent, and you can always live on that ninety percent. It's really true; you just live within your means.

Lage: So is that something you commit to as a family?

D. Cellarius: We don't have a formal commitment to an amount, but we've always had a range of giving, mostly to the Sierra Club.

Lage: When you were growing up, did your parents talk in the terms that you're talking now, about reverence for life and giving to your community? I'm not talking about in terms of money but in terms of giving of yourself.

D. Cellarius: Well, I'm sure that they did. My dad was in charge of community recreation. He ran all the day camps in the summer in Highland Park and in the area. He also, during the war, ran the USO, which was a place for soldiers to go and dance. Also, the USO had other things, like the soldiers could go and take classes in things like photography. My father's life was service. He never really talked about it, but he was always doing service. He was very active in Rotary. He graduated from YMCA College, and so he worked for the YMCA at one time. I think one of his first jobs was for the Red Cross. I remember the head of the Red Cross of Chicago gave my parents a gorgeous wedding present, and I was always impressed with that. He worked with those things, and he worked with youth. He cared so much about young people. I knew he had a deep commitment to something, but he never really talked about it. We did go on nature hikes. I think I mentioned this before.

Lage: You did.

D. Cellarius: We went on nature hikes, and he had these nature hikes as part of the community recreation in Highland Park. He knew people who were great nature hike leaders, and I can still remember their names. Sam Campbell, he wrote a lot of books, and Burt Leach did the bird walks. I remember those people, and I remember lots of bird walks. That was part of what we did. Then, whenever my parents had a chance to go anywhere they went to the parks, usually in northern Wisconsin or down in Indiana. Then they started going out West, when we got a

little older. Then he just put aside absolutely everything and moved out West to start a new job.

My parents, from then on, worked terribly hard, for many, many years, trying to earn a living. His first job had been very good, in Highland Park, because it's an affluent community. He was head of the whole community program. Their life got harder after they left, and they said they left Chicago for the kids. So we grew up in the mountains, first on the side of Pikes Peak, in Colorado, and then in southern Oregon in the woods. It was very hard for my mother. But we always went to Lutheran church.

Lage: Did the Lutheran churches that you went to when you were growing up have social action programs? I'm trying to get the roots of where you got so committed to social action.

D. Cellarius: The churches we went to when I was in school didn't have as much social action as this church in New York City and the church in Ann Arbor. They were--but then it was the times. The church in New York was in 1960, and that was not the age of environment, but we did have the poor. The church was always open, and street people could come in and get warm. It was a real urban church that ministered to the people of the city, and I was so impressed.

Lage: That was a new experience for you too, having grown up in the woods, so to speak.

D. Cellarius: Yes, and I really was interested in the plight of the poor people. My parents had been personally, in Oregon, very helpful to them. We had small grocery stores, and many people couldn't pay their bills, and my parents were constantly letting them not pay their bills, letting them pay us in a deer they'd shot or some geese they'd shot. A lot of the loggers in southern Oregon had terrible health problems because they got hurt in the woods all the time, and their wives had to work hard, and my mother was always comforting the women, who didn't like it that the men were going to spend their paycheck and get drunk and beat them.

I really cared about people, and I really liked being in the woods, but I didn't make a big connection. One thing I did when I was--I have always done, as long as I can remember, I've been a writer. I would write poems, and I would write stories and keep them. My mother saved some of them for me that I'd written like in fourth and fifth grade. I remember that one of the first emotional things I wrote was I had learned about dog fighting. I wrote an editorial--I was probably in fourth grade--and I wrote an editorial about how people must get together and stop the practice of dog fighting, because it was cruel, and people did it for money. I always look back and think, my first activist act, but I never did anything with that.

Lage: Well, you were in fourth grade.

D. Cellarius: Yes, but I remember writing how horrible it was and how the dogs got all torn up and that there were men who were putting them up to do this, and somebody's got to stop this. That was sort of a beginning of activism in that kind of a way. Then I did a lot of writing, not great writing, but I always liked writing, so English was one of my better classes. In college, I decided to go into science. I was going to become first a doctor, and gave up on that, so I became a biologist. I decided not to go on for a Ph.D., although I had a pretty interesting subject.

Lage: I think we talked about this.

D. Cellarius: We talked about that. But then going to the zoo where there was so much emphasis on animals, and where there were some pretty famous people-- I talked about that too, Fairfield Osborn coming, and some of the other famous people who worked with animals and exploring were affiliated with the zoo. That was one of my introductions to organizations. Because the New York Zoological Society put a lot of money into education, including paying me to go to schools and talk, and then we would be coming up to the Sierra Club and learning about toxins and--

Lage: Just kind of everything merged together.

D. Cellarius: Yes, an awful lot happened there when we lived in New York and that was before Earth Day, because that was the sixties. I think that's where the connection between the social action-- Then the social action, I guess, became, at Earth Day, more environmental action. Also, at the time of Earth Day I was very interested with several antiwar groups, because that was the Vietnam era, and I had friends in Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and Women's Strike for Peace. So all of those, there was almost more than you could do.

Lage: Right.

The Sierra Club and Partnering with Religious Groups

D. Cellarius: In those early days. I guess the Sierra Club was trying to do most of it. In the Sierra Club, you could work on almost any issue. The Sierra Club has gotten a little more focused now, although we are getting into more issues now, in 2000, because the Sierra Club has moved towards greater partnerships with other groups. I think that's a good trend that the Sierra Club started.

Lage: To keep on this religious tack, one of the partnerships you just mentioned to me before we turned on the tape was with the Council of Churches. Tell me about the ads. You said that some controversy followed.

D. Cellarius: Well, some people were recently surprised early this year to see that the Sierra Club was running some ads about protecting the earth, our duty to our stewardship ethic. They were partnering with the Council of Churches for saving the arctic refuge and appealing to people's sense of reverence for creation and the fact that God asked us to protect the earth.

Lage: Do you know where the ads were run?

D. Cellarius: In some media markets in the United States, and I still think there are going to be some more. This one offended some people in the Conservation Governance Committee; some people who were deeply religious just didn't want particular religions mentioned, other people who had no particular religious affiliation but did not like the Sierra Club partnering with a religious group. In this case, Council of Churches, I think, is pretty broad.

Lage: Is it basically Christian, though?

D. Cellarius: I'm not sure. There were words from a Jewish prayer, or saying, and some people felt very strongly about this, and I'm actually very sad to say that it didn't bother me at all. I couldn't care less. I was happy to see us doing ads calling for caring for the earth, and I was happy to see us partnering with someone who shared our concern. I think there were some people like me who were just happy to see this happen. But they asked Carl Pope why this had happened, and he said, "Well, you know, we've been talking about partnering with religions for several years now, and we've been doing that."

This was a very public expression of this, but we've been talking with religious groups, and nobody's been fussing about it because we partner with all kinds of groups. We do inner-city outings. We partner with inner-city groups and take kids hiking, and we partner with hunters and anglers, and we give grants to groups to go and work together on things that they both care about. This partnering has become a new thing that the Sierra Club does. I think it's good because the Sierra Club did some analysis, maybe five years back, discovered that a lot of people didn't know who the Sierra Club was. The general public really didn't know a lot about the Sierra Club.

This analysis also indicated to us that the way we could really save wild places and protect the earth was by engaging the broader public in our cause, so the idea of partnering came about and grants to chapters to partner and projects for partnering. In doing this, we gained the activism of lots of people who don't join the Sierra Club, but they care about the things we care about, and many of them will contact their congressman; they will vote more for better candidates. I think it's one of the reasons why we're making any progress we're making right now.

So partnering with the church just didn't bother me at all. Some people have written lengthy discussions of why this is offensive to them and why it might even might make them stop being in the Sierra Club.

Lage: Do they write them on e-mail or letters?

D. Cellarius: They write them on e-mail and then other people respond on e-mail.

Lage: So these are activists, basically, not just leaders.

D. Cellarius: These are leaders in the--

Lage: Is it more people who aren't religious and object to having the club's purposes tied to a religion, or is it more people who are religious?

D. Cellarius: I think it's equal. I'm sorry to say, but I think there are some very religious people who just feel that it's too private and it's--

Lage: Exploiting, maybe?

D. Cellarius: That's what some have said. They felt that it panders to a deep sense of what people should be doing that is even deeper than the environmental things, and they think that's offensive. I don't think that's offensive. I mean, I don't think it's exploitive. I don't think it's any more exploitive than saying, oh, you know, you hate to see baby ducks run over by a bulldozer, don't you? We can't let those caribou in the arctic not go to their calving ground. I don't think that's any more exploitative. I think that's deeply emotional to talk about children who can't breathe and animals that are slaughtered. But I think that there is an equal amount of people who feel just that the Sierra Club shouldn't get into the religion business, as though we're sort of competing industries. [laughter]

Lage: Will you repeat what you told me earlier, the references to John Muir?

D. Cellarius: One person said, "Oh, well, John Muir talked about God and the glory of creation. His works speak to a religious appreciation of nature," and another person said, "Well, John Muir is not the Sierra Club." And then another person said, "But in his day, John Muir <u>was</u> the Sierra Club," so we sort of left it at that. I think that mellowed people out a bit, to think that we do have a history with religious connotations. At the time of Muir, there was a name for them--but there were people like Emerson, and Thoreau--

Lage: The Transcendentalists.

D. Cellarius: The Transcendentalists. There was a religious underpinning to this connection to nature. There are some writers who have said that there's quite a bit in our history that came out of that. Muir was a strange one, because his father was very

religious, and he was very cruel to his children. Well, he wasn't cruel, he was just strict. Some people see Muir's religious upbringing to be a kind of break away from the religion he was brought up in, but he was still very religious, very respectful to creation. I think this all is an outgrowth of the partnering, and the partnering is good because we're never going to--the problems of what man has done to the earth are never going to get fixed unless great masses of people agree that it's going to be protected.

Lage: More than the 600,000 in the Sierra Club. Do you know if the club is partnered with other religions, like eastern religions, or the Jewish religion?

D. Cellarius: I don't know of any formal partnerships. Having the name of the Sierra Club: "This ad is brought to you by the Sierra Club and the Council of Churches." That's as strong as that partnering is. That's not a deep partnership, it's just--

Lage: Has there been other outreach to other religious groups?

D. Cellarius: There have been discussions. There have been talks with some religious groups where Sierra Club people have spoken. I can't even tell you specifically what they have been. But there have been articles in *Sierra* about the religious nature. I think Carl has written some editorials.

Lage: Is Carl religious himself, do you know?

D. Cellarius: I have no idea. I'm sure he probably is.

Lage: Do club members talk about religion when they are together?

D. Cellarius: Not usually. I think a lot of club members do keep it in a separate--feel it is personal, and it is very personal. I may be a bit of a superficial person that--I'm just so used to religion, because I was brought up in a church where--

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Lage: You were saying you were so used to religion.

D. Cellarius: Yes. I mean, there's a cemetery in Chicago, a famous cemetery, the Wunder Cemetery. It's a historic landmark in Chicago, where my parents are buried, and relatives. You know, I think that's wonderful. I want my children to know about it, but it isn't-- Being so much in the church, I also don't feel bad not going to church anymore, because I feel that there is religious freedom, and everyone has the right to grow up and chose the way he wants to believe, and I love having friends that are of many different faiths. I think that happens when you grow up. You discover that there are many ways that are all equally right. I'm in awe of all religions and what they contribute to the lives of the people who are a part of them.

It's a very big and interesting subject and we hardly have time for it. [laughs] I think that's why I was sort of sad that so much time was taken up with discussing religion, because there's so much else we need to do right now, and I am thinking about so many things. A lot of the pollution work I do is helping communities with pollution problems. I wish I could just do more for the communities that need help, and the Sierra Club groups that want to help communities that need help, rather than the arguments and discussions at the high level of the Sierra Club which are of arcane administrative matters. They probably relate to how we all can get our real work done, but it's not as interesting or fulfilling at all as working to save a place or to help people whose environment is polluted, and they need some support.

IV NATIONAL SIERRA CLUB WORK AND THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF THE CLUB

The Committee on Committees, the Reorganization in 1995

Lage: That leads us into our next topic, which is your work at the national level of the club.

D. Cellarius: Oh, the arcane administrative work. [laughter]

Lage: Because I know that a lot of that kind of argumentative politics goes on at the national level.

D. Cellarius: And it always has, probably. It has and part of it is personalities. I know sometimes I get emotional when I feel criticized for something I didn't do well or didn't do right. You care so much, and you work so hard to do what you do right, that it really hurts when someone who's your friend in the Sierra Club is criticizing you for not being good enough when what we all should be doing is going out and fixing the problems out there, rather than going after one another.

But my administrative work started when several people, in particular, Shirley Taylor, who was the director, suggested that I be appointed to something called the Committee on Committees. That committee was a very important committee, and they did some things that do not exist right now. They had oversight of the committees, but more than that, they helped them do their work in an administrative way. They provided information. They were there to help when a committee didn't know what to do. They got reports back and so we got reports--at one time, the Committee on Committees, we were getting reports back from some seventy club committees.

Lage: All national committees?

D. Cellarius: All national committees. We had Books and Library [Committees] and all of the different pollution committees. There was a Labor Committee, and there were many, many committees having to do with rivers and all national committees. There were some seventy national committees or more. Then someone came along and said--and it was probably at least partly wise--it's too difficult for the board and the executive director to deal with seventy committees. Now the Committee on Committees attempted to. We got reports from these committees. There were seven of us on the committee; we each read about ten reports. So seven times ten, there were seventy committees. We discussed their work and what kind of help they needed. We made sure--

Lage: Did you help choose membership and chairmanships?

D. Cellarius: No, the committees did that. Although, the committees would decide who they wanted on their committee, and then they would send a list to the BOD ExCom [Executive Committee of the Board of Directors], and the ExCom, once a year, would essentially approve the appointment that the committee chair asked for. Unless there was a major problem on the committee, we didn't get in the way. If someone came and said, "X isn't doing a thing," I suppose they'd look for a new committee chair, but the committees were really managed by the BOD ExCom, which once a year approved committee rosters. That was it.

One thing we did, the Committee on Committees made sure that thank-you letters were sent from the president to retiring committee chairs. That's the kind of thing that doesn't happen any more, and I think it's very important. I recently had a chair retire--and I didn't have the courage to ask President Jennifer Ferenstein to write a letter or sign a letter that I write, thanking him, but I think I should be able to ask her to do that. I now do this and Jennifer is happy to sign letters.

Lage: Why do you feel like you can't ask her?

D. Cellarius: Because she's so busy. I think that things like that are very important things that don't happen anymore. Since the reorganization, we've lost some of the personal appreciation and care for committees--. The Environmental Quality Strategy Team had seven committees, and we have recently had to sunset a couple because there's not enough money to go around. That's why I wished that I had a way to thank the chair and make them feel good in some way.

Committee chairs work very hard, and they're endlessly asked for reports, and they have to manage the money, and they're asked, in addition to doing the work, they're asked all this administrative stuff. Unless we're very careful to thank them, as an oversight committee, they don't feel very appreciated sometimes, so we're trying right now to think of things we can do to reward our committee chairs and members for the work they put in because, in a sense, they are not feeling appreciated, and it's happening more often. I think this is perhaps a

problem of the club right now--is that we're so big, and we're so focused on the big priorities, and the big highly funded campaigns, that some of the little committees just get lost in the shuffle. We're going to try to fix that; we're going to try to find small gifts we can give them or some kinds of recognition, so they feel rewarded for their work.

Lage: Was this one of the impetuses for the reorganization?

D. Cellarius: The impetus for the reorganization was that the board and the executive director felt that they could not keep track, and when something happens, they wanted to be able to consult with a small group of people who would then have input to the rest of the people, so that they would not have to inform the whole club that they were doing something. If they were doing something related to communications, they would just have to tell the chair of the Communications Governance Committee. If they were doing something related to pollution, they would tell the chair of the Environmental Quality Strategy Team.

So that's the way strategy teams were created, because they thought, if we have one strategy team on lands, one on global issues, and one on pollution, then anything the executive director or the board does, all they have to do is inform that person, and that person would inform the proper committee. Communications would go well. So the idea of the reorganization was maybe some of these seventy committees aren't needed anymore. Let's set up the strategy teams for lands, pollution, and sustainability. The latter covers international, and consumption and population--

Lage: It's a big one.

D. Cellarius: Yes, and let the strategy teams decide what committees should be re-created. That happened around 1995, and they were created. The Committee on Committees was one of the committees that was dissolved because everything started over, except for the board, and the RCCs [regional conservation committees] and the council. There was long debate over what to do with the RCCs and the council. Should they get rid of that, too?

Lage: I didn't know that was up for discussion.

D. Cellarius: Oh, yes, but they decided to sort of keep them as they were. They fooled around with the chapter chairs and council, and should it be chapter chairs or council reps? And ended up with what we have now.

Lage: Which is?

D. Cellarius: A Council of Club Leaders [CCL], which is usually chapter chairs.

Lage: Chapter chairs, not just delegates.

D. Cellarius: Delegates. But often the chapter chair is the delegate. In the reorganization, we lost the Committee on Committees, which was sort of the mother hen, because really sweet people like Shirley Taylor and Sally Reid were on that committee, and Bob Howard, who was a very good people person. So we lost that. We had also just created, in the nineties, early nineties, the Issue Committee Caucus, where we pulled together all the committees that dealt with issues, pollution issues, not books, not fund-raising, but issues that members work on, conservation issues.

Lage: Conservation and environmental issues.

D. Cellarius: The Issue Committee Caucus was started by Freeman Allen and others.

Lage: Were you in on that?

D. Cellarius: I was one of the main people organizing that, with Freeman Allen. I chaired it one year. The club allowed us to meet, the chairs of some twenty conservation issue committees.

Lage: This was prior to that reorganization?

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Another way of communicating.

D. Cellarius: Before '95. A lot happened in the nineties. Before '95, we had created this Issue Committee Caucus. We discovered that committees needed help. Council members get a lot of help; they've been coming to the Sierra Club for years. Regional vice presidents were well-organized; they've been organized for many years. But the chairs of national committees were kind of just out in limbo, so once a year we brought them all together, here in San Francisco, and they had briefings about fund-raising. They had briefings from the staff and briefings on how the national club, how the conservation department was working.

We'd say--of course, it was on the phone, it was really before e-mail--"What do you need?" and they'd say, "We need a presentation on doing better newsletters." They would get a presentation, and we would network. Then we created a handbook on understanding the Sierra Club from the viewpoint of a national committee chair. That became a very popular handbook. We ended up selling them. I don't know why we were able to sell them, but everybody wanted one, so we sold them [laughs].

Lage: I'd like one. [laughter]

D. Cellarius: Well, that disappeared. At the time of the reorganization in '95, everything disappeared. One thing that happened at the time of the reorganization is some

committees just dropped off the face of the earth, and the committee members didn't hear for a year or so, "You're not on a committee anymore." They weren't thanked; they weren't told. The Issue Committee Caucus, we had been dissolved. Everyone had been dissolved. We sort of felt it was our responsibility to inform those lost people, but we didn't get to all of them. We got to some of them, but it was a personal effort. There was no longer an Issue Committee Caucus. There was no longer any Committee on Committees.

Lage: Would the Conservation Governance Committee substitute for the Issue Committee Caucus?

D. Cellarius: Yes, but it was just starting, and it was different people.

Lage: So the transition--

D. Cellarius: They didn't realize all these people who'd just been disappeared. Some got informed and some didn't. Some committees quickly re-formed, like the Agriculture Committee got in there under the Sustainable Planet Strategy Team. Some committees quickly re-formed, and some didn't. We did lose some of the activities. It has always been my hope that there would be better communication. One real good purpose of the strategy teams was, as Carl Pope said, "If I have only three strategy teams to stay in touch with, I'll inform them of what's happening, and they can inform whoever needs to know." But this hasn't always happened.

Lage: This is a staff-volunteer communication problem.

D. Cellarius: Yes. I think that the job of overseeing the strategy teams went to the Conservation Governance Committee, which is a very busy, heavy workload committee. After the reorganization, I, of course, lost my committees.

Lage: Which were your committees?

D. Cellarius: During the eighties and early nineties, I chaired the Hazardous Materials Committee, and I chaired that for about ten, eleven years.

Lage: That committee was sunsetted?

D. Cellarius: Yes, everything, because the idea was that if it's worthwhile, it will get created again. I had been chair. I found a new person to chair it, Judy Gibbs, from Missouri, around '90. She only lasted a year, and then I had to chair it again. Then I found Ross Vincent to chair it. So about the time of the reorganization, Ross Vincent was the chair. I had been chair through the--

Lage: I have '84 to '93 here. I think you told me that.

D. Cellarius: Yes, about ten years and then Ross took over and then it was disbanded. He was made chair of the strategy team for all pollution, and then given the job of creating a bunch of committees under that. There was a way to do that. The Conservation GovCom was set up to oversee all the strategy teams, so we have the Conservation GovCom and then three strategy teams underneath, and also the RCCs were all under the Conservation GovCom. Then I got put on that committee. That's how I got put on Conservation GovCom and I worked with all the different conservation committees.

Lage: So now you have an insider's view of how the Conservation Governance Committee functions.

D. Cellarius: Yes, because I was on from the beginning, really. I was not on the very first year, but from like about '96 to 2000.

Lage: Were the total number of committees reduced? Did the strategy teams start up the same number of committees?

D. Cellarius: Almost. They say we have more now, and they say it's good, because it means there's activity, but it also means that it's structured, in that you have the strategy teams-- Now in the old Committee on Committees, we dealt with the Library Committee. We dealt with Gifts Committee. It was every club committee. I said there was like seventy. I think we're back to about seventy. All the governance committees have committees, although we're realizing that the GovCom has lost Books [Books Committee] and *Sierra* Advisory Committee. There's always been some resistance. The chair of the *Sierra* Advisory Committee had a hard time. I can't really speak to why it was difficult, but maybe it's hard to run a magazine with a volunteer committee. When people would have complaints about kind of ads they ran, or articles they had, it would filter up through the volunteer committee.

I think the Books Committee was very popular with Jon Beckmann, and they worked well together, and the expertise of the Books Committee contributed to the books program. The quality of a great many of the books we published have come from some of the professionals on the books program, plus the good business sense. I actually think, like Richard, that it's really sad that we may have members who are tops in the book industry who might like to make a contribution, because members want to make a contribution out of their expertise, but we're losing a lot of stuff like that.

The transition that happened from the early days when we had this Committee on Committees, which was trying to take care of all the committees, and trying to make sure that they were doing something, and they had members, then up to today, it's pretty interesting. I don't think it is confusing, though it seems confusing to new members. The interesting thing that's happened at the same time that we have the volunteer committees is, we have more programs now, because in

the old days, we didn't have grant-funded programs, so we started having the donors who wanted to give to population, or global warming. Now we have the grant-funded programs and a lot of staff who are running those programs.

Then we have the EPEC, Environmental Public Education Campaign, which is another grant-funded program, so they have to do a lot of (c) (3) work that is public education. The club started having big priority campaigns, because donors wanted to give towards more public education. Some chapters were not really active in the big priority campaign, so the thought was to give them an EPEC grant that will enable them to have a staff person and money to carry out a program in their chapter. This was also to solve the problem that the chapters were complaining that they didn't have enough resources, enough money. The dues subvention barely gave some enough money to do a newsletter. All the chapters were wanting to start to have a staff and finding staff was essential to running a chapter, so chapters were raising their own money for chapter staff. Some just couldn't, so they tried to put these EPEC grants with a staff person into chapters that really needed more help.

This has grown every year, as more money came along. For chapters that didn't have a staff person or an EPEC grant, donors funded additional grants to chapters. For example, a $5,000 to $10,000 EPEC grant to partner with hunters and anglers or save a special wild place. You wouldn't get a staff person, but you'd get a big chunk of money--it was usually about $5,000--to do a project in your chapter, and the volunteers would mostly do it, and the money would go for printing expenses, events, and public education.

All of this happened, really, after the reorganization. So you have the creation of these issue committees, committees where a lot of what is done is to provide both historic and technical information, like on pesticides or sustainable agriculture.

Lage: Provide some expertise?

D. Cellarius: Some expertise to help staff in D.C. One of the big things that we do in EQST [Environmental Quality Strategy Team] is help the staff in D.C. decide whether to even get involved in certain federal bills. Is that going anywhere? Is it something we care about? There's lots of bills we have nothing to do with because they're bad.

Eight Priority Campaigns

Lage: So the volunteer committees have the assignment of checking out some of the bills?

D. Cellarius: Yes, helping the national staff. The eight campaigns do a similar job. They have members with expertise. If it's logging, and if the campaign is logging, and the bill is logging, then that job goes to the people on the End Commercial Logging Campaign [ECL], who do a lot of that work.

Lage: Those are staff people?

D. Cellarius: There are eight priority or program campaigns like ECL. In the last couple of years, priority campaigns had budgets of around $400,000, where the Water Committee has $4,000. It's $400,000 versus $4,000. The big campaigns have several staff people. They do litigation. The idea is to put the masses of resources into specific important things.

Lage: Do those campaigns relate to the volunteer structure of the club?

D. Cellarius: Each of those campaigns or programs has a campaign or program committee of volunteers and staff. They are appointed by the Conservation Governance Committee.

Lage: I see.

D. Cellarius: So the Conservation Governance Committee, in addition to overseeing the strategy teams, oversees these eight priority campaigns or programs. The programs are population [Global Population and Environment Program], trade [Responsible Trade Program], human rights [Human Rights and the Environment Campaign], global warming [Global Warming Campaign]--now those are grant-funded. The only money they get is what's in the grant. The priority campaigns are ECL, Stop Sprawl, Wildlands, Clean Water and CAFO.

Lage: What is that last one?

D. Cellarius: CAFOs are Confined Animal Feeding Operations.

Lage: Oh, that's a major campaign?

D. Cellarius: They are chicken farms, pig farms, cattle farms. They're poorly regulated, and they're destroying the water quality in the country, plus they're wiping out family farms.

Lage: In the United States?

D. Cellarius: In the United States.

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D. Cellarius: The priority programs come from grants. The decision to have those is largely the donor, people who give money for those.

Lage: I see. So we have four priority--

D. Cellarius: --campaigns.

Lage: Which are--

D. Cellarius: --selected by the membership.

Lage: Okay, and four priority programs which are funded by grants.

D. Cellarius: Yes, so the bulk of the conservation money is in those eight entities, but the four grant-funded programs don't have nearly as much money as the campaigns. The board decided that to be effective is to put a lot of power behind specific, very important things. That's a good idea. That helps you win. These CAFOs are bad because they destroy water quality; they destroy family farms. Massive corporations buy up little farms and then they make the small farmers be like tenant farmers, and yet the liability for the bad things that happen falls on the small farmers. And the pollution.

The laws are very bad, so we've been trying to strengthen the laws, help the family farmers not get bought up by these monster corporations. Many of them are international. They do a bad thing, because they house a lot of animals in one building. The chickens never see the light of day, much less the ground. They're just raised in a basket and poop through the basket.

Lage: It's an animal rights issue as well, isn't it?

D. Cellarius: No, we have avoided that aspect. It's pollution; it's destroying sustainable agriculture. Now, to raise either pigs or cows or chickens close together, they share diseases quickly; they're in poor health. And for some reason, they grow faster if you give them antibiotics. Like 60 percent to 70 percent of the antibiotics produced in the United States are given to animal farms to make the animals healthier and to stop the diseases that occur, because they're in filthy, unhealthy conditions. Now people are becoming resistant to the antibiotics, because the same antibiotics are used on people. That became part of their campaign. It was a very fortunate part of the campaign, trying to stop the use of antibiotics in raising the animals and to only allow antibiotics if some animals are really sick, because most of the antibiotics in the country are now used on animals.

Just in the last year or two we learned the same resistant bacteria are in the chickens. The chickens have those bacteria because those antibiotics that they were raised with didn't kill them. These are super bugs. Then you eat the

chicken, and then people get the disease, and then the doctor can't cure them because they're resistant. It's a horrible cycle.

Lage: It's quite an intersection here of health and environment. Then there are animal rights issues that you say we don't get into.

D. Cellarius: That's because some of the animal rights people are so far out, and it hurts us to be there. People like the idea, but animal rights people go too far, you know, they get very extreme. So, there have been enough environmental issues with CAFOs. End Commercial Logging [Campaign] has just been to stop the clear-cutting and cutting of the national forests. Another campaign is Sprawl [Stop Sprawl Campaign] and that's one of the best. Sprawl is definitely worth spending hundreds of thousands of dollars because sprawl destroys the landscape. It wastes resources because there are so many new homes built, roads to them built, destruction of the cities. People leave the city to go live in their sprawl villages. Sprawl is one of the campaigns. The other campaign is Wildlands Campaign, and that's a really good, traditional Sierra Club effort, to save some special wild places.

Lage: Can you talk a little bit about how these campaigns become the priority campaigns?

D. Cellarius: Every two years, for maybe the last twenty years or more, the Sierra Club has done a biennial review of its priorities. It gives some kind of a list every two years to the chapters and groups, and the questions are different every year. The questions are things like, "What do you think is the most important thing the Sierra Club should work on?" "What is your group working on?" They vary every year. They're questions directed at the grassroots to find out what's the interest. "What do you think we ought to be working on that we're not working on?" "What do people personally put the most time into?" We're trying to get the issues that you'd work on even if you weren't in the Sierra Club, just what's at the heart of your concern. We've just always done this. It's called the biennial priorities, through the eighties and into the nineties.

Then, in the nineties, the idea came about that we shouldn't switch every two years. You've got to be consistent. So they got the idea of, "Let's have some short-term campaigns and some long-term campaigns." Then two or three years ago, the board could not decide. The board has brought this list up, "What do people want to work on, logging, sprawl, wild places?" They said, "Some of these should be for longer, two to six years, maybe five to ten years, and some should be for just two to four years." They couldn't decide which to make short-term and which to make long-term. It was heavily lobbied, and they decided to make them all long-term. [laughter]

Two years ago we did a review of the priority campaigns and also a review of the grant-funded programs, to see which ones the members worked the most on,

whether the information was getting out to them, whether people felt the information was useful. We got results, two years ago. The result was primarily that down to the local group level, groups are very stressed. They can barely often afford a newsletter, and they work on a couple of local issues. The groups, some of them weren't working on those four [campaigns], and some of them had never heard of them. They wanted information. They said, “Yes, if we knew about that--” So we learned that they needed to do better outreach, and they’ve upped the money for chapter involvement.

Lage: Does this provide money for chapters? These four campaigns?

D. Cellarius: They didn’t at first. In the last couple years they got the idea of providing small grants, because you know how much money they have? Like $400,000 apiece! They have massive amounts of money.

Lage: But they’re paying for their staff.

D. Cellarius: Yes, because they have to have several staff people, and they do big media things. A big media buy can cost $5,000 just in one city--a big ad in the paper, or a TV spot. People are saying now, “Okay, these long-term campaigns were to be for five to ten years.” It’s pretty soon five years. “Is it five or ten?” [laughter] So this year, we’re discussing what questions to ask and what to say is going to happen, because if we choose new priorities, it isn’t just shifting a small amount of money. Staff would have to change what they work on or be let go.

We’re having a hard time deciding what the questions should be this year, or what the actions should be because what if we do a questionnaire and everybody says, “We think the CAFO campaign has finished its work, and we should do something else on water quality?” Then we might have to stop some of those CAFO projects. We’re going to go for a gentle transition and tell the membership, “No matter what you say, we’re not going to just stop something. We’re going to gradually phase into some new work. If everyone says that pesticides are the big thing, or something, there will be a gradual transition.” There will be a questionnaire that will go out this spring.

The Conservation GovCom writes the questionnaire. They also get plans from all the strategy teams and from all these campaigns. They get plans and reports every year and study them, so they know how things are going. They add new people, new volunteers to the campaigns, and there’s a lot of activity trying to keep them all healthy. Once a year--every two years, I guess--they would have a national meeting of all the campaigns and programs and all the committee chairs. This would be a gigantic meeting, costing a lot of money. Then they would bring in a lot of staff, and the staff, we would get media help and fund-raising help. Those campaigns can fund-raise to add extra funds to their base funding, which is several hundred thousand dollars. So in the last couple of

years, they've been funded by the Cassie Mason Fund. Do you know what that is?

Lage: No.

D. Cellarius: A lady in San Francisco left a lot of money to the Sierra Club, and it enabled them to really boost the funding for these campaigns. Then there's something called the Graham lawsuit, which was a lawsuit having to do with some land the Sierra Club Foundation managed in New Mexico. There was a lawsuit, and the Sierra Club won, so we got some money out of that. There's a lot of money right now in these campaigns, but it is possible that the money will become much less in a year or so. Maybe three years from now, we have no idea, both of those big funds may be gone. It will all have to come out of the conservation budget.

Lage: How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the campaigns? What are the end results supposed to be?

D. Cellarius: Well, everyone has a huge campaign plan with some goals. One way to evaluate the effectiveness is whether you've actually been able to get a good new law enacted, or a bad law gotten rid of, or gotten the states to shut down these CAFOs, or gotten a lot of sprawl projects stopped. Many of the sprawl projects are highways. They wanted to stop the Legacy Highway in Utah, because where a big new road goes in you're going to have homes and sprawl and everything along with it.

Lage: So there might be very specific objectives.

D. Cellarius: When you have a campaign, you say, "Okay, what are we going to do with sprawl? Well, we want to stop the Legacy Highway. We want to change the sewer program." There's a national sewer infrastructure funding. We might not want so much money to go to new domestic sewers, because one thing you need to do in a sprawl development is you need a big grant to make a sewage treatment plant for all those people. If you can't treat their sewage, you can't put them out there in the boondocks. So sewage money was fueling sprawl development. So you decide, "Okay, we're going to stop the sewage money. We're going to stop the highways. We're going to make a stronger law to stop sprawl of some kind." Those would be the goals. When the goals are reached, that's a measure of success, and maybe time for the campaign to be over.

The CAFOs were exempt from a lot of clean water act regulations, because no one ever thought that a lot of chickens or pigs would contaminate the water, and they found out that they really did, so we've been trying to add that to the Clean Water Act. That hasn't been too successful. We've also been trying to get states to just not allow big corporations to come in and take over small farms. In some states, they've passed really strong laws against CAFOs, so they've been successful in that way.

They've been successful in getting a lot of the CAFOs operators to say, at least some of them, "We will only use those antibiotics for sick animals. We won't just feed it to them like vitamins." It's almost like a vitamin. They think it's because it kills off some--you know our digestive tracks have beneficial bacteria--and those antibiotics do something to just make the animals healthier, and no one quite knows why. Have you ever heard of Tom Jukes?

Lage: Oh, yes.

D. Cellarius: He discovered this.

Lage: He did?

D. Cellarius: He discovered that antibiotics make animals grow faster, just like vitamins.

Lage: He's dead now.

D. Cellarius: Anne Ehrlich and I were just amazed when we realized that in addition to other things he's done, he made this discovery. He was a strange person.

We evaluated the campaigns two years ago, and we found out that few local groups wanted to work on some of them. They weren't getting the word out. One campaign was just not spending all its money.

Lage: That's a surprise.

D. Cellarius: They had so much money that one of the things that they did was to give grants to chapters. If you want a grant to work on CAFOs in your chapter, you could apply to the Campaign Committee. If you wanted a grant to work on special wild places, you applied to the Wild Places Campaign. If you had a sprawl project, you could apply to the [Stop] Sprawl Campaign. They would put maybe, I would say about $60,000--if you have $400,000, you can give $60,000--give twelve chapters $5,000 grants. So they started giving grants to the chapters, which is very nice. It works both ways. It helps the campaign and gives the chapters some money.

Organizational Structure and Distribution of Financial Resources

D. Cellarius: You have the issue committees, and all the strategy committees, and then you have all these campaigns and programs that are working. Let's say we have a committee on water. The water committee has only enough money for phone calls, and maybe postcards on wetlands issues, but because there is one or two of these big campaigns that deal with water quality, they have people who are liai-

sons, and who attend the meetings and the conference calls, so that they link up in various ways. All these are long-term. The committees, strategy teams are long-term, but we also have something very, very big out here, much bigger, called the War on the Environment.

Lage: I should say here that you're drawing a picture.

D. Cellarius: Yes. This big box over here is the War on the Environment, now called INCA [Integrated National Conservation Action]. That is essentially our short-term campaigns. First, because we wanted to stop Bush, then because Bush got elected. The War on the Environment is a big problem, because he's launched a rollback of environmental regulations. All the laws that Gingrich used to want to roll back, now Bush is rolling them back. The War on the Environment has a very big budget, and the board decided to give that a big budget. That is a fairly flexible campaign that has a campaign committee of volunteers.

Lage: You were chairman of it at one time. Are you still?

D. Cellarius: No, I am not part of this. That was in the old days of the Newt Gingrich stuff. There's a new chair every year. Usually the chair is from the Conservation Governance Committee, because the Conservation Governance Committee allocated the money for the War on the Environment, which is the short-term campaign. They changed the name of that to INCA, Integrated National Conservation Action.

Lage: Is that formerly War on the Environment?

D. Cellarius: Yes. It's a new name for War on the Environment, Integrated National Conservation Action. It's the big hot issues. Let's say Bush wanted to relax the rules on all the power plants because of the energy crisis. We need energy. We need power plants to operate and build new ones. That's something we've worked on.

Lage: Putting out the fires?

D. Cellarius: Yes, putting out the fires. Also, arsenic in drinking water became one of those things. We discovered that arsenic is more important than we thought. There was a proposal under Clinton to make our drinking water safer, and Bush and company wanted to drop that one and not implement it. That became a War on the Environment campaign. The Arctic is an INCA campaign right now because it's at the top of the list.

Lage: Is INCA mainly run by staff?

D. Cellarius: There are several people from the Conservation Governance Committee, and national staff in the D.C. office. Debbie Sease is the real staff leader of that, the

head of the D.C. office, and then they pull in other staff as they are needed. The issues change. As you say, it's the emergencies.

Lage: How does the budget for that compare to the budget for the ongoing campaigns?

D. Cellarius: Because of Bush getting elected, we got some big donations quickly.

Lage: For that campaign?

D. Cellarius: Big donations to the Sierra Club. These were donations where people said, "Do what you can do. The world is in trouble now." A lot of that money went to the INCA. This budget is even bigger than the major campaigns, because this budget needs to run TV ads, needs to do real expensive stuff. But because of Bush getting elected, we got extra money. For the last year, we've been able to pump a lot of money into that.

Lage: This is really a fascinating organizational structure here [indicates drawing]. It is more complicated than the one that was on the table downstairs that showed all the committees and how they fit in to the committee structure.

D. Cellarius: Yes, well, this is the national committees, and this is the campaigns and programs, and this is the War on the Environment. You see, this is all under CGC [Conservation Governance Committee]. You have the other GovComs who have their own organization: communications and finance. They are yet another part of the structure.

Lage: From your point of view as a volunteer, does the structure you've outlined here of the Governance Conservation Committee work well in terms of helping the volunteers contribute and oversee the programs?

D. Cellarius: I think it's very effective in achieving the goals that are set up. We can't work on every issue, because there are too many right now, so it has helped the club focus and be effective, because we've got a bunch of wins in there. We won in the War on the Environment. We won in arsenic. They lowered the amount of arsenic we can be exposed to. They might not have lowered it enough to satisfy every scientist, but they lowered it significantly, so we called that a win. Because of the INCA, it's swift enough to take care of some really bad things. But I don't think we've figured out how to get enough money here [pointing].

Lage: When you say "here," are you talking about the issue committees?

D. Cellarius: Yes, the smaller issue committees under the strategy teams. Each strategy team gets about $35,000, so you get about $100,000 going to the--

Lage: Supporting the volunteer committees.

D. Cellarius: For the volunteer committees, and another $100,000 for all the RCCs and each RCC gets less than $10,000; some of them get $5,000.

Lage: Is that mainly for the expenses of having meetings and sending out--

D. Cellarius: Oh no, we're asking them to do projects.

Lage: Actually to do projects.

D. Cellarius: Asking RCCs to do projects where more than one chapter is involved, like a big workshop. We're trying to get people not to spend money on meetings, because meetings are primarily (c) (4) and we have less (c) (4) money now. So we're trying to get everybody to do public education, because that's tax-deductible, and we're funded so much now out of donations rather than member dues.

The strategy teams, which include all of the national conservation committees, have half of what a campaign has. Each strategy team has about ten committees. There you have a chair; you have a person who has to respond on all issues of water or air pollution. They're heavily relied upon by the staff, to make sure we're right, scientifically, and consistent with club policy. So they do an awful lot of work. One nice thing is that the national Sierra Club provides us with e-mail. All you pay is your phone bill. E-mail is cheap. Your phone calls are reimbursed, and your travel is reimbursed. Most committees still try and meet once a year.

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D. Cellarius: The Sierra Club provides resources to its committees that we're learning to use. I'm not really complaining; I'm just saying it's different. There's different money going to different things. The things the national staff provides are some coordinated list-serves that people can use to communicate, and regular newsletters and people to put stuff up on the web for us. It's more than just this money for the committees to operate. It's the list-serves and the opportunity to put articles in *The Planet* and sometimes in *Sierra*. To get our work done, we rely on a lot of resources that are not counted in the small budgets. I would say that a lot of the big successes come from where the big money is spent. Think what more we could do if we had even more big campaigns, where you make a difference.

Lage: One thing that I see here is that, for example, the CAFO campaign is heavily involved with water issues. Does the water committee have direct--.

D. Cellarius: Yes. As I said, they have liaisons.

Lage: So that's one of their functions.

D. Cellarius: Yes. EQST is very concerned about energy, so we have a liaison to the Global Warming Campaign, which is an energy campaign. It's a campaign to get people to buy smaller cars and get manufacturers to make smaller cars, and for people to use other energy-efficient buildings and appliances and stuff. So it's to cut the energy use, because most energy use contributes to global warming because of CO_2. We have a liaison from the EQST to energy. There are liaisons from other committees that feel they need to talk with. We now have a committee in EQST on corporate accountability. They work with the CAFO campaign on corporate campaigns to shame the corporations. And ECL works with Corporate Accountability Committee to shame the logging companies.

We're getting lots and lots of cross-fertilization. Most of that cross-fertilization is just a matter of being on conference calls, sometimes going to a meeting with the people. The CAFO Campaign gives out grants to teach chapters how to monitor water quality. That's one of the things we've asked the CAFO Campaign to do, is to do more general water quality, using CAFOs as an example, but train people to work on water quality. So that's working very well. I think any time you have a grant to train people to monitor what's happening in the forest--and some of the public lands campaigns do--the wild places, just to find out what's actually happening in the forest--people are getting trained in ways that increase their skills generally. That's another good thing that benefits whoever is doing it.

Lage: It sounds as if a lot of this does trickle down to the local grassroots level.

D. Cellarius: Yes, because they've got the chapter grants. EPEC and all the little grants is another way that chapters can get money. But to get an EPEC grant--they usually have twice as many chapters applying for grants--so one way to make sure you're going to get a grant is to work on one of those four priorities. If you work on CAFOs or ECL, you're more likely. Now, when they started giving these out, few applied to do ECL work. I told you earlier, that's why ECL said, "We need more money." They said, "We need more money than anybody else because nobody wanted to do an EPEC grant and work on our issue. Therefore, we don't have enough things happening out in the chapters. Therefore, you have to give us more money." So they got it.

Lage: They're the one that came out of the national election petition.

D. Cellarius: Yes, one of the goals for the ECL campaign for this year is to lobby the chapters to apply for EPEC grants on ECL [laughs].

Lage: Of course, some of the chapters don't really have logging areas within their scope.

D. Cellarius: No. It's a national forest focus. It's like saying, some of the chapters don't have CAFOs, and we discovered that lots of chapters have CAFOs. Some of the worst

CAFOs are in Michigan and California. Have you ever driven past one of those places?

Lage: Yes.

D. Cellarius: With hundreds of cows and they stink. Mississippi has bad chicken CAFOs. Kentucky has bad chicken CAFOs. Iowa has bad pig CAFOs. Now the pig CAFOs, they've been driven out of Iowa. They're going to Idaho and Washington state. They just buy up little farms and turn them into a pig factory.

Lage: It's quite a tale.

D. Cellarius: A lot of it does come down to the money. I think if you look at the big picture that the money is going to really good work. They say to these issue committees that want more, "Well, demonstrate why you deserve more." We're going to ask the question to the chapters and groups this spring: "What do you want to work on? What do your members really work hard on?" Maybe some new issues will come out of it, and we'll be doing some changing.

Lage: It's fascinating.

D. Cellarius: I was lucky to have some history here, in having first been an issue committee chair. The Hazardous Materials Committee was the first national thing I did. I did that because Michele Perrault called me up, and she said, "Doris, we have a chair of Hazardous Materials and he doesn't have time to do anything anymore. Would you take over and talk to him about what to do and do it?" So I did that. Then I got on the Committee on Committees, because I knew what committees face. Then I was there at the time of the reorganization, and I heard several times, Carl came and talked to the Issue Committee Caucus. He told us how inefficient it was to have so many committees. He didn't know who to talk to, and he really wanted to see things reorganized so that all the pollution was together, and he could go to one pollution person, and we could spread the word. It made sense to us, and so we were happy. We didn't really object to the reorganization.

Lage: Do you have reservations about it now? You didn't like the transition; I could see that.

D. Cellarius: Well, I didn't like the transition because it was too abrupt and people weren't informed.

Lage: How do you think the structure works now, compared with the Issue Committee Caucus?

D. Cellarius: I think because we have e-mail and because we have more money, everybody has a chance to do their work. I think we're having a hard time explaining this to

club members because, for some of the issues, they have been pumped up to the high level of action and funding and access to national staff. So I think it's been more productive, but I think it's hard on the people who really want to work on some of the committees that didn't make it to the top of the priority list. I hope the priority process gets good at sensing what are some new issues, because you can't work on everything. It's silly, in a way, to try.

Lage: What has gotten left out? What are some of the committees or issues that are stepchildren?

D. Cellarius: Oh, one would be maybe pesticides, but there are several national organizations that do terrific work on pesticides. Community health. You've heard of Lois Gibbs? There are a bunch of groups that work on polluted communities. There are groups that work on military toxics. There are groups that work on nuclear waste. None of these are big high priorities, though some people wish that the Sierra Club would do more.

Lage: You mean, they are non-Sierra Club groups that do all these things?

D. Cellarius: Oh, all these things happen in the Sierra Club, but they're not at the top. We have people that work on nuclear, whole chapters, yes. All these things get worked on, but they're not--

Lage: Not heavily funded.

D. Cellarius: No. We do encourage people to work with the other national groups that work on those things.

Lage: Partner.

D. Cellarius: Yes, partner with them.

Lage: Let's take a break now. Don't you think we both need a little bit of a break?

D. Cellarius: Yes, sure.

[Tape interruption]

Trade Issues and the Effort against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment

Lage: We've just been discussing how many hits there are, under your name on the internet. One of them had to do with the MAI [Multilateral Agreement on

Investment], and it looked like you were involved with that on the local level. I wanted to ask you in general about that and any other involvement you have with World Trade Organization type of issues.

D. Cellarius: Well, I knew that the Sierra Club was concerned about the MAI, and I had gotten some good descriptions of it.

Lage: Give a little general background of what it is.

D. Cellarius: Well, this is a while ago, so I have to remember. The MAI was the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. It was an international treaty that was being negotiated behind closed doors. People were very concerned that multinational corporations were trying to do something really sneaky in that there was no public access to these discussions. It was a treaty that was for the benefit of corporations in that if a local government or a state or the federal government passed a law that interfered with their right to make a profit and do business, corporations could sue them.

This is something that trade agreements like NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] also make possible. NAFTA lawsuits are filed by corporations when they couldn't sell their product in a country with regulations that restrict their operations.

Lage: Or a state.

D. Cellarius: Or a state. This has happened with methyl tertiary butyl ether, that terrible gas additive, and most recently it happened with lindane, a pesticide that is used. The Canadian government wanted to ban its use, so the company was suing the government. When the MAI was an issue, communities, especially, got concerned about it, because they learned that communities could do almost nothing to restrict trade. You couldn't give preference in your community to women-owned businesses or to social causes or humanitarian causes. All kinds of special things that a local government might want to do to protect its ground water, its drinking water. You couldn't do anything like that if it interfered with business.

I was friendly, in Olympia, with a lot of the counterculture people. The effort against the MAI was actually started by a young man who was a radical but also very dedicated. He had the sense to get the churches involved and the environmental groups. I went to the local Sierra Club, and they passed a resolution saying that we supported the MAI, because it was a concern of the National Sierra Club's Trade Campaign.

A big meeting was put together, a conference in Olympia, on the MAI. I represented the environmental groups and spoke, and there were other people who represented--. It was held in a Unitarian church.

Lage: Did it involve a lot of the countercultural people?

D. Cellarius: No, it involved mostly churches. It was not countercultural at all. The leader was the head of our city council, the mayor of Olympia. He was involved in the major churches in the city. Though it was started by a countercultural guy, it was not counterculture at all. Olympia was very proud of being a city that supported minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses, and we had laws to protect our ground water. It was going to interfere with a lot--if it was passed, we couldn't do these things, and in fact, might get sued for it. That was a nice partnering with lots of people. That's what we tried to do in partnering, is find others who shared the concern.

I haven't stayed active with the trade campaign because I have too many things to do, but I think the trade campaign is terribly important, because of NAFTA, and now the expansion of it to South America. We have learned that it has had bad effects. With NAFTA, we were able to set up a side agreement on the environment and set up something called the Commission on Environmental Cooperation, between Mexico, United States, and Canada, where they have to do some things regarding the environment, as well as trade liberalization. Some good things are coming out of that. If we can't stop trade agreements, we have to make sure that they both have environmental side agreements, and that the president is never given the authority to sign trade agreements without going to the Congress, because that's the other thing business always wants. That's terrible.

Lage: In what venue did you work on this? You seem knowledgeable about the issue. Was it one of your committees that got involved with it or just you as a person?

D. Cellarius: I as a person was interested and talked. I had gone to international committee meetings with Richard [Cellarius], and Dan Seligman gave speeches about NAFTA, so I knew all about NAFTA and trade agreements. Dan Seligman was working on the MAI and had sent us material about it, so I knew about the MAI because of Sierra Club people and going to international committee meetings.

Lage: A lot of the energy behind the opposition to these trade agreements was, shall we say, a more radical element. Does that make the Sierra Club nervous?

D. Cellarius: I think the Sierra Club is very careful as to what kind of actions we take, and since we can't do anything illegal, Dan and the rest of trade campaign have focused on finding completely traditional things that the Sierra Club does--education, teach-ins--because with something like trade agreements, you need a lot of public education to let people know exactly what's happening. I think with other international work we'll need teach-ins, because people don't understand what you can do about treaties.

I'm working right now on implementation of the POPs treaty. Persistent organic pollutants are POPs. We've set up a list-serve to educate Sierra Club members

about: number one, we have to have Senate ratification of a treaty, even though the U.S. signed it. You think, oh, we signed a treaty! Yay! We've signed some good treaties and never ratified them, so we might as well have never done it. Heads of state sign things, and people don't realize that they have to be ratified. So we want the POPs treaty ratified, and then we want the things in the treaty to happen in the States, because they are supposed to happen, once it becomes a treaty obligation. That's going to be interesting, trying to educate people as to their opportunities to implement treaties. I don't even know how we're going to do it, but it's one of our pollution goals.

Lage: The work is very complicated. This is not just saving a wild place, which is an issue that people can really respond to and understand.

D. Cellarius: Yes, what's complicated, partly, is trying to increase the understanding so that people will take the time to work on it. We're fortunate that many members of the Sierra Club are professional people and want to share their expertise. Some of them don't have much money; some of them, like college professors, and scientists, people who have technical expertise, but they can help us. We have a lot of technical help on our committees from members who understand the details. I think that's really great. It's a great help to the Sierra Club.

How an Issue Comes to the Fore: The Examples of Fluoridation, Sewage Sludge

Lage: Should we go to a particular issue to show how a committee might work? On the Internet, I came across the fluoridation decision which your environmental quality strategy team made a decision about. Is that a good way to talk about how an issue comes to the fore?

D. Cellarius: I think so. Fluoridation is very controversial, because there is science on both sides, apparently, that fluoridation improves dental health. Also, they're finding that it may have environmental problems.

Lage: It was associated with kooks. The opposition to fluoridation was considered kind of a kook issue for a long time.

D. Cellarius: Yes. One thing the industry does is they try to make people look like kooks. I've worked on several issues now where there have been strong industry campaigns to make citizens look ridiculous. Another one I recently worked on is the issue of using sewage sludge for fertilizer. There, same thing happened. Citizens were really harassed. Scientists who would question it were harassed. This is finally getting resolved. It's getting resolved much better than the fluoridation issue.

Chapters came to the National Sierra Club and said, "We want to work on fluoridation." What triggered us to get involved is there were bills in some state legislatures to mandate, with no public input, that the water in towns of a certain size would be treated with fluoride. This was pushed by some who thought that fluoridation was good. It was also pushed by some chemical industries who could get rid of some of their wastes by selling it to cities as fluorides, because the fluorides that are used now, some of them are waste products of the chemical industry, that contain fluoride, but also contain things like arsenic.

So we decided that the Sierra Club would try to do something to help the chapters that wanted to say something. What we said was that we had to have documented environmental reasons for taking a position. The Sierra Club has board-adopted policy. They have guidelines for implementing policy. The board does not adopt guidelines, the Conservation Governance Committee or the strategy teams can adopt guidelines. Then, strategy teams and committees can adopt positions. We decided that all we would try to do was take a position on the process of fluoridation. We sent out a call for comment on a draft position, and we got comments from the chapters, other committees, and members of the Sierra Club.

We found that all we were able to say with certainty was that we support the right of communities to have a voice in whether their water is fluoridated, that it should go to a ballot and the public should vote on it. The other thing we said in the policy--we couldn't say strong things about the environmental damage--but we said that we believed there should be research. It was clear that there were possible problems, and there should be research into the use of these waste fluoride products and the health effects in communities that were fluoridated in this way, and then whether there were environmental effects. I mean, if it's in the drinking water, you water your yard with it; you water your vegetable garden with it. We wanted more research.

Lage: Did you have people who could evaluate what scientific evidence there is? There must be quite a bit of evidence.

D. Cellarius: Yes, we had technical people look at the evidence. There were some strong scientific viewpoints from the environmental side, opposed to the fluoride, because of the contamination that could be in the fluoride. We looked at all of those things, and we looked at research done in other countries. We used the internet. I found that in some countries, because of poverty, a community could no longer fluoridate its water, like in Eastern Europe, and actually the dental health improved. I found scientists who found a number of countries where the dental health improved where the fluoride treatments were stopped.

Lage: Are you looking in scientific journals?

D. Cellarius: Yes, I was looking on Medline which lists peer-review journals. I certainly was glad we were looking at this question. All that the voting members of the strategy team were willing to say is more research is needed, and we support the right of communities to vote on whether their water is fluoridated.

Lage: Now, was that an issue where some people bumped heads?

D. Cellarius: Yes. We had several chapters--at least one chapter, two chapters--who were really mad at us for not being stronger. We did the review, and it came to a vote, and sometimes you don't do what some of the Sierra Club members want.

Lage: Now, since this regards taking a position, does it have to go to the board for a decision?

D. Cellarius: No, we took it to the Conservation Governance Committee, because we felt it was controversial. The Sierra Club takes positions all the time. Our lobbyists take positions. They look at the policy, and say, "Oh, our policy says that, you know, toxic wastes should be cleaned up to a certain level, and here our position on this clean-up is, it's not good enough." It's easy.

Lage: What policy did your position fit under?

D. Cellarius: Use of hazardous materials. We considered it was a hazardous material. The club has a really strong hazardous material policy that when you release a hazardous material to the environment or to the public, you should know for sure it's safe. If it isn't safe, you should look for a safer alternative. If there is a safer alternative, you should use the safer thing. We decided that a safer alternative for fluoride is--*Consumer Reports* has done a study and found out that lots of juice drinks that you buy in the store, they're made with fluoride-treated water.

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D. Cellarius: *Consumer Reports* magazine found that lots of juices contain fluoride. Actually, they even found that especially grape juice has a lot of fluoride in it, because the grapes are treated with fungicides and pesticides containing fluoride, so *Consumer Reports* has actually called for more studies.

Lage: We might be getting more fluoride than we think.

D. Cellarius: Yes, so we felt that people probably do get quite a bit in bottled juices, and bottled water can contain fluoride. You don't know where bottled water comes from. You might find that it comes from Minnesota, or from a spring, but sometimes it's just from water in Minnesota. We felt that between dentist treatments with fluoride, fluoride toothpaste being used universally now, and some communities having natural fluoride, there probably was enough. And the fact that there were some communities where fluoride was discontinued, and the dental health

got better, we thought we were pretty safe in saying even more, but we decided not to because some people didn't want us to go out and join the kooks. [laughter]

Lage: Did you argue strongly for the Sierra Club to take a strong position?

D. Cellarius: I argued moderately. I personally think that it could be harmful now, because there's so much extra fluoride, and because we don't know the source of the fluoride chemical.

Lage: Because it has waste products?

D. Cellarius: Yes, because there's other things in it besides fluoride, yet you will meet dentists and dental hygienists and people who just swear by it.

Lage: I've also heard the argument that--this has some environmental justice overtones, I guess--that it's the poor people that don't get the dental treatment.

D. Cellarius: We consulted with the Environmental Justice Committee, and they strongly felt that because of poor people, that we shouldn't take a stand against it. That's right; I'm glad you mention that. The EJ committee, their position, when they heard about it--and EJ is in Environmental Quality Strategy Team, my strategy team, so they heard all about it. They said, "It's an EJ issue." For several years, the club was asked to work on fluoride, the group didn't want to do it. I thought we should do it, so when I became chair of the strategy team we decided to take on the question. We're asked to do a lot of things for chapters that we can't do, because you can't do everything. A lot of chapters asked us to work on sewage sludge, and we worked on sewage sludge.

Lage: This sewage sludge as fertilizer, what are the problems there?

D. Cellarius: The EPA's laws are not strong enough. There has been a massive PR campaign from the EPA and the sludge industry, which manages the sewage treatment plants, to say it's safe, but then it began to be evident that it really wasn't safe. Scientists were coming forward and saying--

Lage: Did it spread disease?

D. Cellarius: Both disease and contamination. Everything you put down the drain, and everything small businesses put down the drain, unless they have chemical pre-treatment, goes in the sewage sludge, so it's not just your house. There are things in cleaners. There are anti-bacterials we use now. There are drugs that go down the drain. People take drugs.

Sewage sludge contains hazardous chemicals from homes and small businesses. Studies of sewage sludge find that sometimes it has high levels of some of these

things. In fact, some of these are things that are just not well tested; we don't know enough about it. The use of sewage sludge has become massive and widespread, and the cities don't know where to send it. There was recently a big proposal to send the sewage sludge from New York City to some remote community in Texas. It's an environmental justice thing, dumping all the wastes on communities that got no benefit from their generation.

Lage: Oh, so it's not to use it as fertilizer, but just to dump it?

D. Cellarius: Well, they say it's going to fertilize the soil. This was a dump, I think, in Texas. We used to support it, because the Sierra Club thought, it's great for the soil, to put these things back.

Lage: Recycle.

D. Cellarius: Then we didn't realize what sludge tests would reveal, all the toxins in it. In fact, some of the toxins in them are endocrine disrupters, which are just recently discovered chemicals that are not regulated by anybody. The endocrine disrupters act at the teeny, tiny level that a hormone does, and it is so small that no toxicity test has ever picked up these things, yet they disrupt hormone systems in animals and reproductive systems. They can cause birth defects and developmental defects, at tiny, tiny levels. Some of the things in sewage sludge are like that.

In fact, one kind, the digestion of these compounds in detergents makes them even worse. It's not that bad in your shampoo or your hair dye or your cleaning compound, but it gets worse when it's in the sewage, and it's bad for fish. We were able to write a fairly strong policy on sewage sludge. The sewage sludge industry wasn't happy with it, but again, we adopted it recently and put it on the web. It was very interesting to develop it, because this one was of great interest, and we had some seventy comments; we had a lot of comments to read and think about. Just as we're doing this, the government has also become more interested and what we were finding is being supported by the National Academy of Sciences and the EPA's Office of the Inspector General. They discovered that the pathogens are more dangerous than expected. They also discovered that the EPA had been harassing scientists. The National Academy of Sciences studied why the EPA has had such a weak program on sewage sludge. I think that's something that we were part of that is getting results. We're going to have a better way of using sewage sludge in this country.

Lage: That's a good example.

D. Cellarius: It was one of those issues that grassroots activists kept knocking on our door saying, "Let's work on it."

Lage: So this committee is a place where people can go to get some action, to bring up issues.

D. Cellarius: Yes, to try to raise issues that are newly discovered as problems or issues that aren't getting the attention that they ought to get.

Lage: Do you have scientists on your committee, or do you just look up scientific evidence?

D. Cellarius: Well, most of our committee members have some technical background.

Lage: I know you are a scientist, have that background.

D. Cellarius: Almost any scientist is well-trained in his own field, but not in a lot of other fields. The past chair of the Air Committee is a Ph.D. biochemist. Marti Sinclair, the co-chair of EQST with me, her expertise is in bacteriology. My work was in zoology and biochemistry. That is one way you become interested in doing this, because you have a background. Some of the people on our pollution committees are basic long-time activists who have worked on these issues but don't have lots of background, but the woman who helped me on sewage sludge is a university professor, Carolyn Snyder. The other person who worked on sewage sludge with me is a doctor. I don't know if you know Art Unger. He's in California.

The Sierra Club appoints committee members through a process of applications and selection. We also appoint technical experts and corresponding members who don't vote. We don't generally bring them to committee meetings, but they help us. Those people are often technical experts who want to be on board a little bit, and contribute when they can. We're getting more people like this, because we've been told to do outreach to the grassroots; that's why I'm here at this meeting, because we spoke to the Council of Club Leaders about the need for more members on our committees and to tell people about the work that we do and how we want to be helpful to people.

Lage: Is it hard to get new committee members?

D. Cellarius: Right now, it is. We're not getting people applying. We don't really know why. Maybe it's a communications problem. Since we work primarily on e-mail, there are a lot of people who aren't on e-mail all the time. My local group in Arizona, they're not on e-mail a lot. The club's announcement list doesn't go deep into the grassroots. It's something we're all working on. We want to get articles in *The Planet*; we think there should be help wanted or a classified section in *The Planet*. There could be a simple announcement: "Applications can be submitted until March 10. Contact so-and-so--" I think that there are some really easy ways to spread the word. Also, our application forms are formidable. We try to be careful, who is on committees, but I think we've been too careful.

Lage: When you say you try to be careful, what are you being careful about?

D. Cellarius: Oh, we fully describe the work of the committee and the responsibilities of the member. It just goes on and on. It's a lot to read, and a lot of it looks like--"I don't want to do all that."

Lage: Is there a screening process? We brought up the word "kooks" in relation to fluoridation. Do you try to keep kooks off?

D. Cellarius: Well, you have to give two references, and one has to be a leader in your chapter. We usually ask if that person knows their issue, and are they good to work with? If they're a kook, they'll probably tell you. We usually do phone interviews for references. They'll probably say, "Well, that person knows a lot, but they're so difficult, and everything they've done in this chapter has been divisive." So we probably wouldn't appoint somebody like that, though we might, if they're very brilliant.

Lage: So most of them, it sounds like, come up through a chapter involvement.

D. Cellarius: Yes. We have an e-mail. We send our announcements to chapter chairs. We hope that they will forward them to whatever listserv their chapter has.

Lage: Communication is hard, even with email.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: If there's too much e-mail, people don't read it.

D. Cellarius: Even with the web. We haven't fully learned how to use the web. I've been working on a handbook for conservation leaders that the CGC is producing. One of my jobs has been the title page. The title page lists about forty things that conservation committee leaders and members need to know. For most every one, there's a URL. It's almost all on the web now. We have both the public web for everybody and Mitchell, the web for Sierra Club leaders. Everything's on the web, and yet most people don't know this.

Lage: Or know how to get to it.

D. Cellarius: Or know how to get to it. I have this one page, and I use it every day. It's kind of my list of URLs. There's reimbursement forms: How do you do this? How do you set up a listserv? All of our policies, like conflict of interest; everything is there. I really like working on things like that. As I said, I don't like a lot of the administrative work because it's really more fun to do things that are useful to other people, and I think other people have skills for dealing with these administrative [tasks.]

The State Lobbying Program

Lage: You've done a lot of the administrative work, it sounds like.

D. Cellarius: Yes, I guess that's what it is. But my goal in administrative work is to help people who want to get their work done at the local level. Get them the expertise, get them policies that are easy to understand. Get them policies if they feel they can't speak up without having the policy behind them. I was working with some people last week, and he [a citizen] said that he's trying to help a school, because there's a toxic waste site next to the school. He said that the parents and the PTA and the school administration don't want to listen to some of the radical groups. They're not kooks, but they're more radical than the Sierra Club. He says that he feels that they trust him, so he wants me to give him information about the danger of having a school near a toxic waste site and toxic dirt in the school yard.

It's just so rewarding, to talk to a Sierra Club member who says, "It's because I'm Sierra Club that they listen to me." This other group is led by people who put on very successful but sometimes radical campaigns, and they don't want to talk with them. Sometimes campaigns like that get a reputation that isn't trustworthy.

Lage: Are they more direct-action oriented?

D. Cellarius: Yes, and often they're willing to not back up their claims with data. I learned this in lobbying in the legislature. If you tell your legislator something, and you can't back him up, he's really disgusted with you; if you tell him something that wasn't true, wasn't backed up by facts. Because he's going to go out and tell the rest of the legislators, "You've got to kill this bill because it's going to do so-and-so." If you've given him bad information, you're out.

Lage: Have you had an incident where you've seen that happen?

D. Cellarius: Yes. I gave our lobbyist information once about toxic waste in ground water in another state, and he called me up the next day, and he said, "I need all the data. Everyone is very interested." He said, "Get me all the proof of this." I had just read it on the internet, so I called up the person in charge of this town in Maine's groundwater. He said, "Well, that was some contaminated groundwater under a toxic waste site, where of course you'd find that stuff, but the rest of the water in this town is not polluted." So someone was making a broad, general statement about the pollution. There was a little bit of a fact in there, but to make the broad statement was wrong. So I had to tell our lobbyist that I didn't have the whole story. I learned; I tell you that. You want to be able to empower your lobbyist with good information. That's why I like high standards of our state lobbying program.

Lage: Tell me about the state lobbying program.

D. Cellarius: Well, it's something the Sierra Club's been doing. We realized over ten years ago or more, that we had lobbyists in the states. The Sierra Club created a program to link them all up together to help one another, because the same bills often come up in lots of states. They hired Paula Carrell to be the coordinator of all the state lobbyists. She runs this really effective program. She has a big training meeting for them once a year. She gets them information when they need it. They have a listserv just for themselves called FRED.

We've discovered how important state legislation is, because a lot of the bad things the industry wants to do, they're not doing in the Congress; they're doing it at the state level. If they can get some bad state bills passed in a number of states, then passing it at the federal level is easy. They say, "Well, this is already allowed in ten states." So we're trying to head off these bad bills in the states. One of the things that they have to oppose is called "regulatory reform," which is substituting volunteering to do nice things for having to comply with regulations. This is happening as we speak. The Sierra Club is trying to stop it.

Lage: That's a program at the state level.

D. Cellarius: Yes. The state lobbying program.

Lage: Did you have something to do with coordinating these various state programs?

D. Cellarius: No, not now. There is a volunteer committee that works with Paula Carrell. A few volunteers help her, mostly paid lobbyists, but some volunteer lobbyists. I was on that committee for a year or so. This has been going on for ten years. I'm not on that anymore. The state lobbyists have become an entity of their own, because they've got some experts there, people who've been state lobbyists for many years. Some of the early ones are Jeff Smith in Pennsylvania and Caryl Torrell in Wisconsin. Ann Woiwode in Michigan. There is a backbone of state lobbying people, and then new ones get hired on. Just as I said, bad things can get passed in the states, and then it's easy to pass them federally. Well, we also try to get good things passed in the states, so we can say, "Look, it's the law in ten states. Let's just make a national law." That's the reverse of that coin. We've been trying for a long time to do that with the bottle bill, to make beverage containers all returnable.

Lage: That's one of your pets.

D. Cellarius: Yes, that's one of my pets, because it's one of my first issues. I worked on the Michigan bottle bill when I was in Ann Arbor. Eventually, Michigan passed one of the best bottle bills in the nation, because it's a ten-cent deposit. It's a significant amount of money for people who pick up the cans and bottles; pick up ten cans and bottles and you have a dollar. It returns a fair amount of money to the

states in what's called "unredeemed deposits." It benefits the state and gets the litter off the road. Hardly anyone refills containers anymore, though. That's very sad, because it's better to refill things than to recycle. Several more states are working on bottle bills now. Some states are expanding the bottle bill to juices and other kinds of things besides pop. It's not a dead cause; it's something that people still work on.

Lage: I'm just amazed at the complexity of it all; how many issues you alone have been involved in. Plus, you're giving a picture much broader than your own involvement.

D. Cellarius: I think that's typical of a lot of Sierra Club people, though. If you interviewed Marti Sinclair, who's my EQST co-chair--she came up from Oklahoma, grass-roots, fighting, in those days, cement kilns. She's worked on so many issues. I think a lot of us have worked on a lot of issues. Of course, it's because we like to do that. Richard always says why won't I turn off the computer and go to bed. If you know about something, and you know how to get somebody in touch with somebody else--a lot of our work is the networking--you want to do that, because you know that it can make a difference, if you get good information and get the truth to people. It's a very self-centered thing too. If the industry is lying, or trying to site something in a community that's bad for the environment, you want to stop them. It's the good guys versus the bad guys. It often is bad guys. It really is true that bad stuff happens, so whenever you can turn it around, you try to do that.

The Demographics of Sierra Club Members

Lage: You've worked with people all throughout the country on these issues.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Are there differences in Sierra Club people in different locales? Is there a typical member in the Northwest and a different type of member in the Southeast?

D. Cellarius: Well, yes, just because of the problems that they face. In the Northwest, there's just an awful lot of interest in beautiful places. It's one of the first things they did in the Northwest, is save the parks, and the North Cascades, and Alpine Lakes. They're still very strong with the wild places people and reforming the Forest Service, stopping the logging, and now, protecting the salmon. They don't work a lot on pollution or environmental justice.

But there are some members who do. Overarching, the Northwest is that way. While Louisiana, which has all the polluting industries and Cancer Alley,

they're working very hard for environmental justice for the people who live in those contaminated communities, and for cleaning up, or getting rid of some of the industries. So many industries locate down there so they can dump their waste in the Mississippi River and use the oil to make toxic chemicals. It's horrible. Our members in that area are very good at toxics. Yet, they have a very strong interest in the beautiful swamps and places with alligators that need to be saved. There's the Atchafalaya. I'd say, they're really good on endangered species and wildlife as well as toxics there. The Northeast has got a lot of toxics problems, because that's where a lot of the industry in the early part of our history was. The Northeast also has quite a history of interest in wild places. They're a little more balanced. I see Florida as more balanced. Florida has water pollution, but it also has the Everglades.

Lage: So the issues of the place define the people's interest.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: But are the people--their style and the way they work and the social class they come from--the same throughout?

D. Cellarius: I think if you looked at the demographics, we are more uniform across where we come from, than what we work on, because it takes people with enough money to be able to spend some time being in a club, and going hiking, and just spending time. A lot of people join because they want to go on outings; they want to go hiking. So it's people with lives that have enough freedom to have leisure time. Families that are struggling to make a living or adjust to living in a country where they don't speak the language have enough to do just to take care of their families.

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D. Cellarius: I think a real reason we don't have more minorities active is that minorities aren't in the income levels that many Sierra Club members are. They don't have the leisure time. They have a lot of other demands on their lives and stresses in their lives. Sometimes, it's hard for them to maintain the interest, because being a Sierra Club volunteer--I was talking to one lady, who's a very active person, but a minority in the Sierra Club. She said, "I'm really good now at what I do. Everyone wants me to go to meetings, but I have three dogs, and I'm a single woman, and I have to board the dogs, and I'm a biology teacher, and I don't have much money. Even if they give me a plane ticket, they're not going to pay for the meals I eat out and the time I take away from my job." Somebody said yesterday, "I'm sorry to see such a monoculture here." Well, it's because we do have retired people who have enough where-with-all to travel. For some people, to come to a Sierra Club meeting is expensive. I mean, the annual dinner tomorrow night is expensive! It's terrible. The club does provide some breakfasts and brings in lunches and things, but it's still expensive. And you leave your job.

Lots of people can't take off that extra day in the week, because they have to work every day.

Lage: So these are Sierra Club people on the local level who can't afford to get involved in the national Sierra Club.

D. Cellarius: Yes, but I still think the local level lacks active members who are poor people and who are minorities, except for students; they are often very poor, but they live frugally and they like to be active.

Lage: But they may be middle-class in origin.

D. Cellarius: Yes, and they have time to be active, or they make time to be active, and they enjoy it. Many groups have active young people who aren't in the more well-to-do range. By well-to-do, I mean, just able to afford leisure time, time to go hiking or go to meetings.

Lage: You're not talking about wealthy people.

D. Cellarius: No, I'm just talking about having the where-with-all to go on trips and hiking and take a little time off from work to do things and buy a computer and that sort of thing. There are so many people in this country who just don't have that. It doesn't bother me that they're not Sierra Club members as long as they're our friends and we help them. If they want to be members, then we should make everything possible in our local meetings, make it possible for them--at times and places where it's comfortable for them to come and participate. Sierra Club people, I think, try to do that, but there are still other demands on people's lives.

Lage: That's right.

D. Cellarius: The rewards of being in the Sierra Club for a long time come after a long time. Some people get frustrated by this. Some people go to Sierra Club meetings, and everybody is so expert, and they're all talking to one another, and so excited to see one another. Newcomers who aren't experts in stuff, they get forgotten. I've done it myself, and I make an effort now to talk to new folks and strangers, but it's more fun to talk to your friends.

Lage: So there's sort of a club-ish atmosphere.

D. Cellarius: Yes, it is club-ish. We feel, [for example], like the important thing for me today is to be talking to you, an important person, and that new person over there, well, someone will take care of them. Sometimes nobody does. I don't know how much effort is given to membership retention. I worry about that. I think it's a thankless job, but important that there be people in local groups that make sure that newcomers feel welcome and find some work they can do that is valued. That might be another reason we don't have more people who get really

involved--because nobody welcomes them and finds them something that they can do.

Lage: You mentioned the Environmental Justice--team, is it?

D. Cellarius: There is a committee, and also a program, grant-funded.

Lage: Committee, within the strategy team. What kind of people are on that team? Do they come out of communities that are affected?

D. Cellarius: One of the new co-chairs is a student. On national committees people have usually had some chapter leadership experience of some kind, so that they understand the Sierra Club, so when we feed help back down to the chapters, we understand our chapters' work. We try to get chapter people to participate. The Environmental Justice Committee is people who have great concern. There's a person who's worked with the inner city lead-poisoned children in Baltimore and another is a retired public health doctor. Some activists have been helping communities. I don't know that there's a member who's been a victim within the community.

Lage: But they've worked with those communities.

D. Cellarius: Yes. The goal now of the Sierra Club's Environmental Justice Program is good; it's to partner. We come to you, and we do what you want. We don't tell you. We don't do anything you don't ask for. You tell us what the problem is; you tell us how you want us to help. That's a very good thing, the Environmental Justice Program.

Lage: It's something like what you were doing up in the Northwest.

D. Cellarius: Yes, with the communities, and essentially that was environmental justice work. Usually these communities are polluted because they're poor and in the wrong part of town.

<u>The Impact of E-mail</u>

Lage: You know, I think we've covered an awful lot. I'm not sure we'll need to come back after lunch. Are there things that you think we should discuss?

D. Cellarius: Well, [in talking about] structure, I had a note about how the world was changed by e-mail.

Lage: You've made lots of references to that, but why don't you elaborate.

D. Cellarius: E-mail has improved communication. One reason for the reorganization, or rationale for it, was committees were spending too much money on travel. About all they would do, most committees would have two to three meetings per year, so all their money was spent on plane tickets. It just so happened that around '95, when the reorganization was, that we started using e-mail extensively, and the Sierra Club got so good at setting up listservs. You know what a listserv is, right?

Lage: Yes.

D. Cellarius: Where you can send a message to lots of people. The club became this e-mail communication organization. Once people knew each other, and could have e-mail--now we have conference calls, that are very easily set up, with help from San Francisco--it's just changed so we don't have to have all those meetings. We share information quickly, and we share information with many other organizations and get on their list serves. So people who work with nuclear waste not only work with the Sierra Club, they work with five or six other skilled committees. They plan things together, and this all happens on e-mail. Sometimes, they have conference calls. E-mail has really changed how we work, and actually made it possible for a lot more to happen with less money. I don't really know if we know how many people are left out because they don't have e-mail, though.

Lage: So this is a possible downside.

D. Cellarius: Yes, because that may be one reason why we're not getting more people to apply to our committees. Everybody's on e-mail, and they're so busy they can't see straight.

Lage: Busy answering e-mails!

D. Cellarius: Yes, and deleting e-mails. But the people who aren't on e-mail may really be interested. Maybe they have e-mail capacity, but they're not hooked up with our e-mail. I wonder if a downside has been created, this two-tier society. We have *The Planet*, which we mail to 6,000 people who are on our activist's list, so that really tries to get to people through the regular mail, different from email.

Lage: It's not interactive, though, the way e-mail is.

D. Cellarius: No, that's right, it's not. Sometimes I don't have time to read *The Planet*. I hope other people read *The Planet*. My daughter read *The Planet*. She liked *The Planet*. I don't think she gets it now that she lives in Europe. She found it interesting. *The Planet* is written by professional writers. You know how I was saying that it's hard to have time to write when you're working and writing policy; it's hard to have time to write about what you're doing. That's probably why it's good that *The Planet* has John Barry and other people doing the writing. And

Sierra, too. In the old days, members used to write *Sierra*, but they don't do that anymore.

Lage: Does the staff take suggestions from volunteers in terms of what should be in *The Planet*?

D. Cellarius: Yes. And Joan Hamilton [*Sierra* editor] always says, "Keep on sending me ideas. You've given us good ideas." We get a six months ahead list of what articles *Sierra's* going to have. I try to always send that to all my committees, because if we see there's going to be an article on CAFOs, we want to have a chance to add information. But if it's something like--

Lage: Sewage sludge.

D. Cellarius: That's exactly right; something that's on very few people's radar screens. Then, the sewage sludge people, whoever's the leader, will contact *Sierra*, and say, "We have some thoughts about this. We hope you'll talk to us when you do that article." That's been helpful because they're six months ahead of time, always six months in the future. There's time to get on the--

Lage: So that's one way *Sierra* relates to the volunteers.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Reflections on Volunteers and Staff, Wild Places, Living Simply

Lage: How do you feel regarded by staff, as a volunteer? Do you feel you've had good relationships with staff?

D. Cellarius: Oh, yes. You know, it's a dream of people, to work for the Sierra Club. The people who work for the Sierra Club are people who really want to do something for the environment. Every experience I've had has been terrific. Their work is very challenging.

Lage: So there's a lot of commitment.

D. Cellarius: Yes. I think that this is true of all the staff. It's hard working with volunteers. There are some guidelines for what you should do if you don't think everything is going perfect with the staff. I think they have a really hard job interacting with this many--you know, we've got thousands of high-level active volunteers. People in the staff have to tactfully work with everyone.

Lage: And not all the volunteers are as easy to work with as you might hope, I would guess.

D. Cellarius: Well, I think that that's because they say, "We're fighters, and we're impatient, and we're advocates for our issues." All things which make you pushy. I have really gotten upset with volunteers, gotten stomachaches from volunteers. But I have not ever gotten a stomachache from a staff person, because I think they all have too much to do, and I'm sure they work more than they're paid for, although I think we're getting better. None of us could do what we're able to do if there wasn't staff lobbying, talking to the press, fixing the e-mail, helping us have conference calls, helping us set up listservs, helping us do articles. We'd be nowhere, individually, without the staff that the Sierra Club makes available.

Lage: It's a nice thing to have on the record. Are there other things you'd like to discuss?

D. Cellarius: No, I don't think so.

Lage: You wanted to talk about the value of club involvement, but I think that's come out as we've talked.

D. Cellarius: I think that's come out. I've said it's very empowering to its volunteers. Even the volunteers that aren't on the big campaigns, they found ways to get all these little grants to people. For such a huge organization, I just think it's amazing that it's an organization where most people can find a niche. Some people like to do fund-raising, and membership. I've hardly ever mentioned outings, but you know, the outings are a wonderful service. To new people in their community, the Sierra Club is a way to meet people, to get out-of-doors and get to know the area. It's many things to many people.

Lage: Is that still something that you think binds the Sierra Club? The desire to get out into the natural surroundings?

D. Cellarius: Oh, yes.

Lage: Even when you visit chapters, you usually take a hike.

D. Cellarius: Yes.

Lage: Is that a commonality that's pretty strong?

D. Cellarius: Yes. I'm sure it's still a base of why people become new members. I think that it's outings and meeting people, and this concern for the wild places, I think it's pretty universal. Because anyplace you live--I used to think prairies were ugly. I grew up in the prairies along Lake Michigan. I've been working a little bit with the lake and prairie group, which is right there where I grew up, north of Chi-

cago. I look on their Web site, and they've got this picture of this pond, which is--And then they work on the prairies, and the-- They say all kinds of nice stuff about this--[laughs], and here I'm so spoiled living out west. I think anywhere you live, people are working for--you know, the lakes in Florida, the swamps in Louisiana. I think every wild place is threatened now.

Nobody wants America to just be more malls and destroyed and made ugly by sprawl. I now know every place has wild places left that must be saved, but I used to be so ignorant. Sierra Club Books published books about little places that are special. They're all special because they're all threatened. In some places, there's just nowhere to go to get away from people and streets.

Lage: Two things come to mind: you seem to have made your life style, to a pretty good degree, fit your philosophical beliefs, in terms of materialism, and you bicycle to work, use safe products, recycle. Do you think that's true in the Sierra Club as a whole?

D. Cellarius: Yes, I think so. I mean, we're getting to have more and more people who are aware. The word has been out now, since Earth Day, about excess consumption, polluting products. Many people are so much better than we are, as far as being simple. Some people don't take it as far as others; some people take it more. I know that individually I do a lot of things to prove to myself you can do it. Even though I know that just me doing it makes no difference. I know that what I have to work for is big systems--bottle bills, saving the drinking water of all the town. I used to think that by putting a thing on your faucet, you could drink clean water, which is very selfish, because you should care about--everyone in town needs clean water. We need to make sure the whole city's water is clean.

I do a lot of things on principle, but for some things I can't fix, so help me, I'm bad. I know there's bad stuff in shampoo, but I buy it. I just try not to use very much. There's a bunch of cleaning products I don't use very much--I have a simplicity ethic--I don't want to buy ninety-nine different things. I want to go to the grocery store and buy food, not stuff. I don't buy stuff like napkins and paper towels. We can just wash towels. I can't remember if I've ever had a clothes dryer. I think that a person should be able to get along without some things.

Other people do, too. Other people have houses that are really well designed. They've been buying these new refrigerators that don't use the CFCs; they buy new efficient washing machines. I'm always humbled by people whose life is really sparse. Some of the people give up, but it's up to us to keep providing information about what's best to do, and how one can still have an enjoyable lifestyle. From the questions people ask me about pollution and recycling, I can tell that they are making many important changes in their lives.

Lage: And as you say, working for changing systems is more effective in the long run.

D. Cellarius: Yes, and I like the idea of the systems. One day, my sister-in-law said to me, "You wash dishes like you're camping. You pour this water in here, and you try to use almost no water, washing all the dishes. You're in Washington State, it's raining, it's pouring. There's so much water here." I was just thinking, "Well, we shouldn't waste water, even though we're surrounded." That wasn't even conscious. You just shouldn't--this is clean water--think of all the people in the world who have to drink polluted water. Here I'm just pouring it down the drain.

Lage: How do you like your life in the desert?

D. Cellarius: Oh, I like it.

Lage: It's a big move from the rainy Northwest, to the dry desert.

D. Cellarius: Yes, it's nice because we can be outside so much more. I used to wish I could be outside more, but I don't like to be cold; I don't like to be wet. I really liked moving to Arizona. The place where we live is nice, because it's perfect. You can walk downtown. I can say, "I'm going to the library, I'll be back." It takes maybe twenty minutes, twenty-five minutes to come home--"I'll be back in an hour and a half." You can go to the library and stop at a store and be back. You can walk almost everywhere, walk to the dentist, walk to the doctor. It's nice to be somewhere where you can walk everywhere. If I want to go walk around a wild creek and see animals tracks in the sand, that's four minutes away, because we live on a creek. We've got wild animals.

We're in a typical small town that grew. I don't know if you've ever been to Prescott, but it kind of grew like Topsy, and so there's wild places and then little bits with homes. We've gotten involved with the creek association, for saving the creek--along the creek, it's open space. There is a place to walk. Very few people walk along it because it's very rocky and steep near our house. It's not a hiking trail, but we see people walking along the creek sometimes. So, it's the perfect place to live.

Transcribers: Mim Eisenberg and Julie Allen

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